MOORISH CHICKEN AND NUT PIE

PASTELA MORUNA

This is one of my favorite recipes of all times, a swooningly good pie, clearly related to the Moroccan *bastila,* but not nearly as sweet, rich, and time-consuming. *Pastela moruna* is a specialty at many bakeshops in the bewitching Andalusian city of Granada, and local food historians like to say that the recipe was made by the Moorish aristocracy of the Alhambra palace and then kept alive in convents by nuns. Romantic as that sounds, it's more likely to have been borrowed from the city's sizeable North African community. Because I make *pastela* for every possible occasion, I've come to rely on store-bought rotisserie chicken for the filling. If you purchase the puff pastry, too, the pie is a cinch to make.

3 tablespoons olive oil, or more if needed
1 large onion, quartered and thinly sliced
1/2 cup chicken stock or broth, plus more for sprinkling on the onion
3 cups skinned chicken, torn into bite-size pieces (from 1 medium-size rotisserie chicken)
1 tablespoon sweet (not smoked) paprika
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
3/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon cayenne
2 plum tomatoes, chopped
1/3 cup dark raisins
Coarse salt (kosher or sea)
All-purpose flour, for dusting the work surface
2 sheets frozen puff pastry, thawed
1/4 cup lightly toasted pine nuts (see page 267)
1/4 cup lightly toasted slivered almonds (see page 267)
1 large egg yolk
1 1/2 teaspoons milk
Confectioners' sugar, for dusting the pie

1. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook until it begins to soften, 3 to 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and cook until the onion is very soft but barely browned, about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally and adding a little more olive oil and 1 to 2 teaspoons of the chicken stock if the skillet looks dry. Stir in the chicken and cook for 1 minute. Add the paprika, cumin, ginger, cinnamon, and cayenne and stir for a few seconds. Add the ½ cup chicken stock, the tomatoes, and raisins, cover the skillet, and cook for 12 to 15 minutes. The filling should be soft and moist; if it seems a little too wet, increase the heat to high for a few seconds so the liquid reduces. Season the filling with salt to taste and let it cool completely. The filling can be prepared up to a day ahead and refrigerated, covered.

2. Place an oven rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F. Lightly brush a 17- by 11-inch baking sheet with olive oil.

3. Lightly flour a work surface. Using a floured rolling pin, roll out 1 sheet of puff pastry to a roughly 18- by 12-inch rectangle. Transfer it to the oiled

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baking sheet. Roll out the remaining sheet of puff pastry to a rectangle that is slightly smaller than the first. Spread the filling evenly over the pastry on the baking sheet, leaving about 1 inch bare along each of the 4 edges. Sprinkle the pine nuts and almonds evenly on top. Cover the filling with the second pastry rectangle. Fold the edges of the bottom crust up over the top and crimp them decoratively.

4. Place the egg yolk and milk in a small bowl and whisk to mix. Brush the top of the pie with this egg wash. Using a sharp knife, make slits all over the top crust to allow steam to escape.

5. Bake the pie on the center rack until golden brown and baked through, 30 to 35 minutes. Let the pie cool until slightly warm or room temperature. Dust very lightly with confectioners' sugar, cut it into squares, and serve. **SERVES 12 AS A TAPA, 6 TO 8 AS A LIGHT MAIN COURSE**

TOASTING NUTS

Toasting nuts and seeds brings out their nuttiness and intensifies their flavor. If you're using nuts often, you can toast them in batches larger than you'll need for a single recipe and store them in an airtight container. To prevent nuts from turning rancid, I suggest keeping them on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator.

To skillet-toast almonds, pine nuts, or sesame seeds, heat a medium-size skillet without oil over medium heat (do not use a nonstick skillet for this). Add the nuts and cook them, stirring, until golden and fragrant, about 4 minutes for almonds, two minutes for pine nuts, and slightly less for sesame seeds.

To toast nuts in the oven (which is preferable for larger amounts), place them in a single layer in a small rimmed baking sheet. Bake in a 350°F oven until they're golden and fragrant, 5 to 8 minutes, shaking the pan once or twice. Do not let the nuts burn—start checking after about three minutes.

To toast and skin hazelnuts, place them in a single layer in a small rimmed baking sheet. Bake them in a 350°F oven until the skins are several shades darker and look blistered, about 10 minutes. Wrap the nuts in a kitchen towel and let them stand for about 5 minutes. Rub the nuts vigorously in the towel to loosen their skins, then discard the skins (don't worry if not all the skins come off).