

3. KUBBA STEWS

Among the most well-known dishes of Iraqi cuisine are the *kubba* stews. (Again, “*kubba*” means “ball” or “patty”.) These are wonderful preparations, abundant with sauce and flavor, which have as their unifying feature the presence of small meatballs encased in semolina dough. These dumplings are called “*kubba*”, but do not confuse them with the fried “*kubba*” appetizers, to which they bear no resemblance. So celebrated are these *kubba* stews, in fact, that they have become exemplars of Iraqi cuisine. If a non-Iraqi knows one thing about Iraqi cooking, it typically is the *kubba* stew. “Does your mother make ‘*marak kubba*’ (‘*kubba* soup’, in Hebrew)?” is a question often asked of Iraqis in Israel. The fame of these dishes is well deserved – they are remarkable. The stews are themselves wonderful, and the semolina shells of the *kubba* absorb the distinct flavors of each of the stews, transforming their surrounding sauces while being transformed by them.

Another testament to the centrality of these dishes in Iraqi cuisine is that the method of making *kubba* has become something of a status symbol. There are many Iraqis who make the *kubba* by creating a solid semolina ball and poking a bit of meat into the center. But those families that practice the more time-consuming method of surrounding a nice-sized meatball with a thin semolina coating were considered to be of noteworthy breeding.

Kubba stews come in two categories: those that are slightly tangy from the addition of citrus, and those that are not. The first type is called “*hamudh*” (“sour”) and the second is misleadingly referred to as “*hulou*” (“sweet”). There are also two corresponding types of *kubba*: *kubba hamudh*, which goes into the tangy stews, and *kubba hulou*, which is for the non-tangy stews. A tradition in many Iraqi families is to make the *kubba hulou* round in shape, something like a ping-pong ball, and the *kubba hamudh* oblong, similar to a tiny football. It is important to remember that the adjectives “*hamudh*” and “*hulou*” describe the sauces that take the *kubba*, not the *kubba* themselves. This is a significant point because *kubba hamudh* is itself not in any way sour, while *kubba hulou* is spiced to be tangy. The contrast provides an exquisite balance – and some tension – to these wonderful stews.

The stews are excellent preparations in their own right, and can be made and served without *kubba*. Often, these stews have a counterpart that is made with chunks of meat (“*lahem*”) instead of *kubba*, and this is especially so with the *hamudh* stews. Or they may be served as vegetarian preparations. In the recipes provided below, each of these alternatives will be set forth, so that the chef can

choose a form best to fit the meal and the guests. The Iraqi tradition (other than with vegetarian preparations) is to use either *kubba* or chunks of meat in a given stew, but usually not both. However, Rachel often will combine chunks of meat and *kubba* in the same stew. The reason for this is that cooking the meat produces pan sauces beef stock that renders the stew richer, more complicated, and more sophisticated in the interplay of its flavors. Adding *kubba* to a stew so enhanced yields that much more rewarding a dish. To impress the most special guests and the most discerning palates, Rachel recommends using both meat chunks and *kubba* together, especially in the *hamudh* stews.

Regarding the *hamudh* / *hulou* distinction, these categories apply to many Iraqi dishes, not only *kubba* stews. Iraqi culinary tradition considers tangy sauces, whether of the *kubba* variety or not, to be more sophisticated than non-tangy sauces. For this reason, and also because tangy flavors are more potent on the palate, *hamudh* dishes are served after *hulou* dishes when a meal contains multiple courses. Although it would be unusual to serve two different *kubba* dishes in the same meal, it should be remembered that a *kubba hulou* dish should be served before any *hamudh* dish, and a *kubba hamudh* dish should be served after any *hulou* dish.

The *kubba* itself may be prepared long before one plans to use it. It can keep in a freezer for fairly long periods of time and can be added to a stew at any moment. Rachel always keeps a large bag of each type of *kubba* in her freezer, ready for use.

1. ***Kubba Hulou*** (*Kubba* for non-tangy (“sweet”) stews)

Examples of typical *kubba hulou* stews are *Kubba Qar’iyi* (squash or zucchini) and *Kubba Babinjaniyi* (eggplant). (Recipes for these follow below.)

