

Pork Stew with Sweet & Hot Peppers from the Abruzzo

by Joyce Goldstein

Italian Slow and Savory

The Abruzzese of Italy love hot peppers and delight in food that has a bit of a kick. In this rich pork stew, called spezzatino di maiale all'abruzzese, red bell peppers add sweetness and balance the heat. Some versions of this recipe use chopped rosemary instead of fennel seed.

INGREDIENTS

6 tablespoons olive oil, plus extra as needed
2 pounds boneless pork shoulder, cut into 1½-inch cubes
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 cup dry red wine
1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
5 garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon fennel seeds, toasted and crushed
1 fresh hot chile pepper (jalapeño or serrano), chopped, or ½ teaspoon chile pepper flakes, plus more as needed
One 28-ounce can crushed plum tomatoes with juice
2 large red bell peppers, cut into large dice
Red wine vinegar (optional)

DIRECTIONS

In a skillet or large sauté pan, heat 4 tablespoons of the olive oil over high heat. Working in batches, brown the pork on all sides, adding more olive oil, as needed and seasoning with salt and black pepper as you turn the meat. Each batch should take 8 to 10 minutes. When a batch is ready, use a slotted spoon to transfer the pieces to the tagine. Deglaze the pan with about one-half the wine and pour the juices over the meat.

In a skillet or sauté pan, warm the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat and add the onion. Sauté for about 10 minutes, until very soft. Add the garlic, fennel seeds, and chile pepper and cook for 3 minutes longer. Add the remaining wine and the tomatoes and simmer for a few minutes to blend the flavors. Transfer the sauce to the tagine along with the pork and its juices. Add the bell peppers, raise the heat to medium, and bring to a gentle boil. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 1 to 1 ½ hours, until the pork is meltingly tender.

Serves 6