

Taste of Morocco

Destined to delight, this *autumn vegetable tagine* adds a contemporary twist to a traditional favorite. **By Stacie Stukin**

Recipe

Serves 4

- 1 large (or 2 small) parsnips, scrubbed and rolled-cut into 1"-2" chunks
- 1 medium butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into chunks
- 6 tablespoons olive oil
- 1½ teaspoons sea salt
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons minced ginger (from about 1½" fresh peeled ginger root)
- 3 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1½ teaspoons ground turmeric
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (or to taste)
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 bay leaf
- 1½ cups diced tomatoes
- 2 cups vegetable stock (or water in a pinch)
- 1 can garbanzo beans, drained & rinsed
- 1 cup green beans, cut into 1" lengths
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro or parsley
- 1 cup millet, brown rice couscous, or grain of choice
- 1 lemon

The transition from the expansive vibrancy of summer into the more earthbound energy of early fall is the perfect time to take culinary advantage of the local harvest. Fresh tomatoes are still available at the farmers' market but grounding root vegetables start to make an appearance, along with sweet fleshy autumn squash. Why not gather up the bounty and make this slow simmered Moroccan vegetable tagine, courtesy of Chef Lee Gross, who fuses the science of macrobiotics and the palate of a global traveler for a contemporary seasonal diet showcased at the critically acclaimed M Café restaurants in the Los Angeles area.

Macrobiotics, a Japanese plant-based diet that eschews processed foods, animal products, and sugars, while emphasizing grains, beans, and seasonal vegetables, is also a philosophy rooted in traditional Oriental medicine. Explains Gross: "It's based on the idea that there is a flow of energy in the universe, and we have a chance to connect with and balance that energy at least three times a day when we sit down to eat."

With this contemporary vegetarian Moroccan-style tagine—traditionally, a meat-based stew braised slowly and cooked in a clay pot of the same name—Gross has taken macrobiotics beyond the Japanese-influenced brown rice and sea vegetable palate. The authentic Moroccan spices are rich in health benefits: turmeric and ginger are known for their anti-inflammatory properties, cinnamon helps control blood sugar, and cumin is thought to aid in digestion. Add to that the hearty protein and fiber of garbanzo beans, the antioxidants of tomatoes, and the potassium and vitamins A and C in butternut squash, and you've got a well-rounded, nourishing dish.

According to energetic principles in macrobiotics, this tagine gathers the *yang* (contractive) energy of the season through the root vegetables and balances it with the *yin* (expansive) energy of the spices. "There is a mindfulness that comes with macrobiotic cooking," explains Gross. "The whole study is really a practice, much like yoga, where you pay attention to your place in the natural world."

Macrobiotic sensibilities lift this vegetarian stew to new healthy heights.