Dough:

1 ½ cups dry cream of wheat or cream of farina
½ cup dry cream of rice or fine rice meal
1 tsp salt
1/5 lbs. chicken breast, very finely ground (if not smooth, blend in processor until paste)
1 cup water

Put cream of wheat, cream of rice, and salt in a bowl. Add water and immediately mix and kneed into a dough – it is very important to do this immediately. When everything is mixed well, add chicken and kneed until completely distributed. Set *kubba* dough aside.

Hashwa (Filling):

1 lbs. ground beef, extra lean (can use turkey instead)
2 large onions
1 tablespoon corn or canola oil
1 teaspoon salt (less if meat is kosher)
½ teaspoon pepper
⅓ tsp cayenne
½ teaspoon *Bharat*
1 ½ teaspoons *Numi Basra*

Put meat (or turkey) in a bowl. Use a food processor to chop onions finely, but not so finely so as to create a paste. Handful by handful, take chopped onions out of food processor and use both hands to squeeze over a sink. A lot of liquid should come out. Add the squeezed onions to the meat. Add oil, salt, pepper, cayenne, *Bharat*, and *Numi Basra* and knead together well until everything is evenly distributed.

Filling:

Place a bowl of tap water in close proximity, as you must keep your hands wet while handling the dough, otherwise it will stick. Tear even pieces from the dough and roll each into an acorn-size ball (slightly smaller than a walnut). Take one dough ball and place it in the palm of your hand. Using the thumb of the other hand, flatten the ball, beginning at the center and working the dough toward the outside, creating a flat disk. Once flattened, the disk should be quite thin, but not so thin that it begins to break. Take a small quantity of *hashwa*, about 1 teaspoon, round it with the fingers of your free hand, and place it in the middle of the disk. Bring the extremities of the disk up and around the meat, enveloping it. Work the dough so that it closes in an even layer around the meat. The result should be a walnut size ball. Lay the *kubba* on a tray lined with plastic wrap. Repeat until all the dough or all the *hashwa* finished. (If the dough finishes first, simply make round meatballs with the remainder of the *hashwa*.) Place tray in a freezer. When *kubba* is completely frozen, remove them from the tray and store in freezer in an airtight bag or container.

Yield: About 40 *kubba*, depending on size

2. ***Kubba Hamudh*** (*Kubba* for tangy (“sour”) stews)

Examples of typical *kubba hamudh* stews are *Kubba Bamia* (okra), *Kubba Shwandar* (beats), *Kubba Thumiyi* (fresh garlic), *Kubba Qar’ Hamudh* (squash or zucchini), and *Kubba Qar Ahmar* (pumpkin). (Recipes for these follow below.)

Dough:

1 ½ cups dry cream of wheat or cream of farina
½ cup dry cream of rice or fine rice meal
1 tsp salt
1/5 lbs. lean beef, very finely ground (if not smooth, blend in food processor until paste)
1 cup water

Put cream of wheat, cream of rice, and salt in a bowl. Add water and immediately mix and kneed into a dough – it is very important to do this immediately. When everything is mixed well, add meat and kneed until completely distributed. Set *kubba* dough aside.

Hashwa (Filling):

1 lbs. ground beef, extra lean
2 large onions
1 tablespoon corn or canola oil
1 teaspoon salt (less if meat is kosher)
½ teaspoon pepper
⅓ tsp cayenne
2 heaping tablespoons celery leaves (from top of celery root), finely chopped

Put meat in a bowl. Use a food processor to chop onions finely, but not so finely so as to create a paste. Handful by handful, take chopped onions out of food processor and use both hands to squeeze over a sink. A lot of liquid should come out. Add the squeezed onions to the meat. Add oil, salt, pepper, cayenne, and celery leaves, and kneed together well until everything is evenly distributed.

