



FESANJĀN

FESANJĀN (*fesenjūn*, *fasūjan*), a well known Persian dish (*koreš*, a kind of stew) made of walnut or almond, poultry (usually duck) or small meat balls (*kalla gonješkī*) and pomegranate sauce or juice. The earliest dictionary mentioning it (*Farhang-eĀnandrāj*; q.v.) refers to it as *fasūjan* and states that it is a dish coming from the province of Gīlān and “the Gīlānīs know how to cook it well.” The *Farhang-eNafīsī* spells the word *fesenjūn* instead of *fasūjan*, as does the *Farhang-e Moʿīn* (q.v.). The latter also gives the Gīlakī pronunciation as *fūsūnjan*. In his *Dīvān*, the poet and lexicographer ‘Alī-Akbar Dehḡodā (q.v.) gives a detailed recipe for *fesenjān* in verse (p. 55).

The earliest textual reference to *fesenjān* is in Mīrzā ‘Alī-Akbar Khan Āšpazbāšī’s *Sofra-ye aṭ’ema* (pp. 20-21), in which ten varieties of *fasūjan* are mentioned: walnut, almond, eggplant, kidney bean, quince, potato, carrot, pumpkin, fish, and yogurt. Most purists would frown upon such diversification. Today, however, the most common *fesenjān* is walnut *fesenjān*; the pomegranate sauce gives it the dark brown color. Sometimes a red-hot iron is put in the *fesenjān* in order cause some oxidization and darken the color. If the pomegranate sauce is too sour, sugar and fried onions are added to sweeten it.

In some parts of Persia walnut, and consequently *fesenjān*, is considered to be “hot” according to the traditional medicine’s dualistic distinction of hot (*garm*) and cold (*sard*) foods. In order to temper its hotness, but also as a substitute for sugar, peeled pumpkin is added to *fesenjān*. In some other places coriander, which is thought to be a “cold” plant, is added to it.



Fesenjān is an elaborate dish reserved for festive occasions; it is considered a rich man's dish, hence the popular saying "he behaves as if he has had partridge and *fesenjān*," to refer to one showing off or behaving pretentiously.

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