

# AZDAY



Culinary Heritage from At Willul





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# Dedication

To our mothers who showed us how to write this book.  
To the women and men who kept our culture alive and thriving.



# Acknowledgement

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All Photos/Pictures by Bashir Nannis, Ibran Illustration by Refael Scialom, Cover Illustration and page 4 by Bjørn Ihler



Azday is a project to document the culinary heritage of the Amazigh kitchen in the region of At Willul ‘ⵜⴰⵏⵏⵉⵙⴰⵏⵉⵏ ⵏ ⵏⵓⵔ ⵏ ⵏⵓⵔ ⵏ ⵏⵓⵔ’ located in the extreme North Western Libya. For this booklet, we chose to focus on one of the staple diets of this community: couscous.

This is more than a recipe book. It tells the stories of dishes that have passed through generations and have been cooked and eaten for hundreds of years.

To ensure that those dishes, the traditions, and the mythologies that surround them do not disappear, 15 Amazigh elders were asked to recount their memories. Their stories have been echoed in the pages of this booklet.

This book was prepared and written by an Amazigh team from Zuwara: Ismail Abudeeb, Amwaj Nanis and Rowida Almalti.

At Willul is used in this book interchangeably to reference both the people and the region.

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# Introduction

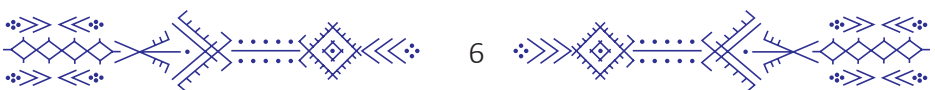
Couscous is an Amazigh staple food consisting of small grains made out of wheat or barley. The etymology originates from the Tamazight language, and it is derived from the phrase meaning, ‘small pieces’. Couscous serves as a base for a variety of dishes also known as couscous.

The Amazigh people are distinguished for the multitude of their dishes. The couscous dish, depending on the occasion, season or time of day, takes many forms. This dish has been prepared and cooked for centuries and has often been viewed as a marker of abundance.

Partly due to the hostile political environment towards the indigenous Amazigh people, a significant portion of both Libya and North Africa have been deprived of archaeological research and exploration over the last 70 years. As a result, few Amazigh artefacts and ancestral practices have been documented or preserved. Sadly, this is particularly true for Amazigh culinary heritage. One of the only Amazigh artefacts ever discovered was a clay pot used to steam couscous, known as Akeskas ‘ $\bullet\text{K}\ominus\text{K}\bullet\ominus$ ’. It was found in Libya and is dated to the late neolithic era.

The first possible literary mention of a couscous dish was made in the anonymous thirteenth-century cookery book ‘Kitāb al-ṭabīkh fī al-Maghrib wa’l-Āndalus’. Additionally, there is a recipe from Marrakesh, alcuscus fitīyānī. Written accounts of the couscous in antique texts show the diversity of dishes, and highlight its widespread across North Africa.

This booklet documents the various forms of couscous, as well as the utensils used for its preparation. The insights in the pages that follow come from At Willul in the extreme North West of Libya. This region has seen a multitude of territorial changes over the past centuries due to colonialism, and is currently confined to a coastal strip of about sixty miles in the west of Libya. The city of Zuwara is its largest population centre.



## The Term Couscous

Couscous, as known in At Willul region and Tamazight language, has two meanings in the culinary context. The first meaning is the half-cooked staple couscous, while the second refers to the dishes made from said staple. In this book, whenever you find the word couscous without an adjective it refers to the half-cooked staple couscous. When linked with another ingredient or adjective, it refers to a certain dish.



## Couscous in the Amazigh culture

Couscous meals are cooked as part of the average weekly diet, and for special occasions. They are often accompanied with rituals and traditions, in this section we will share some of those traditions specific to At Willul.

One such occasion is Ashura, a day that corresponds with the ninth day of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic lunar calendar.

The significance and reverence of Ashura varies between Muslim denominations. The Amazigh people of At Willul are predominantly Ibadi Muslims, a group belonging to neither of the two major denominations of Islam, Sunni and Shiaa. On this day, Ibadi people of At Willul, and elsewhere in North Africa, commemorate the liberation of the people of Israel and their journey to the promised land.

For two days prior to Ashura observant Ibadis eat one dish of Essesran, a stew of mixed beans, for two consecutive lunches and dinners. They refrain from eating



any lavish meals in homage to the forty years spent in the desert by the people of Israel, in accordance with Islamic traditions. On the third day they celebrate the arrival to the promised land by making couscous.