Filling:

Place a bowl of tap water in close proximity, as you must keep your hands wet while handling the dough, otherwise it will stick. Tear even pieces from the dough and roll each into an acorn-size ball (slightly smaller than a walnut). Take one dough ball and place it in the palm of your hand. Using the thumb of the other hand, flatten the ball, beginning at the center and working the dough toward the outside, creating a flat oval. Once flattened, the disk should be quite thin, but not so thin that it begins to break. Take a small quantity of *hashwa*, about 1 teaspoon, press it with the fingers of your free hand into an oblong shape, and place it in the middle of the oval, parallel to the oval's direction. Bring the extremities of the oval up and around the meat, enveloping it. Work the dough so that it closes in an even layer around the meat. The result should be an oblong-shaped object, about 2 inches long, fat in the middle and tapered toward the ends – much like a small football, but less fat in the middle and less pointed at the ends. Lay the *kubba* on a tray lined with plastic wrap. Repeat until all the dough or all the *hashwa* finished. (If the dough finishes first, simply make oblong-shaped meatballs with the remainder of the *hashwa*.) Place tray in a freezer. When *kubba* is completely fro-

zen, remove them from the tray and store in freezer in an airtight bag or container.

Yield: About 40 *kubba*, depending on size

3. ***Kubba Qur'iyi*** (*Kubba* stew with squash)
and ***Kubba Babinjaniyi*** (*Kubba* stew with eggplant) (***Hulou***)

These two dishes differ from one another only in the chief vegetable ingredient used; therefore, for ease of reference, the recipes are listed together. These dishes, like almost all Iraqi stews, are to be eaten over white rice. (See recipe for rice with *hkaka*.)

For *Kubba Qur'iyi*: 1 lbs. of zucchini, white squash, or opal squash (but do not mix different types), cut into cubes $\frac{3}{4}$ inches across (taste raw to ensure not bitter)

OR

For *Kubba Babinjaniyi*: 1 lbs. peeled eggplant, cut into cubes $\frac{3}{4}$ inches across (choose nice eggplant with few seeds, and taste it raw to ensure no bitterness)

ALL ELSE THE SAME FOR BOTH DISHES:

1 medium sized onion, finely chopped

3 very ripe and soft plumb tomatoes or 1 very large, ripe, soft tomato, peeled and cut into small chunks (as an alternative, can use $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. canned tomatoes)

2 heaping teaspoons tomato paste

3 tablespoons corn oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoons salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cayenne

If using *kubba*: 20-25 *kubba hulou* (20 if large, 25 if small)

If using meat only: $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. lean stew meat, cut into 1 inch cubes (can substitute turkey leg)

If using both: $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. lean stew meat, of a cut that is very soft and will almost disintegrate when cooked, cut into 1 inch cubes; 20-25 *kubba hulou* (20 if large, 25 if small)

If you are using meat: Put oil and meat into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the meat browns lightly. Add onions, pepper, and cayenne into the pot, and continue sautéing until the onions are soft and golden. Add 1 cup of water, cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low. Let cook until the meat is tender. If you will be using *kubba* in addition to meat, let the meat cook until it is almost dissolving (this effect requires the right cut of beef and you may need to use more water). Reduce until very little liquid remains.

If you are not using meat: Put oil, onions, pepper, and cayenne into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the onions are soft and golden.

Add tomato chunks (if using canned tomato, do not add the liquid from the can quite

yet), raise flame to medium, and sauté until the tomatoes are soft. Add 1 cup water (including the liquid from the can, if you are using canned tomatoes) and the main vegetable (zucchini/squash or eggplant, depending on which dish you are making) and cover. When the water begins to boil, lower flame to low. Let cook until the vegetable chunks are slightly soft – about 10-15 minutes for the zucchini/squash and about 5 minutes for the eggplant. Dissolve the tomatoes paste in 2 cups of water and add it into pot, together with the salt. Raise flame to medium, cover the pot, and bring to a boil. (If not using *kubba*, use only 1 cup of water, and after boiling, lower flame to low and skip next step.) Add the *kubba* to the pot, one at a time, submerging each below the surface of the liquid, as deep into the pot as possible (note, the *kubba* can be put in while frozen; no need to defrost). As soon as the liquid begins again to boil, lower the flame to low and agitate *kubba* with a spoon to make sure that they do not stick to each other. Cover and leave on a low flame 15 minutes until the broth has a good taste. Shut off flame. You may remove to serving dish and serve immediately; however, the taste is much better after it sits for a long period of time (especially if you are using *kubba*). Rachel recommends that you make this dish one or two days before you are ready to serve it. After it's ready, allow to cool, then refrigerate in the same pot for a day or two. When reheating, use the same pot: add a little bit of water, bring it to boil, and let it sit on low flame for a couple of minutes. Transfer to serving dish and serve. (Note, once *kubba* are cooked, they are delicate. Be very gentle when mixing or transferring contents.)

