

A COOKBOOK

# FALASTIN



Foreword by Yotam Ottolenghi

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**A COOKBOOK**

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## Foreword

I love Palestinian food. I probably love it more than any other cuisine. That's a tricky thing to say, I know, since I am not a Palestinian. As a Jewish boy from the Jerusalem of the 1970s and '80s, though, I probably had enough kubbeh, bamia, and ma'amoul for these magnificent foods to insert themselves deep in my young psyche. Not to mention those dishes that were also becoming part of the nascent Israeli cuisine—like falafel, hummus, and tabbouleh—either as a direct result of Palestinian influence on our food or through Jewish emigrants from the Arab world settling in the city.

I had been living outside Jerusalem for more than twenty years when I got to revisit all these pleasurable memories while writing *Jerusalem* with Sami



Tamimi in 2012. That book was an unashamed celebration of a rather eclectic set of dishes that Sami and I liked to eat growing up, or that we felt were instrumental to understanding the soul of our city. The job was complicated, politically, since we had to put aside the harsh reality of the occupation of the West Bank. But it was a labor of love: love of ingredients, love of our city, love of our families and childhood memories. Through our friendship, helped by a “healthy” distance of 3,600 kilometers separating London from Jerusalem, we told a story that was pure deliciousness and joy.

Once Sami and I put our proverbial pens down, though, we both knew that there was another story to tell, and that is the wider story of Palestinian cuisine: a tale of a formidable food nation that gave the region and the rest of the world some of its most beloved foods.

In *Falastin*, Tara and Sami have picked up the baton where it was left after *Jerusalem*. Once again, this is a purely delicious affair (you can take my word for it; I was lucky enough to be there when they tested the recipes). It is based on Sami’s childhood in Palestine and Tara’s journey into the universe of tahini, za’atar, and precarious savory rice cakes (i.e., maqlubeh). Being the two formidable culinary forces that they are, Tara and Sami are the best guides I can possibly think of to take you into this world, to learn, like me, to enjoy it and absolutely love it.

Yotam Ottolenghi





## **Introduction**

### **Falastin: the place and people**

This is a book about Palestine—its food, its produce, its history, its future, its There is no letter “p” in the Arabic language so “Falastin” is, on the one hand, simply people and their voices. It is a book about the common themes that all these the way “Falastinians” refer to themselves. On the other hand, though—and in the elements share, and how Palestine weaves narrative and cooking into the fabric Middle East there is always an “on the other hand”—the word is a big one, going far of its identity. The two go hand in hand. Recipes are like stories: events brought to beyond a straightforward label. It is about geography, history, language, land, identity, life and shared in the making and telling. They are passed from one person to the and culture. Ask a Palestinian what the word “Falastin” means to them: the answer next, and in that movement, some details change, others come to the fore, while will rarely be short and will often end with the word “home.”

others will be left by the wayside. And stories are like recipes: a series of individual For us, for the purposes of our book, “Falastin” is about all of these things.

experiences blended together to create a whole. Where stories and recipes Geographically, it refers to a small piece of land at the eastern-most corner



of intersect is the nexus, the point, of this book. Rather than telling “a” story or “the”

the Mediterranean Sea where Palestinians have been living for many centuries.

story of Palestine, then, we’re telling lots of stories. These come in the form of That this statement is so complicated by the fact that this land is also home to both our recipes and the profiles of some of the people and places we’ve met other peoples, Israelis, is something we are very mindful of. Our aim with *Falastin* along the way.

is to tread the fine line between paying heed to the situation on one hand and First, however, an outline of what is at the heart of this book: the story remembering, at the same time, that our book is first and foremost a celebration of of Falastin, the place and its people; the story of *Falastin*, our book; and the the food and people of Palestine.

story of Sami, your host, and and Tara, your guide.

As well as being a geographical label, it’s also about identity. For us, it embraces all those who identify as Palestinian, wherever in the world they’re now living. The Palestinian story, post 1948 and with the creation of Israel, could be seen as one of relocation. There are as many different stories as to why a Palestinian is now living where they are living as there are Palestinians. And with more than 12 million Palestinians worldwide, that’s a lot.

There are those who’ve chosen to live abroad and those who have had no choice but to live abroad. There are those who have been displaced closer to home and those who are still living where their parents and grandparents lived before them. Some have known nothing but life in a refugee camp and have never seen the nearby coast, and others have traveled the world freely and have now chosen to return. And then there are those who’ve never actually been to the country itself but who still strongly identify as Palestinian, through the stories and memories passed down from their Palestinian family.



The people of Palestine go by several different names, depending on whom you ask. Some favor “Palestinian,” others prefer “the people of the north,” “Arabs of the Nagev,” “Arab refugees” or “48ers.” “Arab-Israeli,” “Israeli-Arab” or “Palestinian-Israeli” are also used. For us, the words “Falastin” and “Falastinian” are inclusive, managing to incorporate all these various words at the same time as somehow transcending their often loaded meanings.

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At the same time as exploring the regions of Palestine, the purpose of *Falastin* is to be full of recipes that work for and delight the home cook today.

We really want you to cook from the recipes in our book—to find them practical and doable as well as delicious. This means you’ll find fewer recipes for stuffed vegetables in *Falastin* than you would in a “traditional” Palestinian cookbook, fewer recipes for celebratory dishes that take half a day to prepare, less call for hard-to-find kishek or jameed, the fermented discs of yogurt and wheat in which **Falastin: our book**

to bake a leg of lamb. Loyalty to the Palestinian pantry, though—and a reliance on the ground allspice and cumin, olive oil, pulses, grains, za’atar, sumac, lemons, yogurt, dill, garlic, and green chiles that fill it—is unwavering. Our recipes feel *Falastin* is a new kind of Palestinian cookbook: a contemporary collection of distinctly Palestinian, even when they are presented in a slightly new light. Luckily, more than 110 recipes we hope you’ll cook, eat, love, and make your own. It’s the for those living outside the Middle East, the Palestinian pantry is also one that can culmination of Sami’s lifetime obsession with Middle Eastern food and cooking—

be easily sourced and put together from mainstream stores and sites.

born and raised in East Jerusalem, relocated to London in his late twenties, As well as our recipes, another way to get to know the country is through its



and a founding member of Ottolenghi—and Tara’s decade-long obsession with people. When talking about Palestine in general terms, conversation can quickly turn to Middle Eastern food and home cooking—raised in London and adopted into the home to become political and difficult. The day-to-day frustrations for a Palestinian trying to join the Ottolenghi family.

go about their business, when heard by those who don’t need to carry an ID card with them. The recipes come, therefore, from all sorts of places. Some are those Sami likes and others require a permit to travel around their country, are easy not to comprehend.

grew up with and which will always remind him of home. His father’s easy za’atar For most Palestinians in the West Bank, the reality of checkpoints, a separation wall, eggs, for example, or his mother’s buttermilk fattoush. Others are those most and the complicated systems and differing rules surrounding areas A, B, and C (see *Palestinians* grew up on: classics such as chicken musakhan or the upside-down page 130 for more on this) makes, frankly, for a pretty grim picture.

rice cake, maqlubeh. One recipe—that for hummus—remains untouched from *Focus* in, though—travel around the country meeting and eating with when Sami first published it in his second cook book, *Jerusalem*. After all, there are people—and the picture painted is a different one. The link between the land and the some things that can’t be played around with or improved upon.

produce and the people who grow, farm, and make it is strong. Meet someone who We haven’t felt bound by a set list of “traditional Palestinian dishes,”

explains how they make their labneh or yogurt from the milk of their own sheep or goat. We’d rather shine a new light on an old classic than re-create it verbatim.

goat, for example, or smell the fresh za’atar leaves on a small farm holding on a sunny day. Doing this—“playing around”—is a risk, we know, because loyalty to the way a spring afternoon, and the outlook is clearly brighter. How things are seen depends on dish is cooked is not, of course, just about



the dish. It's about tradition and identity who is looking and through what lens. For all the differing points of view, though, the and being able to own these things through food. The process has not always been reality of someone's story—the story they live with day in, day out—cannot be denied.

easy for Sami. Like a lot of Palestinian chefs working today, this tension—between This is why we want to tell the story of *Falastin* through profiles as well as recipes.

a sense of loyalty to the way a dish is traditionally cooked and the desire to move it These are not our stories. They're not even always our views. They are, however, stories forward so as to keep it fresh and relevant—is keenly felt.

we've been moved to tell from people whom we've met.

If *Jerusalem* was Sami and Yotam's joint effort to celebrate the food of their Writing these stories—indeed writing a Palestinian cookbook—feels like hometown and bring it to a wider audience, then *Falastin* is Sami and Tara's focus a big responsibility. All the food and hospitality that a recipe book celebrates must in on the food of Palestine. Speaking in general terms about “Middle Eastern” food be served, in the case of Palestine, against a very sobering backdrop. We want this is rather like saying “European food,” or “Italian food”: it does not pay heed to all backdrop to be properly painted—things cannot be changed until they are fully the distinct people, produce, and dishes that distinguish one country from another seen—but, also, our hope is that everyone will come around the table to cook, eat, within a region. It doesn't allow for the importance of sumac in a dish such as and talk. When *Jerusalem* was published, Sami was asked many times, with varying chicken musakhan to shine, for example, or reveal how many Gazan dishes have degrees of irony to seriousness, about the role hummus could play in the Middle the trio of dill, garlic, and chile shaping them. It doesn't tell us anything about the Eastern peace process. On the one hand, as Sami used to say, it's only food. It's red tahini of Gaza or the white salty cheese of Nablus or Akka. Keeping our focus chickpeas, it's lemons, it's tahini. At the same time, though, food can mean more.



exclusively on Palestine allows us to explore not only the food of this land and Sharing food is not just about sharing food. It's about sharing time, space, ideas, people, but the regional differences within.

and stories.