Couscous dishes are associated with abundance and good fortune. This is even true for couscous grains themselves. The plain half cooked form of couscous is used ceremoniously in certain rituals as an omen of abundance. One of the Amazigh New Year, (January 13), celebration rituals sees a few grains of couscous scattered in each corner of a house's living room and yard. If the yard or its garden has an ant colony, a few grains are expected to be scattered near its entrance. Ants are perceived by the At Willul as pure and blessed. Traditionally, this task is carried out by the eldest female member of the household.

Staying within the Amazigh New Year traditions, another ritual associated with the New Year's feast is made during the night of celebration, and typically includes a couscous dish. Amazigh traditions indicate that throughout the night spirits of Amazigh ancestors visit the houses of all their descendants. All the pots used to prepare and present the feast, including those used for the couscous, will be left in the kitchen overnight without being washed. The visiting ancestral spirits, (a merit), can see that their descendants had an abundance of food in the past year, and that some was used to keep the tradition alive. A merit makes that household worthy of the ancestors' Tanemmirt, (a form of blessing). This ritual can be replicated whenever a major feast is held by the household, and is viewed as a form of continued ancestral connection.

Continuing with celebrations and traditions, couscous with lamb is also cooked on the 40th day after the birth of a new child. On this day, the infant is officially presented to the extended family. This specific celebratory couscous meal represents the wish for abundance upon the new family member.

Most of the couscous dishes in this booklet can be made any day of the year depending on the availability of key ingredients. However, some forms of couscous are made less and less frequently in the everyday lives of the Amazigh community and remain present only as part of certain rituals. One such example is Boulettout 'ⵜⴰⵍⴰⵏⵏⴰⵢⵏⵉⵔ', a particular couscous dish made of larger grains, which is only made today during a wedding ceremony.

Nowadays, the wedding ceremony of At Willul consists of two simultaneous





events. The bride, her family, and friends have one celebration, while the groom, his family and friends have another, both spanning several days. On certain occasions, the groom's party sends a procession to the bride's. The celebrations retain intricately complex and culturally rich rituals that can be dated back a few millennia.

The dish Boulettout is made twice during the wedding.

First, at the bride's party on the second night of the wedding, which traditionally falls on a Thursday night. As the party awaits the procession, Boulettout is prepared and put in a large bowl called Taziwa '٤.✱ΞΠ.◊'. Once the procession arrives at the bride's house tradition sees this bowl presented to the eldest female relative of the bride, who is asked to bring it to the groom's party. Once she arrives, she hands the bowl to the groom's mother who then uncovers it in the middle of the house and presents the dish. The unmarried women attending the party flock to eat from one side of the bowl, and the other side is given to the unmarried men. According to tradition, the men and women eating the Boulettout will be marrying soon.

The second time this meal is made is the following night. This time the dish is prepared at the groom's party in the same Taziwa that was brought from the bride's party the night before. The party then brings the dish on the last procession to the bride's party, where it is again carried by the eldest female family member. When they arrive at the bride's party the bowl is handed to the mother of the bride, who then sets it aside until the groom's procession leaves the party with the bride. Just like the night before, the bride's mother uncovers the bowl and presents it to the unmarried women and men in attendance.

In Eid Al Adha, a Muslim holiday where a sacrifice is made, there are numerous rituals and traditions. One of which is an old blessing ritual connected with the sacrifice in Eid Al Adha, when the sheep has been gutted and all entrails removed. The barbequed head and legs are placed inside of the carcass, a candle is lit besides it and some incense is used. The Carcass is then left for the rest of the night.

Another tradition where people would take a piece of meat from the right cheek of the head, dry it then save it to be cooked during Ashura.





# Ibran 'ΞΘΟ.Ι' of Couscous

Ibran refers to the preparation of couscous. It is a term that can be translated to mean crushing or curling. The entire process of making couscous could, however, be referred to as Ibran. The preparation of couscous goes through the following stages:

- 1- Ibran/rolling
- 2- Exposure to steam
- 3- Drying/ spreading

After harvesting the wheat or barley crop, it is washed and spread to dry for several days under the sun. They are then milled and sifted in a particular metal sieve. Once an evening has passed following the milling and sifting, couscous is washed, and what is left remains in the sieve until it is blown away.

The word Ibran, in the At Willul dialect, refers to the process of bending and crushing materials such as metal. In the context of couscous preparation, the term Ibran describes the circular movement of rolling the grains of couscous between the palms of the hands. This creates the typical round shape.

The couscous is then spread on a Beleri 'ΘΙΙΙΞΟΞ', a traditional large fabric typically worn by women that resembles a Roman toga.

The couscous can also be spread on any fabric that is large and light. This allows it to be shaken to ensure all pieces are exposed to the drying process.