Yield: Seven average servings

4. ***Kubba Bamia / Bamia B'lahem*** (Stew with okra) (***Hamudh***)

This is perhaps the most famous of the Iraqi *kubba* stews. The unique taste of okra and the tanginess of lemon absorb into the semolina shells of the *kubba* to produce a rich and impressive flavor. The dish appears just as frequently in the non-*kubba* variant, with cubes of meat in the sauce, and this produces an even tastier broth. Iraqis typically did not use both meat cubes and *kubba* in the same dish, but as explained in the introduction to this section, meat cubes and *kubba* are not mutually exclusive, and Rachel recommends the use of both together.

This dish, like almost all Iraqi stews, is to be eaten over white rice. (See recipe for rice with *hkaka*.)

1 lbs. of fresh okra, washed very well
1 medium sized onion, finely chopped
3 cloves of garlic, finely diced
3 very ripe and soft plumb tomatoes (or 4, if small), peeled and cut into small chunks (as an alternative, can use ½ lbs. canned tomatoes)
1 heaping teaspoon tomato paste
Juice from ½ - 1 lemon (or *narunge*)

3 tablespoons corn oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 teaspoons salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cayenne

If using meat only: $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 lbs. lean stew meat, cut into 1 inch cubes (can substitute Turkey leg, cubed)

If using kubba: 20-22 *kubba hamudh* (20 if large, 22 if small)

If using both: $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. lean stew meat, of a cut that is very soft and will almost disintegrate when cooked, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cubes; 20-22 *kubba hamudh* (20 if large, 22 if small)

After washing okra, take each pod and cut off both its plant-like head and the very tip of its pointed end. Do this for each okra pod and set in a strainer so that excess water drains off.

If you are using meat: Put oil and meat into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the meat browns lightly. Add onions, garlic, pepper, and cayenne into the pot, and continue sautéing until the onions are soft and golden. Add 1 cup of water, cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low. Let cook until the meat is tender. If you will be using *kubba* in addition to meat, let the meat cook until it is almost dissolving (this effect requires the right cut of beef and you may need to use more water).

If you are not using meat: Put oil, onions, garlic, pepper, and cayenne into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the onions are soft and golden.

Add tomato chunks (if using canned tomato, do not add the liquid from the can together with the chunks, but keep the liquid aside), raise flame to medium, and sauté until the tomatoes are soft. Dissolve tomato paste in 2 cups of water (including the liquid from canned tomatoes, if using canned tomatoes) and add to pot, then add the okra.

If not using *kubba*, cover the pot, bring to a boil, and lower flame to low. Add lemon juice and salt, and stir. There should be a lot of liquid left; if not, add water together with lemon juice. Cover and let cook for 5-10 minutes, until the okra is soft but not mushy and the broth has a good taste. (If not sufficiently tangy, add lemon; if too sour, add some more salt.)

If using *kubba*, cover the pot and bring to a boil. As soon as it boils, add 1 cup of water, lemon juice, and salt. Cover pot and bring to a boil. As soon as it boils, add the *kubba* to the pot, one at a time, submerging each below the surface of the liquid, as deep into the pot as possible (note, the *kubba* can be added while frozen; no need to defrost). As soon as the liquid begins again to boil, lower the flame to low, and agitate *kubba* with a spoon to make sure that they do not stick to each other. Cover and let cook for about 10 minutes until the okra is soft but not mushy and the broth has a good taste. (If not sufficiently tangy, add lemon; if too sour, add some more salt.)