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in cooking, more than thirty nieces and nephews had been born, siblings had got divorced and remarried, and Sami's father had died. A long time for everything to change but, at the same time, for nothing to change when Sami, after nearly twenty years, went home to reunite with his family.

Sinking into one of the enormous sofas lining the walls of his sister Sawsan's sitting room, Sami knew exactly what would follow. A cold sweet juice first appears, innocently suggesting that, this time, he might be let off the onslaught of food, gossip, and teasing to come. Wishful thinking, of course. Next, little bowls of nuts and pickles, saucers of olive oil and za'atar, chopped salad, Arabic salad, monk's salad, and tabbouleh salad are shared. Then the magnificent



“upside down” maqlubeh appears, in all its glory, flipped over onto a large platter, ready to be tucked into and served with thick yogurt.

And finally, of course—this is a family, after all—the teasing. For all the big, probing questions that could follow so much time apart, Sami and his siblings just tease each other instead. About growing old and growing tummies and joking about things they used to do as kids. Everyone thinks everyone else is just a little bit bonkers—everyone is a bit bonkers!—no one really listens but, at the same time, the love in the air is thick enough to bottle. In the absence of words that can do justice to a family’s longing to connect, it falls on the food they are sharing to do the job. Bread is torn apart and handed around.

### **Sami Tamimi: your host**

Maybe this scene contains some clues to the question of what got Sami into the kitchen and kept him there for so long. Maybe it was the memory of his mother’s food—which played such a big and important part in the first six years Palestinian home cooks tend to be women. Palestinian cookbooks tend to be of Sami’s life—and his desire never to let this connection disappear. Maybe it was written by women sharing the recipes they have, in turn, learned from the women his memory of the food of Palestine more generally—carried with him every time in their lives. Stories of wise ums and tetas – mothers and grandmothers—and he drizzles tahini on his toast or sprinkles a pinch of za’atar on his morning eggs or aunties pepper the pages of the traditional Palestinian cookbook. This Palestinian white cheese. Maybe it was the sheer *lack* of questions being asked when you are home cook and chef, though, lost his mother when he was young—Sami’s mother in the kitchen, on your feet, working hard and working fast. Sometimes it’s enough died when he was just seven—and he spent much of his childhood being shooed just to be getting food that makes you happy on the table for people who are away from the kitchen by aunties and sisters.

hungry in the hope that it, too, will make them happy. Maybe he’s just really, really How did this little Palestinian boy from East Jerusalem—whose place was good at grilling wedges of eggplants. Maybe it’s all these things combined.



certainly *not* meant to be in the kitchen—then end up spending the best part of his *Falastin* is the book that brings things full circle for Sami. It's his love letter life at the stove?

to his country and also to his mother. It's also for his Falastinian family more Sami left the cobbled streets of East Jerusalem when he was seventeen.

generally, whom he traveled from all those years ago but for whom, really, he still Home was full and busy growing up. On top of the seven kids, Sami's dad, Hassan, cooks every day.

had with Na'ama, Sami's mother, five more were born after he remarried. Twelve kids calls for a lot of pita and a really big pot. Hungry for life further afield, Sami **Tara Wigley: your guide**

headed first to West Jerusalem, finding work washing dishes in a hotel restaurant, before moving on to Tel Aviv. He spent twelve years there, learning his trade, the Tara has been part of the Ottolenghi family since 2010. She turned up on her bike, last five spent at Lilith, which was the restaurant to be at then. Setting sail next fresh out of cooking school in Ireland, where she'd been for three months. She'd for London, Sami firmly found his feet at Baker & Spice, where he met Yotam gone there with her eighteen-month-old twins and a great big Bosnian dog named Ottolenghi and soon after they set up Ottolenghi together.

Andie. Tara was leaving a decade in publishing. The plan—the answer to the question Life then happened and, before Sami knew it, the gap between leaving home of why she was trading in words and writing for food and cooking—was not yet clear.

and returning to see his family was seventeen years. Seventeen years is a long Luckily, though, Tara didn't need to see the light. In the Ottolenghi family, it time and a lot had changed. At the same time as Sami was becoming a big name quickly became clear, you *can* actually have your cake and eat it; you could learn to 14





cook and still work with words. After a few years collaborating with Yotam on both the writing and cooking of his recipes in the test kitchen, Tara focused exclusively on the writing side of things. She remains a passionate home cook and knows very well how to fill a table with a feast.

For all that Tara is, then—food writer, feast-maker, home cook, mom—she is not, clearly, Palestinian. She has traveled the country many times over several years, inadvertently run the Palestine marathon (the plan was to do just the half!), and fully immersed herself in the food but, still, the point needs addressing. When it comes to all things Palestinian, questions about legitimacy, ownership, and who gets to tell the story are very close to the surface. It's one of the reasons why we wanted to tell lots of stories—through the profiles—rather than “a” story or “the”

story (or even “Sami’s” story).

Tara’s story, indeed, is more one of growing up in south London, eating lots of pork tenderloins, smashed thin, dipped in breadcrumbs, and pan-fried.



When it came to inheriting recipes from grannies, the heights of exoticism came from the package of Angel Delight tipped out into a bowl and whisked up with milk. With a choice of five flavors and with a sponge finger sticking out of the side, the pinnacle of 1980s sophistication had clearly been reached.

It's all a far cry, indeed, from the world of tahini and olive oil that Tara is dripping in today. Pomegranates and za'atar were things she wasn't going to hear of, let alone taste, for another thirty years. The first thing Tara remembers saying to Sami, in fact, was that she thought preserved lemons tasted like soap!

Little did she know that, far from tasting of soap, these little bursts of flavor would be the beginning of her culinary epiphany. That her love of food was not going to come in five flavors with a sponge finger sticking out the side; that her home was soon going to be filled with the smell of eggplants charring on the stove and that her fruit bowl was going to be taken over by lemons. Barely a meal now gets made without the chopped skin and flesh of a preserved lemon being added.

Tahini sauce is included in every supper, every egg gets sprinkled with za'atar and drizzled in olive oil, and shatta is such an addiction that she and Sami now think of it as “shat *tara*.” Tara is knee-deep stuck in tahini and, as anyone who has ever been stuck knee-deep in tahini knows, it's wonderfully impossible to get out. This is not Tara's story to tell, but it is her adventure. If any of our readers become half as obsessed with tahini or shatta as Tara has become since discovering them, then we'll know that the adventure has been a shared one.

Sahtein! Welcome to *Falastin*: a book of recipes and stories. Our hope with the recipes is that they will bring you lots of great meals, good times, and a strong connection with Palestinian cooking. Our hope with the stories is that they make you want to find out more, talk more, question more, ask more. The story of Palestine—its past, present, and, crucially, its future—needs to keep being told, heard, and celebrated.





## **BREAKFAST**



Breakfast in Palestine is a proper meal. This is no quick bowl of cereal or piece of fruit eaten on the go: it's a spread of dishes, often savory, served



with sweet mint tea or a short black coffee, to really fuel you up for the day. “Go to work on an egg,”

indeed. And then some! We have included some quick one-bowl options—fruit and yogurt with sesame crumble, for example, and easy eggs with za’atar and lemon—

but if you want to make a feast of it, then breakfast is a great place to start.

Breakfast, in fact, is where it all started for Sami, whose first job at age sixteen was working as a kitchen porter in a large hotel in West Jerusalem. Seeing Sami pay more attention to what the chefs were doing than to the dirty dishes at hand, head chef Hans saw his potential and soon moved him up to breakfast service.

Cracking about 300 eggs every morning to make scrambled eggs for 150 hungry people allowed Sami to perfect the art of cracking eggs—with conviction, in short—

to learn how to make scrambled eggs in a pot wider than his sixteen-year-old skinny self, and, to know that he’d found the place he was meant to be.

If either the thought of 300 eggs or, indeed, some of what is included on the breakfast table in Palestine all sounds like a bit too much for the early morning, that’s totally fine. One of the many great things about the dishes in this chapter is that they all work as well for lunch and supper (or even dessert, in the case of the yogurt and fruit bowl) as they do first thing.

On the table there can be bowls of thick, creamy, warm hummus. All sorts of pickles and olives sit alongside, with a bowl of plain yogurt and a freshly chopped salad. Cubes of white cheese might also be there, sprinkled with za’atar, sumac, or little black nigella seeds and drizzled generously with olive oil. Or a thick spread of labneh, hard-boiled eggs, and sliced cucumber. Little cubes of halva, maybe, if something sweet is wanted to go with a short black coffee. Whatever the combination of dishes, the holy trinity that is lemon juice, olive oil, and za’atar should always be within arm’s reach in order to make everything sing. And bread, always bread: warm, fluffy, and freshly baked. If you want to bake for the breakfast table,



there are a few recipes in the bread and pastries chapter that work particularly well. See page 282

for the Jerusalem sesame bread, for example, or page 287 for sweet tahini rolls.

For those with more time at the weekend, things such as falafel, fritters, labneh, and pickles really come into play. These are as good for snacks before supper as they are for breakfast, so have a look through the Snacks, Spreads and Sauces.

