THE STIRRING LIFE

Shorbat Burma

A grain and bean soup from Mosul, slow-cooked with lamb

Named for the burma, the soapstone pot it simmered in for centuries.
The original slow cooker. Soak everything the night before and the pot does the rest.

INGREDIENTS

The Soup

- 1½–2 lb lamb shanks on the bone (about 6 small)
- Water, to cover, plus stock as needed
- 1 cup shelled wheat, soaked overnight
- ½ cup red beans, washed and soaked overnight
- ½ cup brown lentils, washed and soaked overnight
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- Olive oil, for frying the onion
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground noomi basra (dried black lemon)
- 1 tsp salt, or to taste
- ¼–½ tsp black pepper
- Chopped parsley, to garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

The Soup

1. Brown the lamb. Sear the shanks on all sides.
2. Low and slow. Add enough water to cover and simmer gently about 1½ hours, until the meat is about to fall off the bone. Skim the foam from the top as it cooks.
3. Set the lamb aside. Lift out the shanks and keep the broth in the pot.
4. Red beans first. Drain all the soaked beans and grains. Add the red beans to the broth and simmer about 20 minutes.
5. Then the wheat. Add the shelled wheat and simmer about 30 minutes more.
6. Lentils last. They cook the fastest. Add them and simmer until everything is tender, adding stock as needed.
7. Fry the onion. Soften it in olive oil and stir it into the pot.
8. Back to the lamb. Pull the meat off the bone and return it to the pot. Season with the cumin, noomi basra, salt and pepper.
9. Finish. Serve topped with chopped parsley.

I snuck a bay leaf into the pot for a little extra aroma, but kept the card traditional. Add one if you like. No noomi basra? Use a squeeze of lemon juice instead. Adapted from the Grain and Bean Soup from Mosul in Nawal Nasrallah's Delights from the Garden of Eden, a recipe with roots in the 12th century.