You may remove to a serving dish and serve immediately; however, the taste is much better after it sits for a period of time (especially if you are using *kubba*). Rachel recommends that you make this dish one or two days before you are ready to serve it. When it finishes cooking, allow it to cool, then refrigerate in the same pot for a day or two. When reheating, use the same pot: add a little bit of water and some more lemon juice (to taste), bring it to boil, and let it sit on a low flame for a few minutes. Transfer to a serving dish and serve. (Note, once *kubba* are cooked, the semolina shells become soft and delicate. Be very gentle when mixing or transferring contents.) Every time you reheat this dish, you will likely need to add some more lemon juice because the acid in the citrus is neutralized over time. The absorptive nature of the *kubba* shells enhances this process, so you will likely need to add more lemon if you are using *kubba* than you would to the non-*kubba* variant.

Yield: Seven average servings

5. ***Kubba Shwandar / Shwandar B'lahem*** (Stew with red beets) (***Hamudh***)

Also among the most famous of the Iraqi *kubba* dishes, this rich beet stew is unmistakable for its sweet and sour flavor and its deep red-maroon color. The dish is traditionally made with *kubba*, though again, one can make it with meat cubes instead or with both meat and *kubba*. All of these varieties are presented below.

This dish, like almost all Iraqi stews, is to be eaten over white rice. (See recipe for rice with *hkaka*.)

1 lbs. of fresh beets, weighed without the leaves, peeled and cut into thin slices

1 medium sized onion, finely chopped

Juice from ½ - 1 lemon

3 tablespoons corn oil

¾ - 1 teaspoons salt

½ teaspoons pepper

¼ - ½ tsp cayenne

If using meat only: ¾ - 1 lbs. lean stew meat, cut into 1 inch cubes (can substitute Turkey leg, cubed)

If using *kubba*: 20-22 *kubba hamudh* (20 if large, 22 if small)

If using both: ½ lbs. lean stew meat, of a cut that is very soft and will almost disintegrate when cooked, cut into ½ inch cubes; 20-22 *kubba hamudh* (20 if large, 22 if small)

If you are using meat: Put oil and meat into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the meat browns lightly. Add onions, pepper, and cayenne into the pot, and continue

sautéing until the onions begin to soften. Add 1 cup of water, cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low. Let cook until the meat is tender. If you will be using *kubba* in addition to meat, let the meat cook until it is almost dissolving (this effect requires the right cut of beef and you may need to use more water). Reduce until little or no liquid remains.

If you are not using meat: Put the oil, onions, pepper, and cayenne into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the onions begin to soften.

Put beets in pot and sauté on medium flame for another 4 or 5 minutes. Add 2 cups of water, cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low. Cook until beets are soft but not too soft.

If not using *kubba*: Add 1 cup of water, lemon juice, and salt. Raise flame to medium, cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low. Let cook for another 10-15 minutes, until the stew reduces to a good taste. (If not sufficiently tangy, add lemon; if too sour, add some more salt.)

If using *kubba*: Add 2 cups of water, lemon juice, and salt. Raise flame to medium, cover, and bring to boil. As soon as it boils, add the *kubba* to the pot, one at a time, submerging each below the surface of the liquid, as deep into the pot as possible (note, the *kubba* can be added while frozen; no need to defrost). As soon as the liquid begins again to boil, lower the flame to low, and agitate *kubba* with a spoon to make sure that they do not stick to each other. Cover and let cook for another 10-15 minutes until the stew reduces to a good taste. (If not sufficiently tangy, add lemon; if too sour, add some more salt.)

You may remove to a serving dish and serve immediately; however, the taste is much better after it sits for a period of time (especially if you are using *kubba*). Rachel recommends that you make this dish one or two days before you are ready to serve it. When it finishes cooking, allow it to cool, then refrigerate in the same pot for a day or two. When reheating, use the same pot: add a little bit of water and some more lemon juice (to taste), bring it to boil, and let it sit on a low flame for a few minutes. Transfer to a serving dish and serve. (Note, once *kubba* are cooked, the semolina shells become soft and delicate. Be very gentle when mixing or transferring contents.) Every time you reheat this dish, you will likely need to add some more lemon juice because the acid in the citrus is neutralized over time. The absorptive nature of the *kubba* shells enhances this process, so you will likely need to add more lemon if you are using *kubba* than you would to the non-*kubba* variant.