## 20 Breakfast



**Hassan's easy eggs with  
za'atar and lemon**



These eggs will always remind Sami of his father, Hassan, who used to make them at the weekend for Sami and his siblings. It's proof, if ever proof were needed, that few things are not improved by the addition of some good-quality olive oil, a squeeze of lemon, and a sprinkle of za'atar. Serve with some warm bread or pita to mop up the oil.

Serves four

*Playing around:* Eggs pair well with all sorts of chile flakes, so use what you 6 eggs

have: Urfa chile flakes look particularly great, if you have some, and bring a 1½ tbsp lemon juice

smoky flavor. Sumac can replace the za'atar, and cubes of creamy avocado 3 tbsp olive oil

are also a lovely addition.

1 tbsp za'atar

Salt and black pepper

2 green onions, finely sliced

(¼ cup/20g)

Bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil and carefully lower in the eggs.

⅓ tsp Aleppo (or any other)

Boil for 5–6 minutes, then rinse at once under plenty of cold running water.

chile flakes

Meanwhile, whisk together the lemon juice, olive oil, and za'atar and set aside.



Peel and roughly quarter the eggs, by hand so that they're not too neat, and arrange on a serving plate, yolk side up. Sprinkle with ¼ tsp of salt and a generous grind of black pepper and drizzle the lemon juice–olive oil mix over the top. Sprinkle with the green onions and chile flakes and serve at once.

## 22 Breakfast

### **Fresh herb omelette with**

### **Fruit and yogurt with sesame oat crumble**

### **caramelized onions**

### **and tahini-date syrup**

### *Ijeh*

For those who like yogurt and fruit in the morning, rather than a more hearty chickpea-based breakfast, this is a great (though not strictly traditional) Palestinian omelettes have a little bit of flour and baking powder added to choice. The crumble is unusually *unsweet*, by a lot of granola standards, the mix. This (along with the fact that they are fried in a generous amount which we love, allowing for the tahini-date syrup to really stand out.

of olive oil) makes them something between an omelette, a pancake, and Serves four

Serves four

a frittata. They're crisp around the edges, puffed up in the middle, and *Getting ahead:* Double or triple the recipe for the crumble, if you like, so comforting through and through. The fresh herbs and white cheese are that you're all set for the next breakfast (or snack). It keeps well in a sealed 7 tbsp/110ml olive oil

Sesame crumble



traditional, the caramelized onions less so.

container for 2 weeks.

2 tbsp unsalted butter

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup/50g white sesame seeds

Ijeh can be eaten either warm and fresh from the pan, for breakfast or a light 3 onions, thinly sliced

3 tbsp black sesame seeds (or just

supper, or at room temperature later if taken to work or on a picnic. Serve ( $3\frac{3}{4}$  cups/450g)

increase total of white sesame

with a chopped or leafy salad (see pages xx and xx, respectively) and some 8 eggs, beaten

seeds to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/75g)

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

bread, if you like.

$2\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp all-purpose flour

$1\frac{2}{3}$  cups/150g rolled oats

6 green onions, trimmed and

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup/50g sliced almonds

To make the crumble, stir together all the sesame seeds, the oats, almonds, *Playing around:* Use whatever soft herbs you have and like—dill, chives, finely sliced ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/60g)



¼ tsp flaky sea salt

salt, and cardamom in a large mixing bowl. Put the peanut butter, honey, egg tarragon, basil, cilantro—in any combination; they all work well. Just keep 1 green chile, seeded and

1½ tsp cardamom pods (about 14),

white, rose water, and oil into a separate bowl and whisk until well combined.

the total amount about the same.

finely chopped

outer shells crushed, removed

Add the wet mixture to the dry ingredients and, using a rubber spatula or your 1 cup/20g parsley leaves, half

and discarded; seeds crushed in a

hands, mix until everything is well coated. Spread out on the prepared baking *Getting ahead*: You can double or triple the quantities for the caramelized roughly chopped and the

mortar and pestle (or ¼ tsp ground

sheet and bake for 18–20 minutes, stirring once or twice during baking, until onions; they keep well in the fridge for up to 5 days and are lovely to have remainder left whole

cardamom)

golden brown. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool completely, then around, to make more omelettes with or to spoon on top of cheese and bread.

20g mint leaves, half



3 tbsp smooth unsweetened

transfer to a food processor. Blitz as far as you want to take it: for just a few roughly chopped and the

peanut butter

seconds if you want to keep the crumble rough and granola-like, or for longer remainder left whole

5 tbsp/ 100g honey

if you prefer the texture sandy.

$\frac{3}{4}$  tsp dried mint

1 egg white

Put 2 tbsp of oil and all the butter into a medium frying pan and place over  $4\frac{1}{2}$  oz/125g feta, roughly crumbled

1 tbsp rose water

To make the tahini-date syrup, place all the ingredients in a bowl .Whisk well medium-high heat. Add the onions and cook for about 20 minutes, stirring Salt and black pepper

2 tbsp olive oil

to combine and set aside.

from time to time, until deep brown and caramelized. Set aside for about  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp baking powder

10 minutes, to cool.

$2\frac{1}{2}$  tsp za'atar

Divide the yogurt between four bowls and drizzle on the tahini-date syrup.



Tahini-date syrup

Follow this with a generous helping of the crumble—and top with the fruit,  
3 tbsp/date syrup

Put the eggs and flour into a mixing bowl and whisk well to combine, then  
pistachios, and rose petals (if using) and serve.

3 tbsp/ tahini

add the green onions, chile, chopped parsley, chopped mint, dried mint, 2  
tsp orange blossom water

1¾ oz/50g of feta, ¾ tsp salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Mix well to  
*Pictured on the next page*

3 tbsp water

combine. Add the baking powder, mix again to combine, and set aside.

Combine the caramelized onions with the whole herbs, remaining 2¾ oz/

2½ cups/600g Greek yogurt

75g feta, and 1½ tsp of za'atar, and set aside.

⅔ cup/80g strawberries, quartered

¼ cup/ 40g pomegranate seeds

Put 2 tsp of oil into a medium frying pan and place over medium-high heat.

(from ½ a pomegranate)

Add 4–5 tbsp of the egg mixture—about 1¼ oz/35g if you're weighing out  
—

½ cup/ 60g pistachios,



and cook for about 1½ minutes, until the bottom is golden. Using a spatula, roughly chopped

carefully flip the omelette and cook for another 30 seconds or so, until 2 tsp dried rose petals (optional)

golden brown on both sides. Carefully slide the omelette onto a plate and return the pan to the heat. Repeat the process with the remaining oil and egg mixture, to make eight omelettes in total.

Divide the omelettes between four plates, two per person. Top with the caramelized onions, sprinkle with the remaining 1 tsp of za'atar, and serve.

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Breakfast 25



**Scrambled red shakshuka**

**Green shakshuka**

Shakshuka: the signature breakfast of the Middle East. It's a wonderfully *Playing around*: Chunks of feta dotted on top are a lovely addition here; instead informal dish, brought to the table in the pan it's cooked in and



served of, or as well as, the yogurt. A final sprinkle of za'atar also works really well.

straight from there. There are so many versions of shakshuka, all variations on the same theme of eggs cooked in a nice thick sauce. The eggs are usually *Getting ahead*: As with the red shakshuka opposite, the base can be prepared a braised, which is what we've done with the green shakshuka opposite. Here day or two in advance if you want to get ahead. If you do this, just hold back on they've been gently scrambled.

adding the lemon juice (as well as the eggs) until you are ready to eat. Adding the lemon juice too early to the leaves will cause them to discolor.

Serves two generously

Serves four

*Getting ahead*: The base sauce can be made a day or two ahead, up to the point before the eggs are added. The feta can also be marinated up to 3 days  
1½ oz/45g feta, roughly crumbled

2½ tbsp olive oil

in advance. Make more of the feta than you need here, if you like; it's a lovely ¼ cup/5g parsley leaves, roughly

1 tsp green shatta (see page 73)

thing to dot over roasted wedges of sweet potato, or all sorts of salads.

Mix 1½ tsp of olive oil with the shatta (or harissa) and set aside.

chopped

(or green harissa, as an alternative)

¾ tsp Aleppo chile (or ½ tsp regular

1 tbsp unsalted butter



*Playing around:* The shakshuka base can go in all sorts of directions and Put the remaining 2 tbsp oil and all the butter into a large sauté pan with a lid chile flakes)

1 large leek, halved lengthwise and

colors—red here with the tomatoes and red bell pepper, or green with any and place over medium heat. Once hot, add the leek, then decrease the heat 5 tbsp/75ml olive oil

the white parts sliced  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch/2cm

leaves and herbs in need of using up. Either way, it's a really versatile and to medium-low and cook for 6 minutes, covered, stirring a few times, until the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp coriander seeds, lightly

thick ( $1\frac{2}{3}$  cups/180g)

robust dish, so feel free to play around with the spices and toppings. Spice-leek has softened but has not taken on any color.

toasted and roughly crushed

14 oz/400g Swiss chard, leaves

wise, for example, smoked paprika and roughly crushed caraway seeds in a mortar and pestle

pulled off the stems and chopped

work in the red shakshuka instead of the regular paprika and cumin seeds.

