

Serves: 4
Prep: 30 minutes
Cooking: 1 hour

POMEGRANATE + WALNUT KHORESH

3 cups (about 13 oz/360 g) shelled walnuts
1 large butternut squash (about 3 lb/1.35 kg), peeled and cut into ½-inch (1.25 cm) cubes*
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 medium onions, peeled and thinly sliced
1 teaspoon sea salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
½ teaspoon turmeric
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground cardamom
1 teaspoon ground cumin
Zest of 1 orange
4 cups (950 ml) fresh pomegranate juice
1 teaspoon pomegranate molasses*
1 teaspoon grape molasses*
2 cups (120 g) chopped fresh cilantro

GARNISH

1 cup (150 g) pomegranate arils (1 pomegranate)
Sprigs of cilantro

Traditionally this recipe is made with duck: the affinity between pomegranate and duck in Persian cooking goes back to ancient times. However, this dish is equally delicious—and nutritious—made without meat, which is what I am giving you here. For those who'd like meat, I suggest serving it with chicken kabab (page 143).

1. To dry-toast the walnuts: Preheat the oven to 400°F/200°C and line a rimmed sheet pan with parchment paper. Spread out the walnuts on top. Place the pan on the center rack of the oven and bake for 5 minutes. Remove from the oven, transfer to a bowl and allow to cool.
2. To roast the butternut squash: In the same rimmed sheet pan, place the butternut squash cubes with ½ teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon pepper, and 1 tablespoon olive oil, toss well and spread evenly on the pan. Roast in the preheated oven for 15 minutes, until tender.
3. In a medium-sized, heavy-bottomed pot, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium heat. Add the onions and stir-fry for 10 to 15 minutes, or until golden brown. Add the salt, pepper, turmeric, cinnamon, cardamom, and cumin, and sauté for 1 minute.
4. Meanwhile, in the food processor, finely grind the walnuts, then add only 1 cup of the pomegranate juice, and the orange zest, pomegranate molasses, and grape molasses, and mix well to create a smooth, creamy sauce.
5. Transfer the walnut sauce to the onions in the pot, add the remaining pomegranate juice (3 cups), half of the roasted butternut squash (keep the other half for garnish), and the cilantro, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon to prevent the walnut from burning.
6. Taste the khoresh and adjust the seasoning. This khoresh should be sweet and sour: If too sweet, add extra pomegranate molasses; if too sour, add a little more grape molasses.
7. Cover and keep warm until ready to serve. Just before serving, garnish with the remaining butternut squash, pomegranate arils, and sprigs of cilantro. Serve hot with rice or quinoa. *Nush-e joon!*

