

Fregola w/ Sweet + Sour Fruits + Veg

Fregola is an Italian island stale bread type couscous. It can be hard to find. I've found that pearl couscous, toasted in a dry pan, yields very similar results. Really the main difference between the two ingredients is that the pearl couscous sometimes has turmeric for color, this is fine, it makes the dish look nice and has almost no effect on flavor. This dish is great at room temp and as a result is great for picnics or any low fuss Sunday afternoon buffet or grazing situation you may find yourself in.

INGREDIENTS:

1C pearl couscous or Sicilian Fregola
1 baby eggplant, 1/4" cubes
1/2pt cherry tomatoes
2 cloves garlic, whole, skin on
4 dates, pitted and sliced
towel
1/3 bunch mint
1/2 bunch basil
2 tbsp sherry/red wine vinegar
1tbsp olive oil
1/2 block of feta cheese, crumbled
1/4c safflower oil (option)

EQUIPMENT:

12" saute
≥2qt sauce pan
fine mesh colander
spider
plate lined with paper



STEPS:

Set the sauté over high heat and add the pearl couscous to the pan, toss them occasionally for 3-5 min or until most look toasted. Set aside in a clean small bowl.

I found shallow frying the eggplant was ideal, if you are apposed, drop to the bottom of the instructions for an alt method that worked well but took much longer

Add 1/4c of safflower oil to the pan and bring up to a high temperature (350°) You can test but placing a single cubed eggplant into the oil, it should sizzle within two seconds, increasing with intensity over the next 5 seconds. Once at this point add all the eggplant. Shallow fry for 5-8 min or until they are all well browned. Remove with spider and set aside on a plate lined with paper towel.

Pour the hot oil off into a mason jar, or some other heat resistant container
Place the saute pan back on the stove, heat off - don't clean out the pan a little residual safflower oil is OK.

Fill the ≥2qt pot with at least 1.5qts of water. Set it over high heat and bring to a boil. Once boiling add salt and the toasted pearl couscous. Cook for 5-10 min or until it is no longer overly toothsome.

When the couscous are cooked to your likeness, drain them into a fine mesh colander and rinse them under cool water for about 1 minute. Keep them in the colander and set aside.

Bring the saute back up to medium high heat, add the olive oil and garlic cloves, saute until fragrant. Add the cherry tomatoes, pierce each on with the tip of a pairing knife, cook until the tomatoes bleed their juices and being to shrivel.

Add the dates. Now turn off the heat and add the vinegar to deglaze, perfume and halt the cooking, then add the feta, crumbling it by hand. Now taste for salt and add the fresh herbs. Combine with the couscous and serve hot, or room temp. This dish holds really well.

ALT eggplant cooking method. Set oven to 400°. On a 1/2 or 1/4 sheet tray scatter all the cherry tomatoes, the cubed eggplant and the garlic cloves. Drizzle with 2-3tbsp of olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper. Pierce each cherry tomato with the tip of a pairing knife, and place in the oven. Cook for 30 min, then remove, toss the ingredients around and cook for an additional 15-30 or until the eggplant are dark and the tomatoes are shriveled. Add the dates and combine with the couscous