## Utensils used for Ibran

The contemporary utensils used for the Ibran are relatively similar to the older traditional equipment. While the materials used to make the pots, spoons and bowls have changed, the process itself remains the same

- Millstone
- Manual sieve
- Taziwa, a large bowl, depending on the quantity of couscous
- Large couscoussier (an upper pot that has large holes so steam can rise to the couscous)
- Large pot suitable for the couscoussier
- Asmsal, a rag that closes the gap between the pot and the couscoussier
- Spread
- Large stick that is sharp at the tip
- Large steel spoon
- Large cooking pot



## Stages of Ibran

### Ibran

Ibran begins by placing the harvested barley or wheat grains into a large bowl, to which a bit of flour is added so that the grains do not absorb too much water. Once the water has been added, the rolling of the couscous can commence. Some will add a little bit of olive oil and salt to the sprinkling water.

In order for the couscous particles to remain small, depending on the quantity of Ibran, different sized bowls will be used. If the pellets are larger than what is wanted, more hand rolling is done until the grains are as small as desired.



### Exposure to steam

The large couscous pot is filled with water to expose the couscous to steam. The upper part of the pot, the couscoussier, is placed on top. Once the water has reached a boil, the couscous is put in the couscoussier. When the water has boiled sufficiently, a rag is placed between the two pots to increase pressure, and prevent steam from escaping. During this process, the couscoussier should always be kept closed by a lid.

Blind people have used more traditional utensils to steam the couscous. Instead of a rag, they used flour to fill the holes in the upper pot to build pressure. The steam would not be entirely contained, however the dried flour would turn hard, thus indicating that the couscous has been properly steamed.



This first steaming of couscous is different from the steaming done when preparing the couscous dish. The first steaming half cooks the couscous grains, and the second will finish cooking them.

After about 20 minutes of steaming, the couscous is ready and emptied on a spread to cool.

### Spreading

While hot, a wooden spoon is used to spread the couscous over a large piece of fabric. One has to be careful to not spread couscous under direct sunlight, as too much light and warmth can create an overpowering taste. It is better to place the couscous in the shade, but once the sun has set it is important to take it inside so it is not affected by the night humidity. Couscous can also be spread indoors. It will however need to be shifted using a spoon every now and then.

Spreading is a slow process, lasting days and requiring patience. Both the weather and spreading methods directly influence how long the couscous will need to be spread for.

When the couscous is completely dry and crunchy, it is time to store it. Using the fabric on which it was spread as a pouch, it will be placed in a large airtight bucket or container. Dried couscous is best kept in a dry and dark storage room. Properly stored couscous can be kept for a year or even longer. This is why it is called the ‘food for the year’ by At Willul

### Ibran of Couscous in the Amazigh Culture

#### Targhat ‘ⵜⴰⵎⴻⵔⴰⵜ’

In the Amazigh culture of the At Willul, as is the case in other Amazigh traditions, there is the Targhat (ⵜⴰⵎⴻⵔⴰⵜ) that brings people together to work on a large project for communal benefit. When everyone cooperates, they share the results.

During the Ibran of couscous there are those who invoke the Targhat tradition to produce a large quantity of couscous at once. Parents, neighbors and friends all gather in one house, bring the harvested grains, and start the process of



Ibran. Once complete, they distribute the couscous amongst one another, each taking according to the crops they contributed to the collective work. Such labor is often accompanied by singing.

### **Twiza ‘ⵜⵓⵏⵉⵛⵉⵙⵉ’ - Collaboration**

Twiza (ⵜⵓⵏⵉⵛⵉⵙⵉ) is another tradition in At Willul and other Amazigh cultures. During Twiza people gather so they can work collectively on a large project for the benefit of an individual participant. In Twiza, unlike the Targhat tradition, once the work is finished the product is given to only one of the community elders.

One example of Twiza during Ibran of couscous is when a family is preparing for a wedding. The Ibran day takes place a week before the actual wedding. Each side of the family organizes separate Twizas. The celebration takes three days during which two parties are held for each side, amounting to six days in total.

The Twiza of Ibran of couscous in preparation for the wedding is for women. The family that is organizing the wedding prepares a special feast for relatives, neighbors and friends. This feast commemorates their arrival to the house to start their collaboration in preparing the couscous. On the morning of Twiza, people will gather at the organizing house and women will stay over to continue the work of Ibran. To thank and bless those who worked, a bit of couscous would be put aside to make lunch. When lunch has been offered, the work is finalized by spreading the couscous to dry.

### **Blessings of Twiza**

In ancient times, the life of At Willul revolved around, and was tied, to the blessings of Erozen ‘ⵉⵔⵓⵏⵉⵛⵉⵙⵉ’. Erozen are a collection of acts and intentions that are carried out to garner positive outcomes, similar to the concept of ‘Karma’ in Indian culture. People did many things to receive these Erozen, or blessings.

