Egg sambal 'shakshuka'

1½ tsp fennel seeds
2 whole cloves
seeds from 2 cardamom pods
½ tsp ground cinnamon
1½ tbsp medium curry powder
60ml olive oil
½ tsp black mustard seeds
20 curry leaves
1 red onion, halved and thinly sliced (160g)
10g ginger, peeled and finely grated
5 garlic cloves, crushed
10g coriander, stalks finely chopped and leaves to serve
150g datterini (or cherry) tomatoes
2 tsp sambal oelek
1 x 400g tin of crushed tomatoes
100ml tamarind concentrate
300ml water
15g palm (or light soft brown) sugar
5 eggs
salt and black pepper

Growing up in Malaysia, *nasi lemak* was something Helen ate a lot of. Wrapped in banana leaves and day-old newspaper, the little packs of coconut rice, spicy sambal, egg and cucumber are sold on nearly every street corner. While this recipe is very much *not nasi lemak*, it is nevertheless inspired *by* it. The egg and tomato sauce mingling in the pan reminds us, at the same time, of the Middle Eastern shakshuka which Yotam grew up eating. Serve with rice, flatbread or any bread you like.

Getting ahead: This can be made in advance, up to the point just before the eggs are cracked into the sambal. The sambal lasts well in the fridge for up to 3 days.

Serves 4

Put the fennel seeds, cloves and cardamom seeds into a small dry frying pan and place on a medium-low heat. Toast lightly for about 2 minutes, until fragrant, then grind to a powder in a spice grinder or a pestle and mortar. Add the cinnamon and curry powder and set aside.

Put 3 tablespoons of the oil into a large sauté pan (for which you have a lid) – about 26cm wide – and place on a medium heat. Add the mustard seeds and 10 curry leaves and cook for 1 minute, until the seeds begin to pop. Add the onion and cook for about 7 minutes, stirring frequently, until they are starting to colour. Add the ginger, garlic, coriander stalks and fresh tomatoes, cook for another 5 minutes, then add the fennel spice mix. Cook for 2 minutes, until fragrant, then add the sambal oelek, tinned tomatoes, tamarind, water, sugar and 1¼ teaspoons of salt. Stir well and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for 20–25 minutes, uncovered, until thickened.

Crack the eggs into the sambal and sprinkle a little salt and pepper over each egg. Cover the pan and cook for 7–8 minutes, until the egg whites are fully cooked and the yolks are soft.

Meanwhile, put the remaining tablespoon of oil into a small pan and place on a medium heat. Add the rest of the curry leaves, cook for about a minute, until very fragrant, then remove from the heat. When the eggs are ready, drizzle the oil and fried curry leaves over the eggs, scatter over the coriander leaves, and serve.

