

A HOUSE IN THE LEBANESE MOUNTAINS: Recipes & Stories from Beit Trad
by Sarah Trad

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Excerpted from A House in the Lebanese Mountains, by Sarah Trad

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Yakhnet Fasouliya Aa'rida

HEARTY BEEF & WHITE BEAN STEW

This robust stew combines tender beef with creamy white beans in a rich tomato sauce, making it a filling meal that will satisfy any hearty appetite. Whether you use butterbeans or another large white bean variety, the key to this stew's deep flavors lies in proper seasoning and slow cooking. It's a perfect comfort dish for any season, and tastes even better if made a day or two ahead.

SERVES 4-6

9 oz dried large white beans or butterbeans
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 small onion
9 oz beef chuck steak (mawzat)
3 tablespoons neutral-flavored oil (such as canola)
1 tablespoon butter
3 tablespoons tomato paste
14 oz canned chopped tomatoes
1 chicken bouillon cube
2 teaspoons fine sea salt
½ teaspoon white pepper

TO SERVE

chopped parsley
Vermicelli rice (recipe below) or bread

FIRST, SOAK THE BEANS OVERNIGHT:

Place the dried beans in a large bowl and cover with twice their volume in water. Add 1 teaspoon baking soda and swish with your hand to combine. Leave to soak overnight, or for at least 8 hours.

TO BUILD THE STEW:

Finely chop 1 onion.

Chop 9 oz beef chuck steak into bite-sized chunks.

In a large pot, heat 3 tablespoons neutral oil and 1 tablespoon butter over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté for about 5 minutes, until translucent.

Add the beef and continue cooking over medium heat for about 10 minutes, until the meat is lightly browned on all sides.

Stir in 3 tablespoons tomato paste and cook for 3 minutes, until slightly caramelized.

Mix in 14 oz canned chopped tomatoes and cook for an additional 2 minutes.

Pour in 6 cups water and bring to a boil. Crumble in 1 chicken bouillon cube and let it dissolve. Cover the pot, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 1 hour, or until the meat becomes very tender.

TO PAR-BOIL THE BEANS:

While the stew is simmering, drain and rinse the beans.

Place the drained beans in a separate pot and cover with twice their volume in water. Add 1 teaspoon of the fine sea salt and bring to a boil.

Skim off any scum, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 35-45 minutes, until al dente. The beans should still have a bit of bite, as they will continue cooking in the stew.

TO FINISH THE STEW:

Drain the beans, then stir them into the stew. Continue cooking over low heat for about 15 minutes, or until the beans are tender.

Stir in ½ teaspoon white pepper and 1 teaspoon fine sea salt. Taste and adjust the seasoning as needed.

TO SERVE:

Garnish with parsley and enjoy warm, with vermicelli rice or your choice of bread.

Rezz b sha'riyeh

VERMICELLI RICE

A lot of people are intimidated by cooking rice, fearing it will end up gluggy, but if you follow our steps, it will be the easiest thing you can make at home.

The addition of vermicelli is typically Lebanese. In Lebanese homes, the toasted vermicelli is usually added in with the rice as it simmers away, so it ends up cooked like pasta. But at Beit Trad, inspired by my friend Maroun Salloum, we toast the vermicelli and scatter it over the cooked rice as a garnish just before serving, so it stays crispy.

SERVES 6 AS A SIDE

1 cup basmati rice
3 tablespoons neutral-flavored oil (such as canola)
1 oz vermicelli

½ teaspoon fine sea salt

TO RINSE THE RICE:

Place 1 cup basmati rice in a fine-meshed sieve and rinse under cold running water, swirling vigorously, until the water runs clear. Drain well.

TO TOAST THE VERMICELLI:

While the rice is draining, line a plate with paper towels.

In a non-stick pot with a lid, warm 2 tablespoons of the neutral oil over medium-low heat. Add 1 oz vermicelli and stir constantly for about 5 minutes, until the vermicelli is lightly golden brown.

Remove the toasted vermicelli using a slotted spoon and place on the paper towels to dry and crisp up.

TO COOK THE RICE:

Add the remaining 1 tablespoon neutral oil to the pot. Once hot, add the drained rice, stirring to coat each grain. Lightly toast for about 2 minutes, stirring often.

Pour in 1 ¼ cups water and add ½ teaspoon fine sea salt. Increase the heat to high and bring to a simmer. Put the lid on and reduce the heat to very low. Cook for 17 minutes without opening the lid.

After 17 minutes, check the rice. If there is still any water left, cover and cook for a few more minutes. If not, turn off the heat, cover again, and let the rice steam for 10 minutes.

TO SERVE:

Fluff the rice with a fork to avoid breaking the grains.

Transfer the cooked rice to a serving dish and serve warm, sprinkled with the crispy vermicelli for added texture and flavor.