CHICKPEAS WITH ONIONS, HONEY AND POMEGRANATE

By Susan Barocas

Chickpeas, *garbanzos* in Spanish, have been grown in the Iberian Peninsula for centuries, an abundant vegetarian source of protein appreciated by the Jews of Spain who first arrived with the Romans (who loved their chickpeas, in the 3rd century BCE. Sephardim then and now use chickpeas in soups, vegetable casseroles, stews with meat or fish and in dishes on their own such as this one. This dish features a savory and sweet combination of flavors and includes vinegar, an ingredient often used by the Sephardim in vegetable dishes and now a popular part of Spanish cuisine. The recipe is adapted from *A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews* and from my own research into the food of the Jews of Spain.

Serves 4-6

2 medium onions, diced (1/4 inch)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 tablespoon honey
1 cup pomegranate juice
3 teaspoons pomegranate molasses
1 teaspoon wine vinegar
2 15-ounce cans chickpeas, drained, or 3 cups cooked chickpeas
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
Seeds and juice of 1 pomegranate
Chopped parsley and a drizzle of pomegranate molasses for garnish (optional)

In a large pan, heat the oil over medium. Sauté the onions about 12-15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft and sweet, just starting to brown. Add the ginger and cloves to the pan and mix for a minute, letting the spices begin to release their aromas. Add the honey, pomegranate juice, molasses and vinegar to the pan. Stir well to blend. Add chickpeas, salt and pepper to the mixture and stir well. Simmer for 10-15 minutes to heat through and blend flavors. Adjust salt and pepper to taste. Add the pomegranate seeds and cook another minute or two. Serve hot, cold or at room temperature. Drizzle with pomegranate syrup and/or sprinkle with parsley before serving if desired.

Tip: Very lightly oil the measuring spoons for the honey and pomegranate molasses to get them to release easily.