Yield: Seven average servings

6. ***Kubba Thumiya / Thum B'lahem*** (Stew with fresh garlic stalks) (*Hamudh*)

This delightful seasonal dish can only be made when fresh garlic stalks are available. These are green stalks, resembling scallions, at the base of which lie the familiar heads of garlic that are typically removed and dried. If you can find fresh garlic, then this dish will provide a rare and memorable treat.

This dish, like almost all Iraqi stews, is to be eaten over white rice. (See recipe for rice with *hkaka*.)

2 or 3 large stalks of fresh garlic
1 medium sized onion, finely chopped
5 very ripe and soft plumb tomatoes, peeled and cut into small chunks (as an alternative, can use 1 lbs. canned tomatoes)
1 heaping teaspoon tomato paste
Juice from ½ - 1 lemon (or narunge, preferable)
¼ - ½ bunch fresh mint leaves, very well washed, torn or cut slightly into coarse pieces
3 tablespoons corn oil
¾ - 1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoons pepper
¼ - ½ teaspoon cayenne
If using meat only: ¾ - 1 lbs. lean stew meat, cut into 1 inch cubes
If using *kubba*: 20-22 *kubba hamudh* (20 if large, 22 if small)
If using both: ½ lbs. lean stew meat, of a cut that is very soft and will almost disintegrate when cooked, cut into ½ inch cubes; 20-22 *kubba hamudh* (20 if large, 22 if small)

Prepare the fresh garlic by cutting off the very tips of the stalks (which are often dry and hard), and finely chop the entire stalk, both the white and the green parts.

If you are using meat: Put oil and meat into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the meat browns lightly. Add onions, garlic, pepper, and cayenne into the pot, and continue sautéing until the onions are soft and golden. Add 1 cup of water, cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low. Let cook until the meat is tender. If you will be using *kubba* in addition to meat, let the meat cook until it is almost dissolving (this effect requires the right cut of beef and you may need to use more water).

If you are not using meat: Put oil, onions, garlic, pepper, and cayenne into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the onions are soft and golden.

Add tomatoes to the pot (but if using canned tomatoes, do not add the liquid from the can just yet) and sauté on medium flame until the tomatoes are soft.

If not using *kubba*, dissolve tomato paste into 1 cup of water (including the liquid from the can, if you are using canned tomatoes) and add to pot together with the lemon juice

and salt. Cover, keep flame on medium, and bring to boil. Add the mint leaves, stir, lower flame to low, and cover. Let cook for 10-15 minutes, until the stew has a good taste. (If not sufficiently tangy, add lemon; if too sour, add some more salt.)

If using *kubba*, dissolve tomato paste into 2 cups of water (including the liquid from the can, if you are using canned tomatoes) and add to pot together with the lemon juice and salt. Cover, keep flame at medium, and bring to boil. Add *kubba* to the pot, one at a time, submerging each below the surface of the liquid, as deep into the pot as possible (note, the *kubba* can be added while frozen; no need to defrost). As soon as the liquid begins again to boil, add mint leaves, lower the flame to low, and agitate *kubba* with a spoon to make sure that they do not stick to each other and also to mix in the mint leaves. Cover and let cook for about 10-15 minutes until the stew has a good taste. (If not sufficiently tangy, add lemon; if too sour, add some more salt.)

You may remove to a serving dish and serve immediately; however, the taste is much better after it sits for a period of time (especially if you are using *kubba*). Rachel recommends that you make this dish one or two days before you are ready to serve it. When it finishes cooking, allow it to cool, then refrigerate in the same pot for a day or two. When reheating, use the same pot: add a little bit of water and some more lemon juice (to taste), bring it to boil, and let it sit on a low flame for a few minutes. Transfer to a serving dish and serve. (Note, once *kubba* are cooked, the semolina shells become soft and delicate. Be very gentle when mixing or transferring contents.) Every time you reheat this dish, you will likely need to add some more lemon juice because the acid in the citrus is neutralized over time. The absorptive nature of the *kubba* shells enhances this process, so you will likely need to add more lemon if you are using *kubba* than you would to the non-*kubba* variant.

Yield: Seven average servings

7. ***Qar' Hamudh / Kubba Qar' Hamudh*** (Stew with squash) (***Hamudh***)

This exquisite stew is striking in its flavors: intriguing hints of mint combine with the tanginess of lemon and the delicate sweetness of squash to produce a wonderfully complex, sophisticated, and refreshingly light dish. Even palates less accustomed to exotic tastes will be won over by this delightful preparation.