One example is the Twiza of couscous. People would help out the family hosting the wedding so their doors may be opened to guests, believing that their own will be as well in time. It is also seen as the bringing of joy, which would eventually reflect upon themselves. This is one of the many benefits of Twiza.





## Couscous Meals

Couscous meals prepared by At Willul are divided into four types:

Couscous with various key ingredients:

- Couscous with meat
- Couscous with fish:
- Couscous with vegetables:
- Sweet Couscous

In addition there are the following specific types of couscous:

- Amltot
- Efershayyen
- Boulettout
- Tebouddien

Most dishes listed here are prepared and eaten in everyday life. Dishes prepared for special occasions are covered in the section 'Couscous in Amazigh Culture.'

## Couscous Cookware

To prepare the couscous dishes, the following cookware is needed:

- A small pot
- A Small couscoussier
- Asmsal (a rag that closes the gap between the pot and couscoussier)
- A Steel spoon
- A ladle

Where more utensils are needed, it will be mentioned in the specific recipe.

## Steaming and Cooking the Couscous

The couscous, having gone through lbran, is put in a concave plate and sprinkled with a ladle of warm water. The couscous will develop a sticky or a semi-paste texture. To avoid this, it is important to not add too much water and add a little bit of olive oil.

Place the couscous in the couscoussier and add some fat or fluid from the lower pot. Place a rag in-between the pot and couscoussier ensuring that all gaps have been sealed. Once the steam rises, close the lid over the couscous.

After 15 minutes, remove the lid, lift the couscoussier and pour the steamed couscous into a large bowl. Using a spoon, stir the couscous to remove any lumps. Put the couscous back in the couscoussier, close the lid and put the rag in place. The couscous will stay there until what has been prepared in the lower pot is cooked.





# Couscous with Meat

## Ingredients

- Couscous- 300g
- Meat- 400g
- Onions- One large onion
- Tomato puree- 2 tbsp
- Olive Oil- 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Ground red pepper- 1 tsp
- Black pepper- 1 tsp
- Water- 1 liter

## Optional ingredients

For added flavour and depending on personal preferences, the following ingredients can be cooked with the couscous. Some optional ingredients are added depending on the seasonal availability.

- Potato - 1 large
- Chickpeas - 100g
- Green tomatoes- 4 medium
- Green broad beans - 100g
- Green onion s- 4
- Chickpeas - 200g
- Carrots - 100g
- Garlic - to taste
- Squash- 200g
- Cinnamon (flour)- Four tsp
- Eggs - 4
- Milk - 0,2 liter

This couscous is prepared for lunches and dinners, as well as for weddings and other celebrations.

Due to the taste of fat that comes out of the meat cooked in the couscous, especially beef, it should be cut into medium pieces.

In the At Willul area, the elderly do not eat couscous with young camel meat. This is partly due to the fact that At Willul do not herd camels, but could also be due to old religious practices connected with Judaism.

## Step by Step

Main:

- Cook the couscous as described above.
- Cut the meat into pieces.
- Chop the onion into small pieces.

Optional:

- Peel the potato, carrots and cut them into small pieces.
- Peel the chickpeas and green beans
- Peel the green onions, and chop them into small pieces
- Chop the squash and remove the seeds
- Boil the eggs and peel them

First the couscous is steamed, as detailed above.



## Cooking the stew

Stew in Tamazight is called Eldam, and it is the sauce that the ingredients are cooked in. There is an ancient tradition where people would douse the cooking fire with a ladle of stew as a blessing in case the spirits of their ancestors came to visit.

Pour olive oil into the pot, and when heated add the chopped onions. When they turn golden add the tomato puree and stir the mixture well. Wait for a minute or two then add the meat. Sprinkle in salt and pepper. Pour water on top until all the ingredients are submerged. Wait for the water to boil, and when it does the potatoes or carrots can be added. Place the couscoussier on the pot and let it simmer.

After thirty minutes, add the chickpeas, green beans, green onions, and cabbage. Put the couscoussier back on the pot. Once couscous grains are cooked, lower the temperature and sprinkle it with sauce to prepare it for presentation.

### Notes:

- Check the water level whenever removing the couscoussier from the pot. If the water level is under the pieces of meat and vegetables, add some water so that the stew does not dry out.
- If the pieces of meat are large and chunky, let them cook for longer before adding the vegetables and other ingredients.
- If the meat is very greasy, it should be left hot as it adds more of the desired flavour to your meal. Take off the pot if the potato is cooked.
- The redness of the stew will come from the addition of tomato puree. Be careful to not add too much tomato puree, it will turn the stew sour.