Add the chard stems—in batches, if you need to—and green onions and 1 onion, thinly sliced ( $1\frac{2}{3}$  cups/150g)

into roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch/2cm

Toppings-wise, for either of the shakshukas, chunks of tangy feta, black cook for another 6 minutes, covered, stirring occasionally, until completely



1 red bell pepper, seeded and cut

pieces; stems cut into roughly

olives, or finely chopped preserved lemon peel work well dotted on top. A softened. Add the chile, garlic, and ground spices and cook, uncovered, for into long slices, ½ inch/1cm thick

¾-inch/2cm dice

drizzle of tahini or a spoonful of yogurt is also great when serving, along with 1 minute before adding the chard leaves, parsley, dill, and ¾ tsp of salt. Stir (5 oz/140g)

6 green onions, thinly

some crusty fresh bread and a crisp green salad.

to wilt slightly, then add the water and cook for 10 minutes, covered, until the 3 garlic cloves, crushed

sliced (¾ cup/60g)

leaves cook down and completely wilt. Add the lemon juice, then use a spoon ½ tsp cumin seeds, lightly toasted

½ green chile, finely chopped

to make four wells in the mix. Crack an egg into each well and sprinkle each and roughly crushed in a mortar

(1½ tsp/5g)

one lightly with salt and pepper. Cover the pan and cook for a final 4 minutes and pestle

1 garlic clove, crushed



Place the feta in a bowl with the parsley, ½ tsp of Aleppo chile, 3 tbsp of oil or so, until the egg whites are set but the yolks are still runny. Dot the shatta-1 tsp tomato paste

¾ tsp ground cumin

and ½ tsp of coriander seeds. Mix well and set aside (in the fridge if making in oil mix over the eggs and serve at once, with a spoonful of yogurt alongside, ¼ tsp paprika

¾ tsp ground coriander

advance) until needed.

if desired.

5–6 tomatoes, roughly chopped

1 cup/20g parsley leaves,

Put the remaining 2 tbsp oil into a large sauté pan with a lid and place over (1 lb 2 oz/500g)

roughly chopped

*Pictured on the next page*

medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook for 5 minutes, until softened and 2½ oz/75g cherry tomatoes

Salt and black pepper

lightly browned. Add the bell pepper, cook for another 5 minutes, then add 2 tsp shatta (see page 73);

7 tbsp/100ml water

the garlic, cumin seeds, tomato paste, paprika, and remaining 1 tsp coriander or rose harissa)



½ cup/10g dill, roughly chopped

seeds. Cook for another minute, until fragrant, and then add all the tomatoes, ⅓ cup/80ml water

1 tbsp lemon juice

the shatta (or harissa), water, 1 tsp of salt, and a generous grind of black Salt and black pepper

4 eggs

pepper. Cook over medium heat for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, 4 eggs, lightly beaten

Greek yogurt, to serve (optional)

until the tomatoes have broken down and the sauce has thickened.

Add a pinch of salt and a good grind of black pepper to the eggs and mix well.

Slowly pour this into the tomato mixture, swirling the pan and giving it a couple of gentle folds: you don't want the eggs to be too mixed in. Decrease the heat to medium-low, cover the pan, and let cook for 4 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat, spoon the marinated feta over the top, sprinkle with the remaining ¼ tsp Aleppo chile and serve at once.

*Pictured on the next page*

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## **Ful medames**

Ful medames is best known as an Egyptian staple. It's just as popular in Palestine, though, particularly during Ramadan where it's often served for suhur, the pre-fast Ramadan meal. As with all pulses, the dish either sets



you up for the day if eaten in the morning or provides comfort at the end of it if eaten for a simple supper. Warm pita, as ever, is a must.

*Playing around:* We've given the directions for some sumac onions, a simple Serves two generously, or four if

salsa and a soft-boiled egg but, really, you can go in all sorts of directions: bulked up with an egg and pita

fried eggs, a simple sprinkle of parsley, some chopped green onions, coarsely grated hard-boiled eggs—they all work well.

3 x 14-oz/400g cans cooked

fava beans, drained and rinsed

*Dried vs. canned fava beans:* We choose to start with canned beans here (2¾ cups/470g)

because they are easier to find than dried and, also, they cook with much 3 lemons: squeeze 2 to get 5 tbsp/

more consistency. Dried beans also require peeling, which rather takes the 70ml juice and cut the third into

edge off the quick morning option (see page 340 for more on this).

wedges, to serve

*Getting ahead:* This dish is very quick and easy to make. It basically involves 4 garlic cloves, crushed

opening a few cans of beans, mashing them with a fork, heating them ½ a green chile, finely chopped

through with spices, and topping them as you like. If you want to get ahead, 1½ tsp ground cumin



all the elements can be made up to a day in advance, then warmed through,  
Salt

and put together just before serving.

½ small red onion, thinly

sliced (½ cup/60g)

¾ tsp sumac

¼ cup/5g picked parsley leaves

Pour 1 quart/1 liter of water into a medium saucepan and bring to a boil.  
Add 1 large avocado, cut into ¼-inch/

the beans and simmer over medium heat for 5 minutes, just to warm  
through ½cm dice

and soften up. Drain, reserving about 3 tbsp of the water, and return the  
beans 1 tomato, cut into ¼-inch/

to the pan. Add the reserved cooking water to the beans, along with 2½ tbsp  
½cm dice (⅓ cup/70g)

of lemon juice, the garlic, chile, cumin, and ¾ tsp of salt. Using a fork,  
crush 2 tbsp olive oil

the beans to form a rough mash. Set aside (or keep warm, if eating soon) 4  
soft-boiled eggs, to serve

until needed.

(optional)

Warm pita bread (see page 278),

Place the onion in a bowl with ¼ tsp of salt. Use your hands to rub the salt  
in to serve



a bit, then set aside for 10 minutes, for the onion to soften. Mix in the sumac and parsley and set aside until needed.

Put the avocado and tomato in a bowl with the remaining 2 tbsp lemon juice and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of salt. Mix to combine and set this salsa aside.

To serve, heat up the fava bean mixture, if needed, then transfer it to a large serving platter. Smooth out the surface and make a little well in the center. Top with the salsa, followed by the onion and drizzle on the oil. Serve as is, with a wedge of lemon to squeeze over, or with a soft-boiled eggs on top, if desired, and some warm pita alongside.

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**Warm hummus with toasted bread  
and pine nuts**

*Fattet hummus*



*Fatteh* roughly translates as “crushed” or “crumbled.” It refers to a group of dishes where chunks of flatbread (either stale bread in need of using up, or fresh) are layered in a dish with various toppings. Fattet hummus, where the Serves six for breakfast or

layers are chickpea, tahini, and yogurt, feels like a sort of savory chickpea as a side for lunch or supper

“bread pudding.” It’s warm, comforting, hearty, and rich and can be eaten for breakfast, lunch, or supper.

3 pitas (shop-bought or see

*Dried vs. canned chickpeas:* Instructions are given for dried chickpeas. If page 278 for homemade), torn

starting with canned, drain and rinse the chickpeas and put them into a pan into roughly 1-inch/2cm pieces

with 2½ cups/600ml of water, 1 tsp of ground cumin, and the 4 whole garlic (7 oz/200g)

cloves. Simmer for 8–10 minutes, then transfer to a blender or food processor, 6 tbsp/90ml olive oil

as per the recipe instructions, along with the yogurt, tahini, lemon juice, and 1½ tsp ground cumin

remaining garlic.

Salt

½ cup/10g parsley leaves,

finely chopped

2 lemons: finely grate the zest

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.



of 1 (to get 1 tsp), then squeeze

both to get  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml juice

Put the pita pieces into a bowl with 2 tbsp of olive oil,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of cumin and  $1\frac{1}{3}$  cups/250g dried chickpeas,

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of salt. Mix well until coated, then tip out onto the prepared baking soaked overnight in double their

sheet. Bake for 20–25 minutes, or until the pita is golden and crispy. Transfer volume of water and 1 tsp baking

two-thirds of the pita to a 9 x 13-inch/23 x 33cm dish with sides that rise soda (or  $3\frac{3}{4}$  cups/600g cooked

up about 3 inches/8cm (or individual plates with a lip, if making individual chickpeas—from about 3 cans)

portions) and set the remaining third aside.

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp baking soda (you don't

need this if you are starting

Combine the parsley, lemon zest, remaining 4 tbsp/60ml of olive oil, and with canned chickpeas)

$\frac{1}{8}$  tsp of salt in a small bowl and set aside.

5 garlic cloves; 4 peeled and left

whole, 1 crushed

Drain the chickpeas and put them into a large saucepan with a lid, along  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup/200g Greek yogurt

with the  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of baking soda, 4 whole garlic cloves, and remaining 1 tsp of Rounded  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/150g tahini



ground cumin. Pour in 1 quart/1 liter of water and bring to a boil over high heat. Lower to a simmer, cover loosely with the lid and cook over medium-low for 30–40 minutes, stirring a few times, removing the scum as you go. Add a bit more water, if you need to, to keep the chickpeas submerged, until they are completely soft and cooked through. Stir in ½ tsp of salt, then (without draining the chickpeas, as you need the cooking water later on) transfer just under half the cooked chickpeas (1¼ cups/200g) to a blender or food processor along with the yogurt, tahini, lemon juice, the crushed garlic clove, ¾ tsp of salt, and 7 tbsp/100ml of the hot cooking liquid. Blitz until smooth and set aside. Keep this and the remaining chickpeas in the pan warm.