The stew is most often made with cubes of meat instead of *kubba*, which is why the name "*Qar' Hamudh*" appears first in the title. The reason might be that Iraqis typically did not use both meat cubes and *kubba* in the same dish, and this dish is so sophisticated that it seems to crave the richness imparted by sautéing and cooking meat as part of the sauce. As explained in the introduction to this section, however, meat cubes and *kubba* are not mutually exclusive, and the cook should feel free either serving the traditional *Qar' Hamudh*, or adding *kubba* to produce *Kubba Qar' Hamudh*.

This dish, like almost all Iraqi stews, is to be eaten over white rice. (See recipe for rice with *hkaka*.)

- 1 ½ lbs. of zucchini, white squash, or opal squash (but do not mix different types), cut into thick half rounds (taste raw to ensure not bitter)
- 1 medium sized onion, finely chopped
- 2-3 cloves of garlic, finely diced
- 3 very ripe and soft plumb tomatoes (or 4, if small) peeled and cut into small chunks (as an alternative, can use ½ lbs. canned tomatoes)
- 1 flat teaspoon tomato paste
- Juice from ½ - 1 lemon
- ¼ - ½ bunch fresh mint leaves, very well washed, torn or cut slightly into coarse pieces
- 2 ½ tablespoons corn oil
- ¾ - 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoons pepper
- ¼ - ½ teaspoon cayenne
- If using meat only: ¾ - 1 lbs. lean stew meat, cut into 1 inch cubes
- If using *kubba*: 20-22 *kubba hamudh* (20 if large, 22 if small)
- If using both: ½ lbs. lean stew meat, of a cut that is very soft and will almost disintegrate when cooked, cut into ½ inch cubes; 20-22 *kubba hamudh* (20 if large, 22 if small)

If you are using meat: Put oil and meat into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the meat browns lightly. Add onions, garlic, pepper, and cayenne into the pot, and continue sautéing until the onions are soft and golden. Add 1 cup of water, cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low. Let cook until the meat is tender. If you will be using *kubba* in addition to meat, let the meat cook until it is almost dissolving (this effect requires the right cut of beef and you may need to use more water). Cook until no more water remains.

If you are not using meat: Put oil, onions, garlic, pepper, and cayenne into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the onions are soft and golden.

Add tomatoes to the pot (but if using canned tomatoes, do not add the liquid from the can just yet) and sauté on medium flame until the tomatoes are soft.

Dissolve tomato paste in 1 cup of water (including the liquid from the can, if using canned tomatoes) and add to pot, then add the squash. Cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low.

If not using *kubba*: Let the squash cook until it is slightly soft. Add lemon juice, salt, and mint leaves, and stir. There should be a fair amount of liquid left to the stew; if not, add some water together with lemon juice. Cover and let cook for another 5 minutes. (If not sufficiently tangy, add lemon; if too sour, add some more salt.)

If using *kubba*: Let the squash cook until it begins to soften, then add 1 cup of water, lemon juice, and salt. Raise flame to medium, cover pot, and bring to boil. Add the *kubba* to the pot, one at a time, submerging each below the surface of the liquid, as deep into the pot as possible (note, the *kubba* can be added while frozen; no need to defrost). As soon as the liquid begins again to boil, add mint leaves, lower the flame to low, and agitate *kubba* with a spoon to make sure that they do not stick to each other and also to mix in the mint leaves. Cover and let cook for about 10-15 minutes until the broth has a good taste. (If not sufficiently tangy, add lemon; if too sour, add some more salt.)

You may remove to a serving dish and serve immediately; however, the taste is much better after it sits for a period of time (especially if you are using *kubba*). Rachel recommends that you make this dish one or two days before you are ready to serve it. When it finishes cooking, allow it to cool, then refrigerate in the same pot for a day or two. When reheating, use the same pot: add a little bit of water and some more lemon juice (to taste), bring it to boil, and let it sit on a low flame for a few minutes. Transfer to a serving dish and serve. (Note, once *kubba* are cooked, the semolina shells become soft and delicate. Be very gentle when mixing or transferring contents.) Every time you reheat this dish, you will likely need to add some more lemon juice because the acid in the citrus is neutralized over time. The absorptive nature of the *kubba* shells enhances this process, so you will likely need to add more lemon if you are using *kubba* than you would to the non-*kubba* variant.

