

mama eats

mediterranean chickpea stew

cooking notes: If you have the time, I really recommend soaking and cooking your own chickpeas from dried, which is not only much more flavorful and texturally pleasant, but also economical and less packaging. Simply soak them overnight on the counter, in plenty of water. Drain the next day and place in a pot with lots of fresh water to cover and 2 tsp of sea salt. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer softly, skimming off any foam that rises to the surface, until tender, anywhere from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours depending on how old your beans are. If you have very hard water, it can help to add a large pinch of baking soda into the cooking water. One more thing- it's important to take your time with sautéing the vegetables before adding broth, it's this time and lower heat that coaxes out the depth and richness which flavors the stew. Use a broth that tastes clear and rich on its own, not muddy or tinny- the better than bouillon no chicken is a good one.

1/4 cup / 60 ml olive oil

a bulb of fennel, halved, core removed, sliced crosswise, a few tender fronds reserved

half a medium onion, chopped fine

a medium red bell pepper, quartered then sliced

4 large cloves garlic, sliced

a big pinch fennel seeds, roughly crushed

½ tsp paprika, smoked or sweet

a large carrot, chopped large

4 canned plum tomatoes, chopped roughly

½ cup / 120 ml of dry white wine

a few bay leaves

a few small waxy fleshed potatoes, chopped

4 cups / 950 ml good flavored broth

2 ½ cups / 450 g cooked chickpeas

for serving: well- toasted, garlic rubbed, and olive-oiled sourdough bread, chile flakes or [calabrian chile paste](#), a handful of finely chopped parsley

Put on a nice cozy playlist, wash your hands, roll up your sleeves. Heat the olive oil over medium high heat in a large pot- I use my Dutch oven. Add the onion and sliced fennel, and a big pinch of salt. Cook down gently, stirring every so often, lowering the heat if vegetables are browning, until vegetables are more translucent and softened, about 5 minutes.

Add the bell pepper and cook about 5 minutes longer, till it, too has softened and colored the vegetables a bit orange. Stir in garlic and fennel seeds and let it cook a minute till fragrant. Add in carrot and tomatoes and cook down another few minutes. Add the wine and potatoes, increase the heat and let the wine mostly cook off. Toss in the bay leaves and pour in the broth.

Let it simmer 10 minutes or until potatoes are tender, then add the chickpeas and cook another five minutes. Taste for salt and adjust seasoning. Serve into shallow bowls and drizzle a thread of olive oil over, and scatter over some parsley, a bit of the reserved fennel fronds, and a healthy pinch or spoon of chile flakes or paste.

Leftovers taste just as good, if not more delicious, the next few days.