

Algerian Fish Tagine Dinner A Planning Guide for Four — Casual & Relaxed Menu at a Glance

- Appetizers: bourek pastries, zaalouk, shlada, carrot salad, olives & preserved lemons
- Main: Algerian-style fish tagine (grouper, monkfish, or dorade)
- Sides: vegetable couscous, ras el hanout roasted vegetables, fennel & orange salad
- Beverages: mint tea, orange blossom lemonade, Provençal rosé, cardamom coffee
- Dessert: makroudh, chebakia, or dates from African Market Nice

Fish Notes Traditional choice: grouper (mérrou), firm and classic for Maghrebi tagines. Easiest to work with: monkfish (lotte) — very firm, forgiving, freezes and thaws well. Widely available: sea bream (dorade), hake (merlu), or cod (cabillaud). Picard is a perfectly good source for monkfish or cod fillets if you want a stress-free, pre-portioned option. For a more special-occasion presentation, buy grouper or dorade fresh from a fishmonger at Marché Provençal. Ambiance Music: Algerian raï (Cheb Khaled, Cheb Mami, Rachid Taha) for arrival and after dinner; chaâbi or Andalusian-influenced malouf as a mellower backdrop during the meal. Decor: low warm lighting (candles, lanterns), a patterned kilim-style table runner, brass or copper serving pieces, fresh mint and citrus as a simple centerpiece, incense or bakhoor lit before guests arrive. Don't forget: a bread basket, a small bowl for olive pits, a lemon or rose-petal water bowl for rinsing fingers, and harissa served on the side rather than mixed in. Shopping List Organized by where to buy each item. African Market Nice — 37 Route de Turin, 06300 Nice Open Tue-Sat 10h-19h30 (Fri closed 13h-15h), Mon 12h-19h30, Sun 10h-16h30.

- Ras el hanout, cumin, sweet & smoked paprika, ground coriander
- Harissa (jar or tube)
- Preserved lemons
- Dried dates (dessert fallback)
- Makroudh, chebakia, or other pastries – call ahead to check stock
- Orange blossom water
- Mint tea (gunpowder green tea)
- Feuilles de brick (bourek/brik pastry sheets), if in stock

Marché Provençal / Cours Saleya (mornings, closed Monday)

- Fresh fish – grouper or dorade, from a fishmonger stall (if not using Picard)
- Fresh mint, large bunch
- Vegetables: carrots, zucchini, turnips, fennel, tomatoes, onions
- Oranges, for the fennel-orange salad
- Olives and marinated vegetables
- Crusty bread or semoule bread
- Monday only: browse the antiques/flea market for a secondhand tagine dish

Picard (if buying fish frozen)

- Frozen monkfish or cod fillets, portioned for 4

Regular Grocery (Casino, Carrefour, etc.)

- Couscous (semoule)
- Roasted almonds
- Olive oil, extra lemons
- Dry Provençal rosé
- Sparkling water or a non-alcoholic option
- Ground coffee and cardamom pods, for after dinner

Preparation Timeline Worked backward from serving time, so the day of the party stays calm. 1-2 Days Before

- Buy dry goods and spices from African Market Nice
- Buy rosé and non-perishables from the regular grocery store
- If going the flea-market route, this is the window for a Monday Cours Saleya visit
- Make the zaalouk / chtitha (eggplant dip) – improves after a day in the fridge
- Make the carrot salad – also holds well
- If using frozen fish, buy it now and keep it in the freezer

Day Before

- Move frozen fish from freezer to fridge to thaw slowly overnight (skip if buying fresh)
- Prep fennel & orange salad components; store separately, dress just before serving
- Make the shlada (tomato-cucumber salad) – best made a few hours to a day ahead
- Chop vegetables for the tagine and the roasted vegetable side
- Mix the chermoula marinade; marinate the fish overnight if the recipe allows
- Set the table and put out decor – runner, candles, brass pieces

Day Of — Morning

- If buying fish fresh, go to Marché Provençal early
- Assemble bourek/brik rolls (don't fry yet); keep covered in the fridge
- Roast the vegetables for the side – reheat later
- Prep the couscous base – reheat with a splash of water/oil before serving
- Make the mint tea concentrate or have everything ready to brew fresh

Afternoon (3-4 Hours Before Guests Arrive)

- Light prep only – nothing that needs full attention
- Set out olives, almonds, preserved lemons in serving dishes
- Chill the rosé
- Confirm harissa is in its own small serving bowl

1.5-2 Hours Before Guests Arrive

- Start the tagine – gives it time to braise gently without rushing
- While it simmers: shower, change, take a breath

30–45 Minutes Before Guests Arrive

- Fry the bourek – best done just before serving so they're crisp
- Reheat couscous and roasted vegetables
- Dress the fennel-orange salad and shlada
- Light candles/incense, start the music (raï for arrival)

When Guests Arrive

- Bourek and olives out immediately as they settle in
- Brew and pour mint tea or lemonade
- Tagine finishes on low heat in the background – check once, then let it be

After the Meal

- Cardamom coffee or a second round of mint tea
- Dessert plated – no cooking required if bought at African Market Nice

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