½ cup/60g pine nuts, lightly

heat. Lower to a simmer, cover loosely with the lid and cook over medium-low for 30–40 minutes, stirring a few times, removing the scum as you go. Add a bit more water, if you need to, to keep the chickpeas submerged, until they are completely soft and cooked through. Stir in ½ tsp of salt, then (without draining the chickpeas, as you need the cooking water later on) transfer just under half the cooked chickpeas (1¼ cups/200g) to a blender or food processor along with the yogurt, tahini, lemon juice, the crushed garlic clove, ¾ tsp of salt, and 7 tbsp/100ml of the hot cooking liquid. Blitz until smooth and set aside. Keep this and the remaining chickpeas in the pan warm.

are completely soft and cooked through. Stir in ½ tsp of salt, then (without draining the chickpeas, as you need the cooking water later on) transfer just under half the cooked chickpeas (1¼ cups/200g) to a blender or food processor along with the yogurt, tahini, lemon juice, the crushed garlic clove, ¾ tsp of salt, and 7 tbsp/100ml of the hot cooking liquid. Blitz until smooth and set aside. Keep this and the remaining chickpeas in the pan warm.

When ready to serve, top the pita in the baking dish (or individual plates) with half the pine nuts, two-thirds of the whole chickpeas, and 7 tbsp/100ml of their cooking liquid. Pour in all of the chickpea-tahini sauce and stir together.

Top with the remaining pita, the remaining chickpeas (but without any extra cooking liquid at this stage) and the remaining pine nuts. Spoon in the parsley oil and sprinkle with the sumac and paprika and serve at once.

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## **Hummus: two ways**

If anything is going to keep you going until lunch it's a dish of hummus to start the day. It's filling and hearty and pairs with all sorts of things. If meatballs seem a bit too epic for breakfast (though they're no more epic than the bacon or sausage we might not think twice about), try the version with fried eggplant.

Cubes of eggplant have a "meaty" quality that makes them a great substitute for meat, if you're looking for one.

Serves six

We like to double the quantity for the hummus and make both toppings at the same time so that there is something for everyone (and both things for some!).

Hummus



Either way, serve the hummus with warm pita (see page 278) for scooping, 250g dried chickpeas, soaked

along with a chopped salad (see page 92) to lighten things up. And if this still overnight in double their

all sounds a bit too much for breakfast, that's fine; it works just as well for volume of water

lunch or supper instead.

1 tsp baking soda

270g tahini

*Getting ahead:* Hummus should, ideally, be served freshly made and still 60ml lemon juice

warm. For anyone who's grown up on little tubs of hummus bought from the 4 garlic cloves, crushed

refrigerated section of a supermarket aisle, eating it while still warm, smooth, 100ml ice-cold water

creamy, and "loose" will be a revelation. If you do want to make it in advance, Salt

though, that's fine; just store it in an air-tight container and keep it in the fridge for up to 4 days. If the hummus develops a bit of a "skin" then just give it a stir Meatballs (for kofta version)

before serving. The most important thing if storing in the fridge, is to bring it 1 lb 2 oz/500g ground beef or veal

back to room temperature before serving, to warm and loosen up.

(or a mixture of both)



The meatballs can be made, rolled, and kept in the fridge for a day before 1 small onion, peeled and coarsely

serving, all ready to fry. If doing this, store them in an airtight container in the grated ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/120g)

fridge for up to 3 days, but don't pack them too tightly: you want them to keep 1 large tomato, coarsely grated and

their round shape. They also freeze well, for up to 1 month. If you fry them from skin discarded ( $\frac{1}{3}$  cup/65g)

frozen they will need a couple more minutes in the oven to warm through.

1 cup/20g parsley, finely chopped

1 red chile, seeded and finely

chopped

About  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml olive oil

To make the hummus, drain the chickpeas and place them in a medium Salt and black pepper

saucepan over high heat. Add the baking soda and cook for about 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Add  $1\frac{1}{2}$  liters of water and bring to a boil. Cook for Topping (for kofta version)

about 30 minutes—timing can vary from 20 to 40 minutes depending on  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/25g pine nuts

the freshness of the chickpeas—skimming off any foam that appears. The  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/5g parsley, roughly chopped

chickpeas are ready when they collapse easily when pressed between thumb  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp

and finger: almost but not quite mushy.



regular chile flakes)

A few small picked mint leaves

Drain the chickpeas and transfer them to a food processor. Process to form (optional)

a stiff paste and then, with the machine still running, add the tahini, lemon juice, garlic and 1½ tsp of salt. Finally, slowly drizzle in the iced water and Eggplants (for eggplant version)

continue to process for another 5 minutes: this will feel like a long time but 2 large eggplants, cut into roughly

it is what is needed to get a very smooth and creamy paste. Transfer to a ¾-inch/2cm cubes (6 cups/500g)

bowl and set aside at room temperature, until needed. If you are making it in Salt

advance then transfer to a sealed container and keep in the fridge. Remove it About 1¼ cups/300ml sunflower oil

half an hour before serving, to bring it back to room temperature, and give it 1½ cups/160g walnut halves,

a good stir if a “skin” has formed.

roughly chopped

½ cup/10g parsley leaves, roughly

*Continued on the next page*

chopped

½ cup/10g mint leaves, roughly

chopped



2 tbsp lemon juice

2 tbsp olive oil

½ tsp Aleppo chile flakes

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*If making the kofta version:* Place all the ingredients for the meatballs in a **Warm chickpeas with green chile sauce**

medium bowl with 1 tsp of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Using your hands, mix well to combine. With wet hands, roll the mixture into roughly **and toasted pita**

1¼-inch/3cm balls (weighing about ½ oz/15g each): you should make about 45 balls.

*Musabaha*

Put the tbsp of oil for the topping into a large frying pan and place over medium heat. Add the pine nuts and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. The word *musabaha* means “swimming” or “floating,” here describing the until they are golden brown. Spoon the nuts, along with the oil from the chickpeas floating around in the tahini sauce. It’s essentially hummus a step pan, into a little bowl and set aside.

or two before it gets blitzed. The dish should be warm and creamy enough to Serves four

eat with a spoon or a strip of pita. This is lovely for breakfast, lunch, or supper.

Add 1 tbsp of the oil for frying to the same pan and keep over medium heat.

Add a third of the meatballs—or as many as you can fit into the pan without 1⅓ cups/250g dried chickpeas,



*Getting ahead:* The toasted pita can be made up to a day ahead and kept in a overcrowded—and cook for about 3 minutes, turning throughout so that all soaked overnight in twice their

sealed container at room temperature. The green chile sauce can be made sides take on color and the balls are just cooked through. Keep them warm volume of water and 1 tsp baking

a few hours in advance, but hold back on the parsley until just before serving; while you continue with the remaining balls, adding another 1 tbsp of oil with soda (or 2 x 14 oz/400g cans of

it will discolor if it sits around. The chickpeas can be made a few hours in each batch.

cooked chickpeas)

advance and just warmed through to serve. Once assembled, the dish needs Salt

to be eaten fresh and warm.

When ready to serve, spoon the hummus into individual shallow bowls, creating a slight hollow in the center of each. Divide the meatballs between Toasted pita

the bowls, placing them in the middle of the hummus, and spoon over the 2 small pitas (see page xx;

pine nuts and their cooking oil. Sprinkle over the parsley, chile and mint, if about 5¼ oz/150g)

Drain the soaked chickpeas and put them in a large saucepan. Cover with using, and serve with a final drizzle of olive oil.

1 tbsp olive oil

plenty of cold water and place over high heat. Bring to a boil, skim the surface of the water, then decrease the heat to medium-low and simmer for



*If making the eggplant version:* Line two baking sheets with paper towels.  
Place Green chile sauce

45–60 minutes, adding 1 tsp of salt toward the end of the cooking time,  
until the eggplants in a colander placed over a bowl or in the sink and  
sprinkle with 1 green chile, seeded and

the chickpeas are very soft but still retain their shape. Drain the chickpeas, 1  
tsp of salt. Use your hands to mix well, then set aside for about 45 minutes;  
finely chopped

reserving 7 tbsp/100ml of the cooking liquid, and set aside.

this is so that the bitter juices can be released (see page 335 for more).  
Transfer 3 tbsp lemon juice

the eggplants to the prepared baking sheet and pat dry as best you can.

1½ tbsp white wine vinegar

If starting with canned chickpeas, drain them and place in a medium 1 large  
garlic clove, crushed

saucepan with enough water just to cover them. Place over medium heat,  
Put the sunflower oil into a medium frying pan and place over medium-high  
⅓ tsp salt

bring to a simmer, and cook for about 8 minutes, just to soften them up a  
heat. Once hot, add the eggplants—in two or three batches so as to not ¼  
cup/5g parsley, finely chopped

bit more. Add 1 tsp of salt toward the end of the cooking time. Drain the  
overcrowd the pan—and fry for about 8 minutes, until completely softened  
chickpeas, reserving 7 tbsp/100ml of the cooking liquid, and set aside.

and golden brown. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the eggplants to the 2  
tbsp olive oil, plus 1½ tbsp



second prepared baking sheet and set aside, for the excess oil to be absorbed, While the chickpeas are cooking, prepare the other elements of the dish.

4 large garlic cloves, crushed

while you continue with the remaining batches. Transfer the eggplants to a 1 green chile, finely chopped

bowl, add the walnuts, parsley, mint, lemon juice, olive oil, and Aleppo chile *Continued & Pictured on the next page*

1 tbsp ground cumin

and mix well to combine.

