

Samak Mashwi
(Arabic Grilled Fish)

This recipe for barbecued fish with dates is from the Gulf States of the Arabian Peninsula. Red mullet or salmon would be good choices for the fish in this recipe.

Ingredients

(6) 12 oz. whole firm fish **or** (1) 4 1/2 to 5 lb. fish
2 large onions
2 garlic cloves
1 cup dried pitted dates
1 tsp. turmeric
1 Tbs. olive oil

1 1/2 tsp. *baharat* (see recipe below)

Utensils

knife and cutting board
measuring cup
measuring spoon
bowl
round toothpicks
blender **or** food processor
wire rack
paper towels
mixing bowl
large spatula
grill **or** barbecue
serving plate

Make the *baharat* (see recipe below). Place the dates in a bowl and cover them with cold water. Let the dates soak for 30 minutes or until they are soft. Gut and clean the cavities of the fish, but do not remove the scales, as they will keep the meat intact during the cooking process. The person at the seafood department can gut and clean the fish for you. Rinse out the cavities of the fish, pat them dry with a paper towel, and sprinkle with salt. Let the fish absorb the salt for at least 15 minutes. Soak the toothpicks in cold water. Peel and finely chop the onions. Peel and crush the garlic. Place the onions, garlic, and spices in a mixing bowl and add the olive oil. Mix well and stuff the cavities of the fish with the mixture. Close the cavities with the round toothpicks. Place the dates in the blender or food processor and process with just enough water to make a smooth paste. Spread the date paste on the outside of the fish and place the fish on the wire rack. Let the fish stand for at least 15 minutes. The dish can be prepared up to this point in advance. Heat the grill or get the charcoal to the glowing stage and place the fish over the heat. The

fish can also be broiled in a preheated oven. Cook 4 to 5 minutes, then, using a spatula, turn the fish over and cook for an additional 4 to 5 minutes. Remove the fish from the grill, barbecue, or oven and remove the skin along with the scales and date paste. Serve the fish hot.

For the *baharat*

Ingredients

1/2 cup black peppercorns
1/4 cup coriander seeds
1/4 cup cassia bark **or** 1/8 cup cinnamon

1/4 cup whole cloves
1/3 cup cumin seeds
2 tsp. cardamom seeds
1/4 cup ground nutmeg
1/2 cup ground paprika

Utensils

measuring cup
measuring spoons
blender or food
processor
airtight container

Place all the ingredients in a blender or food processor and process until all are the same powdery consistency. The *baharat* can be made in advance and stored in an airtight container. Makes 1 pint.