



Ellie's mother tells her that this stew had been her father's favorite. The recipe is long, but it isn't hard to make, and it's a satisfying dish for a cold day, served over rice.

Ghormeh Sabzi Herb Khoresh (Beef and Split Pea Stew)

Makes 4 to 6 servings

½ cup yellow split peas

¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon olive oil or vegetable oil (divided)

1 large yellow onion, very finely chopped

Kosher salt

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1 pound beef (or lamb) stew meat, cut into ½-inch cubes

½ teaspoon black pepper

3 tablespoons good-quality tomato paste

1 (3-inch) cinnamon stick

Large pinch of saffron threads

Sugar, if needed

Lime juice or lemon juice, as needed

Crunchy shoestring potatoes for topping

Hot cooked basmati rice for serving

Start the stew: Place the split peas in a bowl and cover with 3 cups cold water. While they soak, bring 2 quarts water to a boil in a saucepan; keep at a lively simmer. In a large (5-quart) Dutch oven or similar pot, heat ¼ cup oil over medium heat. Add onion, give a quick stir to coat, and cook without stirring until onion starts to turn golden at the edges and decreases in volume, 6 to 8 minutes. Begin to stir frequently and keep cooking until mostly golden throughout, 4 to 6 minutes more.

Season the onion with a little salt, add turmeric and stir until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add meat, give a quick stir to coat with the onion mixture, spread evenly over the bottom of the pot and don't touch it for 1 minute. Then cook, stirring frequently, until meat is no longer pink, 2 to 3 minutes. Season with 2 teaspoons salt and the pepper. Adjust heat to medium-low and add tomato paste. Cook, stirring frequently, until tomato paste releases its color into the oil, 2 to 3 minutes. (This step is very important for the final hue of the stew.) Add the cinnamon stick, give a quick stir and pour in enough boiling water to cover the meat. (You'll use 2½ to 3 cups water; reserve the rest for later.) Bring to a boil, stir, cover, adjust heat to low and gently simmer, stirring once in a while, for 1 hour, until the meat is tender.

Meanwhile, prepare saffron water: Using a mortar and pestle (or a spice grinder), grind saffron to a fine powder (you will have a scant ¼ teaspoon). If needed, add a small pinch of sugar to the threads to help with grinding. Add 2 tablespoons of the boiled water, gently stir, cover and let steep until ready to use. (If using a spice grinder, transfer the powdered saffron to a small glass to steep.)

Par-cook the split peas: In a medium saucepan, heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil over medium heat. Drain the peas, transfer to the saucepan and cook, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes (avoid overcooking, which would toughen the peas). Cover with 4 cups of the boiling water and add 1 teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, adjust to a simmer, partially cover and cook, stirring occasionally while skimming off any foam, until peas are al dente, 10 to 15 minutes. Drain, rinse with cold water and set aside.

Add peas and simmer: After meat has simmered 1 hour, add the par-cooked split peas and 1 tablespoon of the saffron water to the stew, adjust heat to medium and return to a rapid simmer. Cover, adjust heat to low and simmer 30 to 40 minutes, until stew comes to life: The split peas are tender but maintain their shape, and the flavors have come together. As the stew simmers, taste for salt and adjust as needed.

Remove the cinnamon stick, stir in the remaining saffron water and add lime juice to taste, 1 tablespoon at a time. Cook 10 to 15 minutes more, until consistency of stew is not too thick and not too runny. (You should be able to spoon the sauce over rice.) Adjust as needed: Add just-boiled water to thin out a bit, or simmer uncovered to thicken. (Stew will also thicken as it sits.)

Transfer stew to a serving dish, scatter shoestring potatoes on top and serve with rice.

Note: Persian yellow split peas are available at Shirazi Market, 2864 N. Oakland Ave.

Adapted from <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1026340-khoresh-gheymeh-meat-and-split-pea-stew>