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup/100g tahini, plus about

Spoon the hummus into individual serving bowls, creating a small well in the  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/ 60g

middle of each portion. Spoon in the eggplant and serve at once.

6 tbsp/100g Greek yogurt

2 tbsp lemon juice

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp paprika

Parsley leaves, to sprinkle

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Set the oven to a 425°F broil setting.

To toast the pitas, pull open the pitas and tear each half in two. Brush the insides of the pitas lightly with the oil and place under the broiler for about 2 minutes, until crisp and golden brown. Keep a close eye on them while they are under the broiler so that they don't burn. Remove from the oven and, once cool enough to handle, break the pitas apart into roughly 1½-inch/4cm pieces. Set aside until ready to use.

To make the green chile sauce, mix together all the ingredients in a small bowl. If you are making this in advance, hold back on the parsley and just mix this in before serving. It will discolor if it sits around for too long.

Once the chickpeas are cooked and drained, put the 2 tbsp oil in a medium saucepan and place over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook for 2 minutes, stirring often, until the garlic is starting to color. Add the chile, cook for another 1 minute, then add the chickpeas, reserved cooking liquid, cumin, tahini, yogurt, lemon juice, and ½ tsp of salt. Bring to a boil, then decrease the heat to low and simmer for 2–3 minutes, stirring from time to time.

Transfer the warm chickpeas to a large serving platter with a lip or to a wide shallow bowl. Spoon in the green chile sauce and drizzle with the ¼



cup/60g tahini. Sprinkle with the paprika and parsley leaves and finish with the 1½ tbsp oil. Dot the toasted pita around and serve.

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**SNACKS,**  
**SPREADS,**  
**AND**  
**SAUCES**





The Palestinian table is only really happy when it's covered with food. Once the empty breakfast dishes get cleared away, the table is ready and waiting for the next array of snacks, spreads, and sauces. These are themselves just a prelude to the main meal later on. It's not, however, all about the food. A table constantly covered with all these dishes says a number of things.

The first thing it says is "Welcome!" Welcome to the table, everyone's invited and please tuck in! Please be hungry and try all sorts of things. It's a way to convey bounty, hospitality, and generosity. There will always be more than enough food on the table. If someone turns up unannounced, it's simply a case of pulling up an extra chair or making room on one of the great, big sofas.

The secret behind these "instantly appearing" spreads is, often, the freezer.

This way of cooking—of preparing things ahead and getting them into the freezer, ready for whenever they are needed—is a big part of the heart and



hospitality behind Palestinian cooking. “Hawader,” the name of the practice, translates roughly as “ready-to-eat.” Open most freezers across the West Bank, for example, and they will be full of things such as kubbeh (see page 71), fritters (see pages 66–7), breads and pastries, like fatayer (see page 296), or the open-topped flatbread sfiha (see page 226). Groups of women often get together for these big-batch cooking sessions, chatting as kubbeh is rolled and packed, fatayer is stuffed and shaped.

Freezers and friends: that winning combination behind so much feasting.

The second thing it says is “let’s share.” Maza or mezzeh are the small dishes, sharing plates or appetizers to have with a drink at the beginning of a meal.

With a large number of small plates filling the table, no one dish steals the show or acts as centerpiece. Similarly, no one person sits and works their way through a whole plate of m’tabbal (see page 82) or a bowl of labneh balls (see page 49). These are, by their very nature, informal “family style” dishes that need to be shared and passed around the table. It’s a way to say “let’s eat this together and let’s chat while we do.”

These dishes can also be a way of both cooking with the season and being able to still eat something when it is no longer in season. Preserving, pickling, drying, and fermenting all play a key part in supplying the Palestinian pantry.

It’s called “mooneh.” If *hawader* roughly translates as “filling up the freezer,” then *mooneh* translates as “filling up the pantry shelves” with things that last in glass jars for months. They’re often little flavor bombs—makdous, (see page 56) for example, labneh balls (see page 49), or shatta (see page 73)—there to reach for as a condiment to any meal. A table covered with spreads and dips says so much about the Palestinian way of preparing, cooking, and eating food. Welcome, tuck in, and pass around. Sahtein! May your health be redoubled!





### **Sweet and spicy seeds and nuts**

These are everything you want from a pre-supper snack: spicy, sweet, crunchy, and very, very craveable.

*Playing around:* The combination of cashews and seeds works really well here; the nuts remain crunchy while the seeds become chewy. A combination of other nuts works just as well, though; macadamias, Brazil nuts, almonds, for example. Use what you have, just keep the total amount of all the nuts and Serves four as a snack

seeds combined the same.

2 tbsp light brown sugar

*Keeping notes:* Double or triple the batch, if you like; they keep well in a 2 tsp flaky sea salt

sealed container for up to 2 weeks. If you do this, only increase the sugar by 1 tbsp olive oil



50 percent: the batch will become too syrupy otherwise. If you are doubling  
1 tsp mild curry powder

the recipe, for example, you'll only need to increase to 3 tbsp of brown  
sugar.

¼ tsp ground turmeric

All the other ingredients are fine to double.

½ tsp Aleppo chile flakes

(or ¼ tsp regular chile flakes)

2 tbsp water

1¼ cups/180g raw unsalted

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

cashews

Put everything except the cashews and seeds into a small saucepan. Bring 2  
tbsp sunflower seeds

to a boil over medium heat, stirring often, then add the nuts and seeds. Cook  
2 tbsp pumpkin seeds

for 3 minutes or so, stirring constantly, until the nuts and seeds are coated in  
a sticky glaze.

Transfer to the prepared baking sheet, then, using a spatula, spread the nuts  
out so that they're not stuck together. Bake for 14 minutes, stirring once  
halfway through, until golden. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool  
completely, then transfer to a serving bowl or to an airtight container if  
making in advance.



## Snacks, Spreads, and Sauces

### Labneh

#### Labneh balls

##### *Labneh tabat*

Labneh is an Arabic cheese made by draining yogurt so that it loses most of its liquid: the longer it's left to drain, the drier and firmer it becomes. You can either have it as it is, to cook with or just to spread on toast drizzled with olive *Playing around:* Play around with coatings and combinations here: a clash of oil and za'atar, or you can shape it into balls, for a pre-dinner snack.

colors and flavors works really well as part of a larger mezzeh spread. We've given instructions for a combination of chile flakes and za'atar, but all sorts Making labneh is one of those things that can feel like a step too far until you of coatings work. Nigella seeds, sesame seeds, other chile flakes (smoky actually get around to doing it and realize how simple it is. It honestly takes Makes about 2 cups plus

Makes about 20 balls, serves

Urfa or sweet Aleppo look great), sumac, chopped pistachios, for example, or more effort to hang out your laundry than it does to hang up your yogurt.

2tbsp/500g

ten as part of a larger spread

a combination of crushed garlic, chopped walnuts, and finely diced red chile.

Play around with the size of the balls as well—large balls work well as a snack *Playing around:* Use either a combination of goat-milk (or sheep-milk or ewe-3¾ cups/900g Greek yogurt (or

3¾ cups/900g Greek yogurt



or as part of a mezzeh spread; smaller balls work well for nibbles with drinks.

milk) yogurt and Greek yogurt or just stick to Greek yogurt. The combination a combination of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups plus

(or a combination of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups

option has a bit more of a tang, which we like, but they both work very well.

*Keeping notes:* The balls keep for up to 2 months in the fridge. The oil will set 2 tbsp/450g goat-milk yogurt

plus 2 tbsp/450g goat-milk

in the fridge, so you'll have to bring it back to room temperature before being and  $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups plus 2 tbsp/450g

*Keeping notes:* Once covered with (and therefore preserved by) oil, labneh yogurt and  $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups plus

able to remove the balls and coat them. Save the oil; it can be used again to Greek yogurt)

keeps in the fridge for up to 2 months. Without the oil it keeps for up 2 tbsp/450g Greek yogurt)

preserve future batches of labneh.

Salt

to 2 weeks.

About 2 cps/500ml olive oil

Olive oil, to seal

3 sprigs thyme or oregano,



or a mixture of both

1½ tbsp chile flakes

Line a baking sheet with a clean, damp piece of cheese cloth.

Line a deep bowl with cheesecloth or muslin and set aside.

(enough to coat 10 balls)

2½ tbsp za'atar (enough to

Follow the instructions in the previous recipe up to the point before it gets  
In a separate bowl, mix the yogurt(s) with 1 tsp of salt. Pour into the cloth-coat 10 balls)

transferred to an airtight sterilized container. Then, with lightly oiled hands, lined bowl, then bring the edges of the cloth together and wrap tightly to  
Salt

spoon a small amount—about ¾ oz/20g—of the labneh into the palm of one form a bundle. Tie firmly with a piece of twine. Hang the bundle over a bowl hand. Roll it around to shape it into a 1¼-inch/3cm ball, and transfer it to the (or attached to the handle of a tall jug so that the bundle can hang free—and prepared baking sheet. Continue with the remaining labneh until all the balls drip—inside the jug).

are rolled. Transfer to the fridge for a couple of hours (or overnight) to firm up.

