

SEASON'S BEST

An Unassuming Gem

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The fabled golden apples of mythological lore, quinces are an exotic addition to meat and sweet dishes for a touch of tart acidity.



As far as looks go, the quince would probably rank low: it is a slightly plain-looking lumpy figure wrapped in a matte yellow and, sometimes rough, skin. It's surprising to learn that the quince was once a prized totem of power and fertility amongst the Greeks and Romans: revered as the fruit of Aphrodite, quinces were given to young brides and new couples to dine as a symbol of good luck and fertility. Even through the Middle Ages, quinces were often served at the tables of nobility during banquets as a sign of their aristocratic standing.

The Persians have featured the fruit in their cuisines for over 2,500 years. Called *morabaye beh* in Persia, quince jam is traditionally spread and eaten on *lovash* (an Armenian unleavened flatbread) with yogurt, vanilla ice-cream or sometimes feta cheese. The French enjoy it as sweet, thick jelly called *pâte de coing*, often with cheese and toast.

Jams and preserves are the most commonly found forms of the fruit in the market. Usually too hard to be eaten raw, quinces contain an abundance of pectin, a natural thickening agent ideal for making jams. During its cooking process, the quince changes from a pale yellow colour to a rosy pink or scarlet hue. Its tannins are broken down, resulting in a metamorphosis to a sweet, citrus paste unlike its initial sour character.

A truly underrated gem, quinces are far tarter and boast a firmer and drier texture than apples or pears, making them ideal for baking. They are extremely receptive to spices and seasonings—keep the skins on for an added dimension of flavour and aroma to savoury dishes. The astringency of the fruit also makes it a favourable pairing for meats such as pork belly and lamb as it cuts through the richness of grilled meats.

Usually in season between September and November, the best quinces are those with firm flesh and yellow skin, like the widely used Smyrna quince, native to Turkey. It should also smell fruity and floral. Pineapple quince is another variety, which, as its namesake tells you, has a slight taste of the thorny fruit. Normally, the flesh is extremely unyielding when raw, so do use a sharp and firm blade during preparation.



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Gourmet Quarter, our series of dining events planned in partnership with Concha y Toro is underway! For the August cycle (15 Aug - 15 Sep), look forward to specially curated menus (and optional wine pairings) from restaurants like Burlamacco Ristorante, Pepereno, Ildo At the Cliff at Sofitel Singapore Sentosa Resort & Spa, The Lighthouse Restaurant & Rooftop Bar, Jade @ The Fullerton Hotel Singapore, La Brasserie Restaurant, Kai Garden 菜苑, Cherry Garden at Mandarin Oriental, Singapore and Long Chim Singapore. For details, check out [www.wineanddine.sg](#)



CHRISTOPHER MILLAR

Executive chef, Stellar at 1-Altitude

Millar is always looking to reinvent the dining scene with new and innovative gastronomic experiences. He highlights that quinces brown extremely fast upon exposure, so they should only be cut just prior to cooking or stored in lemon water till ready to be used.



BRAISED LAMB SHANK TAGINE with quince and fig compote and almonds

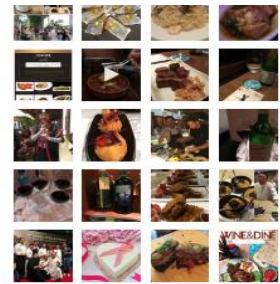
Serves 6

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp cumin seeds
- 2 tbsp coriander seeds
- 1 tbsp turmeric powder
- 1 tbsp chilli powder
- 2 tbsp cinnamon powder
- 10 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 onions, peeled and chopped finely
- 2 cups olive oil
- 6 lamb hind shanks
- 3 quinces, peeled, cored and quartered and placed in lemon water
- 2l chicken stock
- 500gm tinned tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tbsp brandy
- ½ cup orange juice
- 3 fresh figs (finely diced)
- almonds, mint leaves and cinnamon sugar to garnish

Method:

1. Toast the cumin and coriander seeds in a dry pan. Crush in a mortar and pestle.
2. Combine with the turmeric, chilli and cinnamon powder, onion and garlic in blender and purée until fine.
3. Add the olive oil and blend into a paste.
4. Smear the lamb shanks with the paste and marinate overnight.
5. Heat up a frying pan with olive oil. Brown the lamb shanks nicely on all sides.
6. Place the shanks and quinces with any remaining marinade in a large pot (or tagine if you have one). Pour in the chicken stock and tinned tomatoes.
7. Cover with lid then bring to a simmer. Turn the flame down to a low simmer and gently braise the shanks for 3 hours. Meat should be falling off the bone.
8. Allow the shanks to cool down in the stock. Remove the shanks and quince from the stock. Return the pot to the flame and reduce to a thick tomato sauce.
9. To make the quince and fig compote, place 100gm of the removed quince paste in a pot with the brandy and orange juice. Bring to a gentle simmer and constantly stir until the quince paste is smooth (about 5 minutes).
10. Allow to cool completely before adding the chopped figs.
11. Garnish with chopped toasted almonds, mint, sprinkle with cinnamon sugar and serve the compote in a small dish on the side.



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