moroccan matzah ball soup

This soup is the cover of the book because it basically me in a bowl half Moroccan, half Ashkenaz, influenced by the flavors of the shuk in Jerusalem where I've done my shopping for the past 13 years, full of flavor, easy to prepare, and approachable enough that it appeals to the youngest and oldest amongst us!

1 Tbsp saffron
1 cup boiling water
1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 large onion, diced
5 carrots, peeled, cut into 1/4 inch rounds
2 fennel bulbs, diced
4 cloves garlic, peeled and halved lengthwise
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp hawaij for soup
1 tsp kosher salt
1/2 tsp coarsely ground black pepper
2 tsp harissa
1/4 cup + 2 Tbsp arak
12 cups chicken stock
1 cup dried chickpeas, soaked overnight in water (uncovered), drained and rinsed
1 batch matzah ball mixture  (recipe below)
6 cups Swiss chard (or any leafy green)

Combine saffron and boiling water in a cup. Set aside.
Set a medium pot over high heat. Add olive oil.
Add onions, carrots, fennel, and garlic; stir to combine. Cook vegetables on high heat for about 6 minutes.
We are looking for a quick sear on high heat to develop a bit of char on the edges of the vegetables.
Once veggies are charred, add coriander, Hawaij, salt, and pepper.
Stir spices and harissa with vegetables for 2 minutes to extract natural oils from the spices.
Once spices become fragrant, add arak.
Use a wooden spoon to scrape up any bits stuck to the bottom of the pan.
Allow arak to reduce for 3 minutes. Add saffron water and stock. Add drained chickpeas.
Bring mixture to a boil (uncovered), then lower heat, cover the pot, and simmer soup for 2 hours.
40 minutes before serving, bring soup to a boil again.
Using lightly oiled hands, form 2 tablespoons of matzah ball mixture into a smooth ball and add to the pot.
Repeat until all the matzah balls are in the pot.
Add Swiss chard.
Reduce heat back, cover the pot, and simmer for 30 minutes.
Serve hot soup with a matzah ball in each bowl, and garnish with what you like!

garnish
cilantro leaves mint leaves
purple radish, cut into thin strips (or any color radish!)
very light sprinkle of sumac
variations
I chose to keep this soup free of actual chicken pieces so that it could be thrown together quickly at all times, without having to run to the grocery store (or your freezer) for chicken or meat. However, if possible, I highly recommend adding a few pieces of chicken into the pot with the carrots, onion, and fennel and turning this into a full on Moroccan chicken soup.
If you don’t want to bother with raw chicken but want that bite of chicken anyway, you can always add already cooked shredded chicken to each bowl!

matzah balls

1 cup matzah meal
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp kosher salt
4 eggs, beaten
1/4 cup oil

In a medium bowl, combine matzah meal, baking powder, and salt. Add eggs and oil. Mix well to fully incorporate. Place plastic wrap directly on the mixture to cover well; place in the fridge for at least 1 hour or overnight.
To make matzah balls, bring soup or salted water up to a boil. Lightly oil your hands and then scoop up 2 tablespoons of the mixture. Roll into a ball and drop into the boiling liquid. Once all the matzah balls are in the liquid, reduce heat to low, cover the pot, and cook matzah balls 30 minutes, until cooked through.

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