

Sobaheg (Squash Stew) with Grilled Herring

Serves 5

1/2 cup dried beans (Anasazi beans or kidney style beans)
 5 whole herring
 1/2 cup coarse grits (course ground hominy)
 1/2 cup duck fat
 1 pound duck legs, cut into bite-sized pieces
 1 small acorn squash (or 2 cups any other winter squash) peeled and cut into bite-sized pieces
 1 cup cubed sunchokes (aka Jerusalem artichokes)
 5 cups chicken stock
 1 teaspoon kosher salt
 1/4 cup walnuts, chestnuts, or sunflower seeds, shelled and ground until powdery

1. The night before cooking the stew, empty your beans into a bowl, cover with a few inches of water, and let sit overnight.
2. Drain the soaked beans and gently rinse them, then transfer them to a large heavy stock pot or Dutch oven. Cover the beans with an inch of water and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Once boiling, reduce the heat to low and bring the beans to a simmer. Cover the pot and let cook for 1 to 2 hours, until the beans are mostly tender but still have some bite to them. Gently rinse and strain the beans in a colander and set aside.
3. Melt the duck fat in a second heavy stock pot over medium heat. Add the duck legs and cook for 3-4 minutes, turning, until browned on all sides.
4. Add the par-cooked beans, grits, salt, squash, sunchokes, and the chicken stock to the pot with the duck legs.
5. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil over medium heat. Cover the pot, reduce the heat, and keep the sobaheg at a low simmer. Cook for approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes, until the vegetables, beans and duck are tender, stirring often to prevent sticking. Periodically skim off the froth that rises to the top.
6. While the stew is cooking, season the herring with salt on both sides. Set a cast-iron grill pan over high heat and cook the herring for 3 to 5 minutes on each side, until the skin is crispy.
7. To finish: add the nut flour to the stew and stir until thoroughly blended. Serve the stew in bowls with one crispy herring on top of each bowl.

Recipe courtesy of National Museum of the American Indian's Chef Jerome Grant

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