Yield: Seven average servings

8. ***Qar' Ahmar / Kubba Qar' Ahmar*** (Stew with pumpkin) (***Hamudh***)

This dish is very similar to *Qar' Hamudh* (see introductory description to that dish), and also typically appears with meat and no *kubba*. The only difference is that there is no garlic or mint in this dish, and slightly more lemon, to compensate for the sweetness of the pumpkin.

This dish, like almost all Iraqi stews, is to be eaten over white rice. (See recipe for rice with *hkaka*.)

- 1 ½ lbs. of pumpkin, cut into cubes $\frac{3}{4}$ inches across (taste raw to ensure not bitter)
- 1 medium sized onion, finely chopped
- 3 very ripe and soft plumb tomatoes (or 4, if small) peeled and cut into small chunks (as an alternative, can use ½ lbs. canned tomatoes)
- 1 flat teaspoon tomato paste
- Juice from 1 lemon
- 2 ½ tablespoons corn oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoons salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cayenne

If using meat only: $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 lbs. lean stew meat, cut into 1 inch cubes

If using kubba: 20-22 *kubba hamudh* (20 if large, 22 if small)

If using both: $\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. lean stew meat, of a cut that is very soft and will almost disintegrate when cooked, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cubes; 20-22 *kubba hamudh* (20 if large, 22 if small)

If you are using meat: Put oil and meat into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the meat browns lightly. Add onions, pepper, and cayenne into the pot, and continue sautéing until the onions are soft and golden. Add 1 cup of water, cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low. Let cook until the meat is tender. If you will be using *kubba* in addition to meat, let the meat cook until it is almost dissolving (this effect requires the right cut of beef and you may need to use more water). Cook until no more water remains.

If you are not using meat: Put oil, onions, pepper, and cayenne into a large pot and sauté on medium flame until the onions are soft and golden.

Add tomatoes to the pot (but if using canned tomatoes, do not add the liquid from the can just yet) and sauté on medium flame until the tomatoes are soft.

Dissolve tomato paste in 1 cup of water (including the liquid from the can, if using canned tomatoes) and add to pot, then add the pumpkin. Cover, bring to boil, and lower flame to low.

If not using *kubba*: Let the pumpkin cook until it is slightly soft. Add lemon juice and salt, and stir. There should be a lot of liquid left; if not, add water together with lemon juice. Cover and let cook for another few minutes. (If not sufficiently tangy, add lemon; if too sour, add some more salt.)

If using *kubba*: Let the pumpkin cook until it begins to soften, then add 1 cup of water, lemon juice, and salt. Raise flame to medium, cover pot, and bring to boil. Add the *kubba* to the pot, one at a time, submerging each below the surface of the liquid, as deep into the pot as possible (note, the *kubba* can be added while frozen; no need to defrost). As soon as the liquid begins again to boil, lower the flame to low, and agitate *kubba* with a spoon to make sure that they do not stick to each other. Cover and let cook for another few minutes until the broth has a good taste. (If not sufficiently tangy, add lemon; if too sour, add some more salt.)

You may remove to a serving dish and serve immediately; however, the taste is much better after it sits for a period of time (especially if you are using *kubba*). Rachel recommends that you make this dish one or two days before you are ready to serve it. When it finishes cooking, allow it to cool, then refrigerate in the same pot for a day or

two. When reheating, use the same pot: add a little bit of water and some more lemon juice (to taste), bring it to boil, and let it sit on a low flame for a few minutes. Transfer to a serving dish and serve. (Note, once *kubba* are cooked, the semolina shells become soft and delicate. Be very gentle when mixing or transferring contents.) Every time you reheat this dish, you will likely need to add some more lemon juice because the acid in the citrus is neutralized over time. The absorptive nature of the *kubba* shells enhances this process, so you will likely need to add more lemon if you are using *kubba* than you would to the non-*kubba* variant.

Yield: Seven average servings