

STUFFED MEDJOOOL DATES

Prepared in 15 minutes or less.

- 🕒 12 Medjool dates
- 🕒 12 ½ x ¼ x ¼ -inch pieces Asiago, Manchego, or pecorino cheese
- 🕒 4 slices applewood-smoked bacon, each cut crosswise into 3 pieces
- 🕒 Spanish smoked paprika, this deep brick-colored sweet, cool and smoky flavor seasoning is popular in many Mediterranean recipes

Preheat oven to 425°F.

Using small knife, make small cut in side of each date; remove pit. Insert 1 piece of cheese into each date. Brush bacon slices generously on 1 side with smoked paprika.

Wrap each date with 1 piece of bacon, with paprika side against date. Secure bacon with toothpick.

Arrange dates on rimmed baking sheet. Roast until bacon is browned on bottom, about 6 minutes. Turn dates; roast until bacon is cooked, about 6 minutes longer. Transfer to plate; cool slightly. Remove toothpicks. Serve immediately.

Option: For a spicier version substitute bacon with thin slices of chorizo.

Basmati rice, a long grain white rice great for soaking up stews and sauces, and cous cous are widely popular in Middle Eastern cuisine. Notable for their delicate fragrance and taste, Basmati rice and couscous recipes reign high on my entertainer's must serve list.