Another method is to put the bundle into a sieve placed over a bowl, with the Half fill a jar (large enough to fit all the rolled labneh: about 4 inches/10cm weight of a plate, for example, or a couple of cans, sitting on top. This weight wide and 5 inches/12cm tall) or airtight container with the olive oil and add speeds up the draining process.

the balls. Top with more oil, if necessary—you want the balls to be completely covered with oil—and add the thyme or oregano. Seal the jar



and transfer to Let rest in the fridge for 24–36 hours, until much of the liquid is lost and the the fridge.

yogurt is thick and fairly dry.

When ready to coat—you can do this up to 1 day before serving—remove the Transfer the labneh to an airtight sterilized container or jar (see page 341); jar from the fridge and bring to room temperature, so that the oil becomes just top with enough olive oil so that the labneh is covered and sealed.

unset. Lift the balls out of the oil and roll them in the chile flakes or za'atar: *Pictured on the next page*

an easy way to do this is to spread your chosen coating on a plate, place a few balls at a time on top and shake the plate: the balls will be coated in seconds.

If not eating at once, return them to the fridge on a plate (but not in the oil).

Bring back to room temperature before serving, you don't want them to be fridge-cold.

*Pictured on the next page*

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Snacks, Spreads, and Sauces

Snacks, Spreads, and Sauces 49





### **The yogurt-making ladies of Bethlehem**

Meeting up with “the yogurt-making ladies of Bethlehem” felt a bit like doing a deal. Our friend Vivien Sansour (see page 106), who was in London when we were in Bethlehem, WhatsApped the number of her friend Siham Kalibieh to our friend Raya Manaa, who was driving us around. Siham, we were told, would point us in the right direction. We met Siham by what felt like chance. We were meant to meet on a street corner on the outskirts of



Bethlehem, but relying on Waze—our navigational tool of choice—was not always, we quickly found, entirely reliable.

Satellite Navigation, it turns out, can get just as confused as the next person trying to get its head around the geography of the area. We might be in what we thought of as Palestine as we drove around Bethlehem. Waze, on the other hand, rather than focusing in on any useful directions, just informed us that we were “*entering an area of high risk.*” The evidence, looking around us, bore no relation to the warning.

Happenstance was on our side. After a few left turns, a few right turns, and a few going-around-in-circles turns, we spotted the shop we’d been told to keep an eye out for and Siham was standing outside. Happily, she hopped in and, happily, sat nav was turned off in favor of our local in tow and in-the-know! Up a winding hill we went—more lefts and rights and bends—what a view!—before we were

“handed over,” package-like, to another lady, Majida Shaalan. She, in turn, led us through the main entrance to a block of apartments, up several flights of stairs and into her small home. It’s here, finally, that we met the local crew to see and sample the goods: “the yogurt-making ladies of Bethlehem” and their range of white (and yellowy-white) offerings.

From where it was spread out on the easy-wipe plastic tablecloth in her immaculate kitchen, Majida scooped up a tbsp of butter for us to try straight away.

It was incredibly rich and intense; delicious but full-on. Easier to snack on were the balls of labneh, made from yogurt that has been salted, hung, and drained of much of its liquid (see page 337). The yogurt left behind, after 24 hours or so, is then thick enough to shape into balls. Stored in jars and preserved by being covered in oil, these balls can be rolled in all sorts of things—za’atar, sumac, shatta, chile flakes, red pepper flakes or nigella seeds—before being eaten (see page 49). They’re also delicious as they are, without any coating; rich, as with the butter, but with a tartness and saltiness that cuts through to allow for continued snacking.



Much of the tartness of these products comes from the fact that it's generally sheep or goats that are being milked locally, rather than cows with their creamier milk. Kishek (also known as jameed) was also on display for us 52

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and offered up for tasting. Kishek are hard discs of sun-dried fermented yogurt and cracked bulgur wheat. Before refrigeration was available, these discs were a way to conserve and use milk throughout the year. Nowadays, though, they are still widely used: crumbled into stews or savory pastries or sprinkled over pulses, grains, and salads. In Gaza, kishek is flavored with dill seeds and red pepper flakes. The version we try, on the outskirts of Bethlehem, is plain, allowing the full force of its sharp, sour nature to punch through.

Sitting down on one of the three large velvet sofas that line the otherwise bare walls, little glasses of thick, drinking sheep yogurt (laban) appear, to



continue the dairy theme. It's rich and refreshing at once, smooth and sharp. Slightly yellow versions of all the products sit alongside their white counterparts; they are the same product, just with turmeric or safflower, a spice that is used instead of (but which is not nearly as good as) saffron. Ramallah prefers the white yogurt, Majida says, Bethlehem prefers the yellow.

Sipping on our laban, Majida tells us about the network of women—the co-operatives—who get together to make the yogurt, the labneh, the butter, and the kishkek. The milking is either done by the husband (who then hands the milk over to his wife to carry on the next stages) or the woman does the milking as well and is in control at every stage: the milking, drying, hanging, and shaking. Someone seriously in control of her game is grandma Noura Shaalan, who does it all. Noura has ten sons, five daughters, twenty-five sheep, and sixty-five grandchildren, half of whom (the grandchildren, not the sheep) appear at the door as we are sitting around and chatting. Conversation flows as quickly as our plates are replenished when they come close to being emptied. “Force of nature” is an understatement.

“I’ve had enough, thank you” is an ignored statement.

Typically, ladies such as Noura and Majida sell their produce locally; they have around twenty local customers who buy from them regularly or they sell to one or two shops in Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, or Ramallah. The operations are small scale, but their importance to the community is large. These are women who look out for each other, girls sitting on the laps of their mothers and grandmothers, young women bonding with their mothers-in-law, aunties, cousins, sisters. When they’re not making dairy products, some of the ladies lead women’s empowerment groups, who might do a craft activity such as embroidery to sell cards, bags, shawls, cushions, or tapestries to local tourists. We are all given a little embroidered card to take away with us: an olive tree with the word “Palestine” sewn below it. Offers of payment are waved away, little glasses of yogurt are topped up, someone says something to someone else, in Arabic, which makes everyone laugh. Tara misses the meaning of the words but recalls her own “stitch and bitch” group back in London, smiling to think of the power of women, of connection, of sewing and chatting and making and doing and how much all



these things truly mean. We might have lost our way with Waze but sitting there, for that moment, it all feels very much like home.

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## **Preserved stuffed eggplants**

### *Makdous*

Preserves and pickles are a big part of the Palestinian table, adding a real hit of flavor to any meal. They also allow for seasonal vegetables to be eaten year-round. The name *makdous* comes from the Arabic verb “kadasa,” meaning “to stack.” Stacking the stuffed eggplants on their sides and letting them sit for nearly 2 weeks before eating them makes their taste intense. The result is hot, Serves eight as part

strong, nutty, sharp, and garlicky in all the right ways. Start with eggplants as of a larger spread

small as you can find: it’s nice to be able to eat a whole eggplant at a time, so you don’t want to be working your way through a large one.



1¾ lb/800g baby eggplants

(between 12 and 22, depending

*Keeping notes:* Once stuffed and covered in oil, these need to rest for 12 days, on size!), long stems trimmed,

to ferment. They keep for up to 6 months.

leaving the green base

1 tbsp sugar

*Equipment note:* You'll need a tall sterilized jar—7½ or 8 inches/19–20cm tall and 4 inches/10cm wide—to store the eggplants in. For notes on how to Stuffing

sterilize your jar, see page 341.

⅔ cup/70g walnut halves,

roughly chopped

2 green chiles, finely chopped

(3 tbsp/30g)

Pour about 3 quarts/3 liters of water into a large pot (about 12 inches/30cm wide and 7 inches/18cm deep) and add the eggplants and sugar. Place a (about 3 tbsp/25g)

5 garlic cloves, crushed

heatproof plate on top of the eggplants and place a bowl on top of this, so 2 tbsp Aleppo chile flakes (or 1 tbsp

that the eggplants are completely submerged. Bring to a boil, then cook regular chile flakes)



over medium-high heat for 30 minutes, until the eggplants are soft and have  
¾ cup/15g parsley, finely chopped

started to pale. Using a slotted spoon, lift the eggplants out of the water and  
½ tsp salt

place them in a colander. (You don't need to keep the water, but don't be  
tempted to pour them through a sieve: the eggplants are soft so they will  
lose salt

their shape if you do this.) Set aside for about 15 minutes, to cool slightly.

1⅓ cups/320ml olive oil

To make the stuffing, while the eggplants are cooking, place all the  
ingredients in a medium bowl. Mix well to combine, then place in the  
fridge, covered, until needed.

With a small sharp knife, make one slit down the side of each eggplant,  
about 1 inch/2½cm long. Spoon between ¼ and ⅛ tsp of salt into each  
eggplant, depending on the size, and spread it inside each cavity. Once they  
are all salted, return the eggplants to the colander, cut side down, and set the  
colander over a large bowl. Place the plate on top of the eggplants and place  
a heavy object on top of that. Let rest in the fridge for 12 hours for the  
eggplants to release water; the amount of water released will depend on the  
eggplants—it can be anywhere between 3 tbs/50ml and 10 tbsp/150ml.

Stuff each eggplant with 1–2 tsp of the walnut mixture, depending on size,  
then arrange them, stacked up sideways, in the sterilized jar. Pour in the oil  
—the eggplants need to be completely covered otherwise they will become  
moldy—then seal the jar and turn it upside down. Sit it upside down in a  
deep saucepan or tray, to catch any oil that might seep out, and set aside for  
1 hour.

Turn the jar right side up and store in a cool, dark place; the kitchen  
cupboard or pantry. Let ferment for 12 days before using.