## Presentation

Pour the couscous in a bowl, stir well with a spoon so that no pellets remain.

Usually, one bowl of couscous meat is enough food for five people. Depending on the social class of the family, meat used to be eaten during holidays.

If you want to add cinnamon, take some at the tip of a small spoon and sprinkle it over the couscous.

Take a spoon or two of the stew and sprinkle it over the couscous until it is absorbed.

Remove the meat and vegetables from the stew and place to the side, then



pour the stew on the couscous until it is completely covered. If you like the couscous to be more moist, continue adding stew. Once satisfied, you can arrange the pieces of vegetables and meat on top.

Lastly, take the onions from the pot and place them on top of the couscous next to the meat and vegetables. Add hard-boiled eggs if desired.

Now your large bowl of couscous is ready. Place the appropriate number of spoons and add your favorite side dishes:

- Small bowl of olive oil
- Some stew (which should be added to sufficiently moisten the couscous)
- A bowl of salad (contains a variety of salad that goes with this dish)
- A bowl containing pickled vegetables
- Green onion
- Juice
- Bottle of water



# Couscous with Chicken

Couscous with chicken is one of, or perhaps the most popular dishes for everyday meals. The portions in this recipe will make enough couscous to serve five people.

The ingredients and method of cooking is very similar to that of couscous with meat, with the following exceptions:

- It is a faster process than the couscous with meat, be it sheep or beef.
- Chicken breasts or other parts of the bird without bones are used for this dish as they tend to break easily while cooking. Skin from the chicken meat should be removed as it gives an unpleasant taste to the stew.
- Garlic should be added to the stew for extra flavour.

# Couscous with Dried Meat

## Ingredients

- Couscous - 300g
- Dried meat - 400g
- Onion - 1 large
- Tomato paste puree -2 tbsp
- Olive Oil - 4 tbpg
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Ground red pepper - 1 tsp
- Black pepper - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 liter

Couscous with dried meat is a delicacy typically cooked in the months following Eid Al Adha, which is when the meat drying process happens for most families.

Dried meat is either sheep or beef that is cut into thin long strips that are continuously connected. In a large bowl, add salt and olive oil to the meat. Ensure that the meat and seasonings are thoroughly mixed and covered, then hang them to dry in the sun.

Once the meat has dried, you may take it down. If it rained before the meat has dried, the process can be carried out in doors. If the meat has been exposed to moisture , make sure to pat it with a cloth and let it dry. If the process was done during summer time and there are flies, cover the meat with a light fabric, such as sash. The number of days for which the meat is left to dry depends on how the pieces are cut later, if the preference is for thick slices, then it needs to be left a while longer.

Be careful to avoid over drying the meat. If it has been cut into thin stripes asit



will turn hard and become difficult to chew.

Much like the optional ingredients for couscous with meat, use the preferred vegetables for the desired flavor, or use what is available depending on the seasonal crop at the time of year.

The steaming couscous, stew cooking methods and presentation are the same as detailed in the 'Steaming & Cooking couscous' and the 'Couscous with Meat' sections.

Remember that dry meat is slightly salty. Do not add salt in the beginning of the preparation of the stew. Once the stew is cooked, you should check the salt and add if desired.



# Couscous with Emze 'ᲥᲗᲚᲗᲗ'

## Ingredients

- Couscous - 300g
- Meat - 400g
- Intestines - to taste
- Onions - 1 large
- Tomato puree - 2 tbsp
- Olive Oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Ground red pepper - 1 tsp
- Black pepper - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 liter

Much like the optional ingredients for couscous with meat, use the preferred vegetables for the desired flavor, or those available depending on the time of year.

Intestines must be cleaned thoroughly and scrubbed. The stuffing is made of a combination of animal's internal organs such as the heart, kidney and liver. It also has rice, parsley and onions with spices. Once the intestines are stuffed they are sewn with natural materials and then steamed.

The steaming couscous, stew cooking methods and presentation are the same as detailed in the 'Steaming & Cooking couscous' and the 'Couscous with Meat' sections.

# Couscous with Azlef

## Ingredients

- Couscous - 300g
- Azlef - 400g
- Onions - 1 large
- Tomato puree - 2 tbsp
- Olive Oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Ground red pepper - 1 tsp
- Black pepper - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 liter

Azlef is meat from a sheep's head, and similar to the meat used in stuffed intestines. It is prepared and eaten for the second day of Eid Al Adha, because the head of the sacrifice is spoiled after three days

## Preparation

The sheep or lamb's head are barbecued until they are charred, then they are scrubbed to remove any remaining skin and wool. This allows for the meat to be accessed with ease. It should

then be covered and left to rest for the day.

The head is then chopped in half and cut in small pieces. Chopping with an axe has to be done in shallow movements to avoid splintering the bones. It is ready to be cooked once this has been done.



