MOROCCAN

Beef Tagine with Prunes

COMPLEXITY	SERVES	PREP	COOK	TECHNIQUE	CUT
Involved	**6**	**20 min**	**2 hr 30 min**	**Braise**	**Blade & cross rib roast**

Ingredients

- 1.2 kg (2½ lb) blade or cross rib roast, cut into 4 cm (1½ in) cubes
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 onions, grated or very finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon, plus 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp saffron threads, crushed and steeped in 2 tbsp warm water
- 1½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 500 ml (2 cups) water
- 250 g (9 oz) pitted prunes
- 2 tbsp honey
- 40 g (¼ cup) blanched almonds, toasted
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds, toasted
- ½ lemon, for finishing
- Chopped cilantro, to serve

Steps

1. Heat the oil in a wide heavy pot or tagine base over medium heat. Add the onions and cook for 8 minutes, stirring, until soft and pale gold.
2. Stir in the garlic, ginger, ground cinnamon, turmeric, cumin, salt and pepper for 1 minute.
3. Add the beef and turn it to coat in the spices. Cook for 5 minutes. There is no hard sear here; the onions and spices form the base of the sauce.
4. Pour in the water and saffron liquid, and add the cinnamon stick. Bring to a bubble, then cover and braise over low heat for 1½ hours.
5. Add the prunes and honey, and cook uncovered for 30 to 40 minutes. The beef should be tender, the prunes plump and the sauce reduced to a syrupy gravy.
6. Taste: it should be sweet, savoury and warmly spiced. Add a squeeze of lemon or a pinch of salt as needed.
7. Remove the cinnamon stick, scatter with the almonds, sesame seeds and cilantro, and serve.

Notes

- **Serving:** with couscous or crusty bread to scoop up the sauce.
- **Oven option:** cook the covered pot at 160°C (325°F), checking liquid at 1 hr.
- **Apricots:** swap in dried apricots for the prunes for a brighter, tarter finish.
- **Slow cooker:** cook the onions and spices as written, then low 7–8 hr or high 4 hr with only 250 ml (1 cup) water. Add the prunes and honey for the last 30 minutes, lid off.

- **Freezer:** freezes for up to 3 months without the almonds and sesame. Thaw overnight in the fridge and reheat until steaming hot.
- **Chef's touch:** rest the tagine 10 minutes off the heat before serving; the sauce settles into a glossy syrup.