

# SLOW COOKER MIDDLE EASTERN STEW

## [VEGAN & GLUTEN FREE]

**Serves:** 6

**Prep:** 30-35mins

**Cooking Time:** about 4 hrs (\*On a high heat setting)

**Type:** Main Meal

**Tools:** Chopping board, sharp knife, colander, large/non-stick frying pan, frying spatula, large measuring jug, slow cooker

**Courtesy of:** Eat2Health Blog



*We love Middle Eastern flavours and combining them with 'slow cooking' sounded like a great idea to us! The result was a stew that is quickly becoming one of our favourites. It's full of flavourful and tender veggies that are ridiculously easy to prepare. Just combine a medley of Middle Eastern spices and flavourings, some traditional and perhaps less or non-traditional ingredients (creamy Charlotte potatoes anyone?!), and you are left with a delicious stew that just keeps tasting better and better as the days go on. Go on and serve up a bowl tonight!*

### Ingredients

3	Garlic Clove (16g)	400g	Tin Plum Tomatoes
200-300g	Red Onion	480g	Cooked Chickpeas (about 2 tins or 250g dried/cooked)
200g	Red Bell pepper		
300-400g	Charlotte Potatoes	50g	Dried Cranberries
400g	Aubergine	9-14g	Harissa Paste
30g	Pitted Black Olives (*optional)	10-15g	Lemon Paste
2 tbsp	Rapeseed Oil	160g	Frozen Spinach
	Middle Eastern Spice Blend*	200g	Frozen Green beans
	Salt & Ground Black Pepper		Fresh Parsley
800ml	Vegetable Stock (low salt/DF/GF)		
150ml	Water		

\* M. Eastern Spice Blend: 2g of each: Ground Cinnamon, Cumin & Mixed Spice Mix & 3g Crushed Sumac Berries

### Directions

1. Peel and finely chop the garlic and onion. Wash the bell pepper, remove its stem and core and then chop into ½-1 cm pieces. Wash and roughly chop the potatoes. Wash the aubergine, trim the top and then roughly chop it into bite-sized (or 1") pieces. Wash the olives and then roughly slice them (if using).
2. Heat 2 tbsp oil in a large, non-stick frying pan over a medium-low heat. **Tip: Need to reduce the fat? Use less oil or a low-fat cooking oil spray instead!** Add the garlic and onion. Gently fry for 1-2 mins or until softened. Add the bell pepper, potatoes and aubergine. Scatter over the **Middle Eastern spice blend** (2g of each: Ground Cinnamon, Cumin & Mixed Spice Mix & 3g Crushed Sumac berries). Season it with a pinch of salt and a few grinds of black pepper. Stir to coat in the spices. Gently fry for a further 4-5 mins. **Tip: If preferred, you can also cover the pan with a lid to help soften the vegetables.**

3. In the meantime, boil 950ml of water in a kettle. Prepare 800ml of vegetable stock according to the packet instructions.
4. Transfer the vegetable mixture into a slow cooker. Place the pan back over the heat. Add 2-3 tbsp of water. Swirl it around to help 'deglaze' the pan. Transfer this liquid into the slow cooker. Add the tin tomatoes, cooked chickpeas, 50g dried cranberries and black olives (if using), 9-14g tsp harissa paste and 10-15g lemon paste. Pour in 800ml vegetable stock and 150ml freshly boiled water. Stir together. Cover with a lid. Cook on a high heat setting for about 4 hours, or on a low heat setting for 7-8 hrs.
5. If preferred, steam or boil the green beans and spinach and add to them to the stew once it's finishing cooking. Alternatively, snap the green beans into halves. Defrost the beans and spinach. Roughly chop the cubes of spinach into smaller chunks. Add the defrosted beans and spinach into the slow cooker 30 mins before the end of cooking. Cover with a lid. Cook for a further 30-45 mins.
6. Serve warm. Ladle into a large bowl and garnish with a little fresh parsley. Serve with some flat bread or a small pitta (wholemeal, multi-grain, or GF, we'll let you decide!)

Enjoy!

*Tip: Refrigerate any leftover stew in an air-tight and resealable container; reheat and consume within 3-4 days. This stew is best served 'warm-hot' but never boiling. Alternatively, store and freeze; defrost, re-season (if preferred) and reheat within 1-2 months.*

## Notes:

- Preserved lemon paste is cheapish and economical (for us); we can easily adapt it into other recipes so the jar won't be left to collect ice crystals at the back of our fridge! We think that this lemon note is quite important; if you cannot find it or prefer not to buy it, try experimenting with a little lemon juice and a fair chunk of freshly ground lemon rind instead.
- To save time you can buy some harissa paste (like we have), or to save some money you can try making your own; [the Kitchn](#)'s version looks like a great (and tasty) place to start!
- We combined a few spices for our Middle Eastern spice blend, one being a mixed spice mix. Our 'ground mixed spice mix' contained: coriander seed, caraway seed, ginger, fennel seed, nutmeg, cloves and turmeric. There are various versions of 'mixed spice' but it's not the same as 'allspice'.
- This stew is quite fibrous, but you can always adapt it by using less veggies! Also keep the veggies as chunky or as small as desired (but for cooking ease, try to keep them as uniform as possible).
- As the stew's liquid is at a minimum/bowl, we wouldn't recommend adding 'grains' to it. It does however go very nicely with a small piece of flat bread or pitta!
- When looking for crushed sumac berries (it's also labelled as just 'ground sumac').