Much like the optional ingredients for couscous with meat, use preferred vegetables for desired flavor, or those available depending on the time of year.

The steaming couscous, stew cooking methods and presentation are the same as detailed in the 'Steaming & Cooking couscous' and the 'Couscous with Meat' sections.

## Mixed Couscous - Ahlaj

### Ingredients

- Couscous - 300g
- Amrdokh (dried fat) - 400g
- Onions - 1 large
- Tomato puree - 2 tbsp
- Olive Oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Squash - 2 pcs
- Potato - 1 large piece
- Carrots - 3 pcs
- Ground red pepper - 1 tsp
- Black pepper - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 liter

It is called 'Ahlaj' because it depends on more than one main ingredient, as it contains 'amrdokh' (an animal dried fat), tomatoes, peppers, onions and pumpkin.

Amrdokh, or dried fat, is always prepared with other main ingredients. The fat is obtained from sheep, goat or cow. It is washed well once, and then let dry. Add salt and peppers, then hang under the sun until it completely dries. Once dried, grind them in a pestle with a mortar, (or a modern machine), and store in a jar or another tightly sealed container.

The steaming couscous, stew cooking methods and presentation are the same as detailed in the 'Steaming & Cooking couscous' and the 'Couscous with Meat' sections.



# Couscous with Dried Fat - Tghwit

## Ingredients

- Couscous - 300g
- Dried fat Tghwit - 400g
- Onions - 2 large
- Dried tomatoes - 100g
- Tomato puree - 1 tbsp
- Olive Oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Ground red pepper - 1 tsp
- Black pepper - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 liter
- Squash - to taste

Tghwit is another type of dried fat.

The Tghwit fat used comes from sheep, goats or cows. It is cut into strips, and has salt and turmeric added. Then they are spread on the ropes outside. The spread is allowed to be outside for a day, then it is ready for cooking. It is placed in a container to keep it. Part of it is taken for cooking with couscous, while the extra part is returned to the pot and kept preserved until it is used again. It can be kept for many months.

Much like Couscous with meat, use the preferred vegetables for the desired flavor, or what is available depending on the time of year.

## Cooking the stew

Put dried tomatoes and pepper in a pot. Pour water over them, and place the pot on the stove. Let it warm up nicely. Once the tomatoes and pepper are warm, remove them from the pot and mash them into a rough paste. Put the paste into the pot, add the chopped onions together with tomato paste. Stir well and add salt, pepper and turmeric. Add water and leave the mix to warm up. Once the water boils, add the green onions. The couscous and then the dried fat Tghwit is added to the empty couscoussier and pot to steam. The steam and warmth will liquify Tghwit and will mix with the couscous, giving it extra flavour. Open the pot and add the squash to it. Let the couscous and stew on the stove until the couscous is cooked.





# Couscous with Tekordasen 'ተጽዕሎጫ'

## Ingredients

- Couscous - 300g
- Tekordasen - 400g
- Onions - 1 large
- Tomato puree - 2 tbsp
- Olive Oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Ground red pepper - 1 ts
- Black pepper - 1 -tsp
- Water - 1 liter

## Optional ingredients

These are the optional ingredients that can be used with Tekordasen, use the preferred vegetables for the desired flavour, or those available depending on the time of year.

- Potato - 1 large
- Chickpeas - 100g
- Tomatoes - 4 large
- Spring onions - 4 large
- Green peppers - 1 or 2 pieces

Tekordasen are a sheep or cow's intestines and stomachs stuffed with dried meat or fat.

Tekordasen are prepared by first cleaning the intestines thoroughly, adding salt, ground red pepper and black pepper. Once they are spiced, you can hang them until they dry. The next step is to cut them into smaller pieces, adding dried meat and or dried fat. You can begin to make small pouches by putting dried meat, fat, stomach pieces and wrapping them in the intestines. The shapes may vary, and it is important to tighten the wrapping.

What is useful about Tekordasen is that you do not need to make them especially for the couscous. They can be prepared and kept until used.

For additional flavour you can place Tekordasen in a saucepan over a stove with olive oil, but not until it has been cooked. Some liquid fat can also be poured over it into its storage container.

There are those who use other organs such as liver inside the pouches instead of dried meat.

The steaming couscous, stew cooking methods and presentation are the same as detailed in the 'Steaming & Cooking couscous' and the 'Couscous with Meat' sections.

Remember that Tekordasen already contains salt, and so be careful when adding salt to the stew. It's best to leave it without additional salt and only add some once it has cooked and you have tasted it.





