THE STIRRING LIFE

Bamya

Iraqi okra and beef stew, with rice and noodles

Grew up on Greek bamya. Married into Iraqi bamya. This is the Iraqi one.
Wash the okra until the water runs clear — that is the slime problem, solved

INGREDIENTS

The Bamya

- 2½–3 lb chuck roast, in chunks
- 2 lb okra
- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 10 cloves garlic, left whole
- 10 oz tomato paste
- 4 cups stock, plus more as needed
- Juice of 1 lemon, plus a little zest
- ¼–½ tsp citric acid, to taste
- 2 tsp salt, to taste

Rice with Noodles

- 2 cups rice, rinsed and drained
- 8 oz very fine noodles, broken up
- 1 stick butter
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 1½ Tbsp olive oil
- 1½ tsp salt

INSTRUCTIONS

The Bamya

1. Brown the beef. Brown the chunks, then cook them until tender. Keep that liquid — it is the stock the stew gets built on.
2. Wash the okra hard. Trim the ends and soak it through several changes of water until the water runs clear. Then cut into bite-size pieces.
3. Onion, then garlic. Olive oil in the pot. Soften the onion, then add the garlic cloves whole.
4. Cook the tomato paste. Stir it in and let it bubble and darken before any liquid goes near it.
5. Stock, then okra. Four cups of stock in, then the okra. Simmer until the okra is tender, adding stock as it needs it.
6. Lemon, acid, salt. Juice and zest of the lemon, then the citric acid and salt to taste. Return the beef and simmer it all together.

Rice with Noodles

1. Brown the noodles. Melt the butter and stir the noodles over medium heat until deep golden.
2. Toast the rice. Stir the rinsed, drained rice through the noodles.
3. Stock, salt, oil. All in together.
4. Low and covered. Reduce to low and cook 12 minutes or more, until tender.

The lemon and the citric acid are doing as much work on the slime as the washing is, so do not skip them. The Greek version of this adds honey and cinnamon. The Iraqi one does not need either.