



PERSIAN NOODLE AND HERB SOUP

ASH-E RESHTEH

SERVES 6

100g green lentils, rinsed
50g fresh coriander
50g fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
50g fresh dill leaves
40g fresh mint leaves
30g fresh chives
100g fresh spinach leaves
80g spring onions
3 tbsp olive oil
2 large red onions, finely chopped
5 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 tsp ground turmeric
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
60g chickpeas, soaked overnight, drained
60g pinto beans, soaked overnight, drained
2.25 litres vegetable stock
150g *reshteh* (see page 15) or udon noodle, broken into three equal pieces
Salt
150g *kashk* (see page 13), plus extra for topping (or blend 150g sour cream with 150g feta cheese to a paste in a food processor)

FOR THE TOPPINGS

(see page 91)
3 onions for crispy fried onion
6 large garlic cloves for crispy fried garlic
3 tbsp dried mint for fried mint
Vegetable and olive oil for frying

Ash-e reshteh is a thick soup traditionally cooked for Persian New Year and the noodles symbolize good fortune. However, these days it is hugely popular in Iran and is eaten all year round.

Soak the lentils in a bowl of water and set aside.

Finely chop all the herbs, spinach and spring onions, ideally in a food processor, and set aside.

Add the oil and onions to a large heavy-based pan and fry on a medium heat for 12 minutes or until the onions are soft and golden brown. Add the garlic and stir for 3 minutes. Add the turmeric and pepper and stir for 30 seconds.

Add the drained chickpeas, pinto beans and stock to the onions and bring to the boil. Turn the heat to the lowest setting, put the lid on and simmer for 2¼ hours.

Drain the lentils and add to the pan along with the chopped herbs, spinach and spring onions. Bring to the boil, then turn the

heat to the lowest setting, put the lid on and simmer for 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the toppings and set aside.

Add the noodles to the soup and stir well to ensure that the noodles do not stick together. (If the *ash* is too thick, add a little boiling water.) Bring to the boil, then turn down the heat, put the lid on and simmer for 15 minutes, stirring from time to time. Taste and add salt if needed.

Stir the *kashk* into the soup, then ladle it into a large serving bowl or individual bowls. Swirl some *kashk* on top (mix with a tablespoon of water if the *kashk* is too thick to swirl), followed by the fried mint (including the oil in which it was cooked), crispy fried onions and crispy fried garlic toppings.

Note

For a quicker version of this soup, use a 400g tin of chickpeas and a 400g tin of pinto beans (rinsed and drained), adding them to the *ash* with the noodles. Use 2 litres of vegetable stock instead of 2.25 litres. (You won't need to simmer for 2¼ hours.)