# Couscous with Fish

## Ingredients

- Couscous - 300g
- Fish - 400g
- Garlic - 5 cloves
- Tomato puree - 2 tbsp
- Olive Oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Ground red pepper - 1 tsp
- Black pepper - 1 tsp
- Fish cumin\* - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 liter

## Optional ingredients

- Potato - 1 large
- Green peppers - 1 or 2 pieces

\*spice blend consisting of cumin and other spices, traditionally used with fish in Zuwara

Couscous with fish is one of the meals that characterizes the Amazigh of At Willul given their proximity to the sea and their ancient connection to fishing. The harbor of Zuwara contains archeological structures that date back thousands of years. Seafood meals are considered a speciality and this couscous is wildly popular.

People prepare couscous with fish for lunch or dinner, on holidays, and sometimes when families gather or have special guests.

People in Zuwara usually select northern bluish tuna, angelfish and red mullet to cook with couscous. They are chosen for the added taste and are found aplenty in the Meditereanean Sea.

## Preparation

Put the saucepan on the stove, then pour in oil and add garlic. Sauté the garlic with the oil until the garlic turns yellow. Add tomato paste, ground pepper and turmeric. Then comes the role of salt and cumin. They are added to the contents of the saucepan, mixed well with all the ingredients, and continued to be stirred for some time until the tomato paste changes colour and becomes slightly dark. Add water over the ingredients, stir all the content until well mixed, and the water starts to boil.

The stew must cook for a while, until its ingredients are cooked well. At that time the fish guts have been cleaned and the crusts removed from them, and also they have been cut into pieces of medium size suitable for the stew. Pieces of fish are placed in the saucepan, finally water is added.

## Presentation

Fish pieces will be put on a separate plate not on top of the couscous. They are set aside with pieces of lemon.



# Couscous with Ozef

## Ingredients

- Couscous - 300g
- Dried fish - 1 or 2
- Garlic - 5 cloves
- Tomato puree - 2 tbsp
- Olive Oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Ground red pepper - 1 tsp
- Black pepper - 1 tsp
- Fish cumin - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 liter

Ozef is dry fish, made from anchovy and other small fishes.

The nets used in catching small fish in Tamazight are called 'Akernvo'. It is more like a bag, with small wings on two sides.

These small fish are found in abundance on the beaches in the summer as well as in the middle of autumn.

Young fish are collected and dried by sunlight. After the fish has dried well, it can be stored for long periods of time.

It is possible to cook small fish with couscous instead of in a pot with the stew. Small fish are cooked thoroughly, meaning they do not need to clean their intestines, as is the case for larger fish.

The making of the stew is similar to couscous with large fish, the only difference is the amount of time required to cook the small fish, which is about ten minutes.

The steaming couscous, stew cooking methods and presentation are the same as detailed in the 'Steaming & Cooking couscous' and the 'Couscous with Meat' sections.



# Couscous with Afrsegh - Aasslouz

## Ingredients

- Couscous - 300g
- Afrsegh - 400g
- Tomato puree - 2 tbsp
- Ground turmeric -  $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp
- Olive Oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - tsp
- Ground red pepper - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 liter

## Optional ingredients

- Fat or butter - 200g

Afrsegh in Tamazight, or Asslouz in Libyan dialect, is a plant commonly known as pale cabbage or african mustard. It is usually found growing in both farms and wilderness

Afrsegh is harvested by only removing the stems, it is then washed, cut and added to the couscous. It is usually prepared in winter, during its growing season.

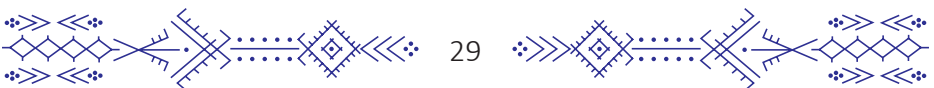
## Preparation

Steaming and preparing of the couscous is as detailed in the section on lbran.

The stew is made by pouring an amount of oil into the saucepan with the addition of two tablespoons of tomato paste, half a tablespoon of ground turmeric, a teaspoon of salt and a teaspoon of ground red pepper.

Mix the ingredients together and leave it on the stove for a short time, meaning until the tomato paste changes color, then add water and close the pot by placing couscous on top.

The pot and the couscous are put over the stove or fire until the couscous and the stew are well cooked. After that, the contents are emptied into a serving plate, the couscous with the Afrsegh is mixed with the stew and it is ready to eat.



# Sweet Couscous

## Ingredients

- Couscous - 300g
- Rasins - 150g
- Almonds - 150g
- Sugar - 50g

## Optional ingredients

- Nuts - 50g

This couscous' main preparation is the steaming process itself, once the couscous has been cooked, the rest of the ingredients will be added and mixed with it.

