



Qrchik – Fermented Cabbage Soup

Country of origin: Armenia

Ingredients

2 cups fermented cabbage,* core removed (or store-bought pickled cabbage), rinsed, drained and chopped

1-2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced into 2cm pieces

2 cloves garlic, finely diced

1-2 medium white or brown onions, diced

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon tomato paste or 2-3 tablespoons tomato sauce (no added salt or reduced salt)

1 teaspoon sweet mild paprika

¼ teaspoon dried chilli (optional)

2/3 cup bulgur wheat (use quinoa for gluten free option)

6-7 cups boiling water

½ teaspoon ground black pepper

2 teaspoons dried parsley

½ teaspoon dried thyme

½ teaspoon dried dill

2 tablespoons plain flour (use corn starch for gluten free option)

1 teaspoon salt (for health reasons you may choose to reduce or eliminate salt)

5 stems fresh parsley, chopped

2-3 stems fresh dill, chopped

2 stems fresh thyme, chopped

“Qrchik Soup is an Armenian fermented soup and is common in mountainous areas up to 1800 m above sea level.

This soup can be made all year round, however in Armenia it is popular in late autumn or winter. It is a comfort soup.

Preparation undertaken in autumn including pickling vegetables, grinding wheat, drying fruits and making preserves meant that meals could be made throughout the harsh winter from goods in the cellars.

Families gathered around the fire for bonding time and to share nutritious meals like this and many others.”

Optional Garnish

Fresh parsley, coriander, dill or fennel leaves

Croutons

Crispy fried shallots

Fried flat pancetta pieces

*See recipe for fermented cabbage



Method

1. Soak the bulgur wheat in cold water to soften.
2. In a medium stock pot sauté the onions in olive oil over medium heat. As the onion turns translucent, add paprika. Add chopped garlic and cook, stirring for 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Add tomato paste and continue to stir. Add flour and stir for another 2 to 3 minutes.
4. Add ½ -1 cup of boiling water and keep stirring to have an even consistency, then slowly add the remaining water and continue stirring.
5. Add fermented cabbage to the pot, stir and cook for 5 minutes.
6. Add potatoes, stir and cook for 10 minutes.
7. Add bulgur wheat (or quinoa). Partially cover the pot with the lid and simmer until potatoes are cooked, 10 to 15 minutes. Stir from time to time as cabbage and bulgur can stick to the bottom of the pot.
8. Once the potatoes are cooked, turn off the heat and let soup sit for 15 minutes. Add fresh parsley, dill and thyme. Add dried chilli (optional), black pepper and mixed dried herbs (parsley, dill and thyme).
9. Taste soup and season with salt if required (*for health reasons you may choose to reduce or eliminate salt, try adding a pinch at a time*). Remember that if you add pancetta it is salty.
10. Ladle soup into bowls and garnish with pancetta and shallots (optional), fresh herbs or croutons.

GARNISH TIPS

For the pancetta garnish; remove excess fat from 100g of pancetta and chop into pieces. Fry in a frypan without oil until cooked, then drain on paper towel.

For the fried shallots garnish; thinly slice one or two shallots and fry in a small amount of olive or canola oil until crispy, then drain on paper towel.