The steaming couscous method is the same as detailed in the 'Steaming & Cooking couscous'

If the almonds have not been cooked before, they require to be boiled so that their skin can be easily removed.

## Presentation

Put couscous in a large bowl, stir it with a spoon to remove any lumping then add the rest of the ingredients on top. Depending on how one wishes to present the dish, they can be all mixed together with some almonds and raisin left for garnish.



# Amltot

## Ingredients

- Amltot - 300g
- Meat - 400g
- Onion - 1 large
- Tomato puree - 2 tbsp
- Olive Oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Ground red pepper - 1 tsp
- Black pepper - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 liter

## Optional ingredients

- Potato - 1 large
- Cinnamon - 100g
- Tomatos - 4 pieces
- Spring onions - 4 piece
- Green peppers - 1 or 2

Amltot is made from barley, and is considered a lesser quality of couscous. In the past it was typically made by low income families or when flour is finished.

After barley is harvested, it is washed and spread under the sun. When the drying process is over, it is placed in a machine called (Tassert), which breaks the grains and turns some of them into semi-powder. The barley coming out of Tassert is sifted by sieve. The sieving process is repeated at least three times. The powder that falls from the sieve is what will later turn into Amltot.

The preparation of Amltot is similar to that of couscous, in both the steaming process and the stew. It is presented like couscous.

Amltot needs to soak up a little in water before it is steamed.



# Ifershayyen

## Ingredients

- Ifershayyen - 300g
- Meat, dried meat or dried fat - 400g
- Onion - 1 large
- Tomato puree - 2 tbsp
- Olive oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Black pepper - 1 tsp
- Red pepper - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 litre

Ifershayyen is made of barely, much like Amltot.

The method of making Ifershayyen from barley is the same as Amltot, except what remains in the sieve, (small crushed particles), is what is used in preparing the meal.

The steaming couscous, stew cooking methods and presentation are the same as detailed in the 'Steaming & Cooking couscous' and the 'Couscous with Meat' sections.

This dish can also be made with the intestines of goats or sheep, in some special social occasions. Ifershayyen is generally considered a light meal, meaning it can be prepared for dinner.





# Boulettout - 'ⵜⴰⵍⴰⵏⵜ'

## Ingredients

- Wheat Ifershayyen - 300g
- Dried meat or dried fat - 400g
- Onion - 1 large
- Tomato puree - 2 tbsp
- Olive oil - 4 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tsp
- Black pepper - 1 tsp
- Red pepper - 1 tsp
- Water - 1 litre

Boulettout is a dish made from Ifershayyn that is wheat based, mostly for rituals and traditions during weddings as outlined in the section about couscous in Amazigh culture.

The steaming couscous, stew cooking methods and presentation are the same as detailed in the Steaming & Cooking couscous and the couscous with meat sections.

A larger than usual portion of fat is added to Boulettout. The dish is served with bread.

While this dish is mostly cooked and served during weddings, it can also be cooked Aembar n Thalit, the last day of mourning for a widowed woman.



# Tebouddien - Rounded Couscous

## Ingredients

- Onions - 1
- Spring onions - ½ kg
- Intestines - 5 pieces
- Fennel - 2
- Dried meat - 150 g
- Couscous - 200 g
- Flour - 100 g
- Eggs - 5
- Oil - 1 tbsp
- Salt - 1 tbsp
- Turmeric - 2 tsp
- Red pepper - 1 tsp
- Tomato puree - 3 tbsp

For those who do not have dried meat as an ingredient, use oil, butter or melted fat.

## Optional ingredients

- Fat - 100 g
- Coriander - 1 plant
- Semolina - 0,200 kg

In the past it was also referred to as Osban el hajala. This dish contains stuffed intestines and is cooked for divorcees, widows and other women who do not have a provider. Historically, it is the man who would slaughter the animals and provide much of the ingredients needed for the stuffed intestines.

## Preparation

Start by placing the intestines in a large bowl, adding coriander, onions, tomatoes and dried meat. Mix them together, then sprinkle the spices on top. Add the eggs and continue to mix, then add couscous.

Now you can turn the mix into teboudden, (rounded shapes, size depends on the preference), once the entire mixture has been done. Put some flour and semolina in a separate low bowl and place the rounded mixture and shape them together.

In a pot add the fat then oil, salt, turmeric, red pepper and tomato puree and leave until the tomato has darkened a little in colour. Pour water and leave it to boil. Now you can bring the teboudden and place them to cook in the stew. Cover the pot, and cook for roughly 30 minutes.

Check frequently on the pot to see if Tebeoudden remained in shape, if they start to disintegrate they are over cooked and you need to lower the temperature. Or, if the stew is getting dry, then add some water as teboudden will soak it up. The stew can still be used to cover the teboudden when presenting it.



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