## Snacks, Spreads, and Sauces

Battir is also on the map for political reasons: for its successful resistance to the building of the separation wall through the village. Had this not been successful, the wall would have cut villagers off from their land and effectively decimated the traditional farming practices. Back in 1949, the railway track that the village looks over served as the armistice line along which the Green Line was drawn up between Israel and Jordan before Israel's decisive victory in the Six-Day War of 1967. Now, the Green Line is the boundary that Israel professes to follow in the building of the separation wall, a massive project that began during the second intifada in 2000, separating Israel on the one side from the West Bank on the other.

### **Battir: how a little village**

The purpose of the wall from the Israeli point of view is to protect its people **made a big mark on the map**

from Palestinian attacks. The purpose of the wall from the Palestinian point of view is to impede its people's freedom of movement and to destroy the land on which Battir is a Palestinian farming village in the West Bank. Just over 6 kilometers their olive trees grow and their houses and farms are built. Perspective on this west of Bethlehem, with a population of around 4,500, it's located on one of depends, of course, very much on what side of the line (or wall) you are standing.

the steep sides of the Refaim Valley, just above the modern route of the Jaffa–

For the villagers of Battir, had the wall followed the Green Line, as Jerusalem railway. Farming in Battir is made possible by its stone terraces, which planned, the terraces and unique farming system of their village would have been stretch for more than 800 acres/325 hectares. The village itself is tiny, but it's well destroyed. Both Palestinian and Israeli activists, therefore, came together in 2007

known for three reasons: (1) its ancient irrigation system and terraces (and the to sue the Israeli Defence Ministry (IDM) to try to change the planned



route. The UNESCO world heritage site status gained as a result); (2) its long, thin, sweet Israeli Nature and Parks Authority, who'd previously agreed to the wall's original Battiri eggplants; and (3) politically, for its bringing together of Palestinian and route in 2005, was persuaded to change its mind. It was a landmark case and, in Israeli activists to successfully resist the building of the separation wall.

2012, the barrier's route had to be reconfigured. It was the first time that an Israeli First: irrigation. In a region where access to water is often a matter of government agency permitted a change to the planned construction of a segment politics and who has control, Battir shows how much can be achieved on land that of the fence.

has a natural and reliable water source. Supplying the land with all the fresh water The atmosphere in the village today is communal and positive, but the it needs is a Roman-era network, fed by seven springs. It's been doing its job for over day-to-day is still hard. For the villagers, selling their produce requires trips to 2,000 years, and Battir, verdant and fertile, is evidence of its success. Responsibility Bethlehem and beyond, and the village's location, still so close to the Green Line, for making sure that all the terraces are getting all the water they need is shared prevents them from becoming complacent about what the future might hold.

between the eight main families of the village. These eight clans rotate their roles Still, it's a real David-and-Goliath story, a testament to the power of the present from one day to the next. The discrepancy between the number of families—

to preserve the past, about how enough attention, energy, and action can move eight—and the number of days in the week—seven—is simply worked around: mountains or, in this case, walls.

the local saying in the village is that a Battiri week “lasts eight days, not seven”!

The methods employed to water and farm the land are traditional—



timeless, even. The amount the main spring goes down each day is measured, for example, by a simple white stick. It's literally just stuck into the water each morning and night to check the difference in height. In doing so, the amount of water that has been used the previous day can be gleaned. For years, these traditional practices have delivered a resulting bounty of tomatoes, spinach, oranges, figs, apples, peaches, grapes, lemons, olives, and, of course, the famous Battiri eggplant.

A Battiri eggplant is smaller, longer, and sweeter than a regular eggplant.

Its sweetness is attributed to the quality of the spring water that supplies it and helps it grow. Locals use eggplants in all sorts of ways in their cooking, from their maqlubeh (see page 264) to their m'tabbal (see page 82). The eggplants small size and distinct shape, though, make them particularly well suited to being stuffed in dishes such as makdous, for example (see page 56), where garlic, crushed walnuts, and chiles are piled into them before they are pickled and preserved.

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**Falafel with sumac onion**



Place the remaining onions in a bowl with the sumac and ¼ tsp of salt. Mix well and set aside.

When shaping the falafel, have a small bowl of water nearby so that you can keep your hands wet. This makes it easier to work with the mixture. Line a (rather than made at home), freshly fried and piled into pita bread or paper baking sheet with parchment paper and a colander with paper towels.

cones. It's rare to find this street vendor set-up outside the Middle East, though, so for anything resembling the real deal, these need to be made freshly at home. The success of pre-cooked, fridge-cold supermarket falafel and form a ball. Don't press too hard, as this will make the falafel dense. Dip is, for Sami—and anyone who grew up eating them in the Middle East —

your finger into the bowl of water and make a large hollow in the middle of one of life's great mysteries.

Makes 16 falafel,

each ball. Spoon 1 tsp of the sumac onion mixture into the hollow and then serves four to six

shape it again, so that most of the filling is covered. Flatten into a patty—

A three-part manifesto, therefore, for those who want to eat falafel as they about 2½-inches/6cm wide and ¾ inch/2cm thick—then, using your little should be eaten:

1⅓ cups/250g dried chickpeas

finger, make a small indentation; this will ensure that the inside gets evenly  
2 garlic cloves, crushed

1. Don't fry them until you want to eat them. They need to be eaten fresh cooked. Place on the prepared baking sheet and continue with the remaining



1¼ cups/25g parsley, roughly

from the fryer.

mixture; you should have enough to shape 16 falafel. Sprinkle the tops lightly chopped

with the sesame seeds, pressing them in slightly so that they don't fall off  
1¼ cups/25g cilantro, roughly

2. The chickpeas get soaked overnight, but they do not get cooked.

when the falafel are fried. At this stage the falafel can be frozen, if you like chopped

This instruction will not make sense until you have made and eaten (see Getting ahead).

¾ cup/15g mint leaves, roughly

your first batch.

chopped

Fill a deep, heavy-bottomed medium saucepan—about 8 inches/20cm wide —

3. Pair them with a chopped salad (see page 92), some (warm) hummus, 2 medium onions, finely chopped

with enough of the oil so that it rises about 3 inches/7cm up the side of the or (creamy) tahini sauce (see page 87). Eat them as they are, or forget (2 cups/300g)

pan. Place over medium-high heat and bring the oil to a temperature of 350°F

about the plate and just pile them into a pita.



1 tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or ½ tsp

if you have a thermometer. If you don't have a thermometer, just add a little regular chile flakes)

bit of the falafel mixture to the pan: if it sizzles at once, you'll know the oil is hot enough. Forgive the lesson, but falafel are pretty much part of the DNA of every Palestinian kid walking to or from school. Lines form around the corner where street vendors set up, shaping their falafel mixture with a large falafel scoop crushed in a mortar and pestle

1¼ tsp ground cumin

hot enough.

Carefully lower the falafel, in batches, into the oil—you should be able to fit (see page 336). Sami used to take his place in line nearly every day, ready to fill 4 in the pan at once—and cook for 5–6 minutes, or until well browned and up his pita or paper cone so as to fill up his tummy.

1 tbsp sumac

cooked through. They need to spend this long in the oil to really dry out on the inside, so don't be tempted to take them out too soon. Use a slotted spoon to

1 tbsp sesame seeds

inside, so don't be tempted to take them out too soon. Use a slotted spoon to

*Getting ahead:* The falafel can be made a day in advance, taken right up to the About 3⅓ cups/800ml sunflower oil,

transfer them to the prepared colander while you continue with the remaining the stage where they are shaped, filled, and sprinkled with sesame seeds. At Salt

batches. Serve at once.



this point they can be kept in the fridge for a day or in the freezer for up to a month. If freezing them, freeze initially on the baking sheet and then, when they are solid, transfer them to a sealable bag. If you are frying them from frozen, just preheat your oven to 400°F, fry as per the recipe, then finish them off in the oven for about 5 minutes, until cooked through.

*Shortcut:* The sumac onion is an untraditional addition. It adds a nice bite of tart surprise to the falafel but you can skip this stage, if you like, and just make the falafel without the filling.

Place the chickpeas in a large bowl and cover with at least twice their volume of cold water. Set aside overnight to soak.

The next day, drain the chickpeas (they should weigh 1 lb 1oz/480g now), then combine them with the garlic, parsley, cilantro, mint, and three-fourths of the chopped onions. Put half the mix into a food processor and blitz for about 2 minutes, scraping down the sides a couple of times if you need to, until the paste is damp and slightly mushy. Transfer to a large bowl and repeat with the remaining half of the mix. Add this to the bowl as well, along with the chile flakes, cumin, coriander, and 1½ tsp of salt. Using your hands, mix well to combine. Add the baking soda and give the mixture another good mix.

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Snacks, Spreads, and Sauces

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**Pea, spinach, za'atar, and  
Cauliflower and cumin fritters with  
preserved lemon fritters  
mint yogurt**

These work well as either a starter or a snack, or as a meal in themselves, A version of these fritters featured in Sami's first book, *Ottolenghi: The if* bulked out with some smoked salmon or trout or some poached or fried *Cookbook*. We tried to play around with them—adding broccoli to the mix, eggs. They can be eaten straight from the oven, all hot and crispy, or at room for example—but kept returning to the classic as something too hard to temperature later on if taken to work or on a picnic. They'll lose their crunch, move far from.

but their flavor will increase.

Makes 14–15 fritters, serves six

Makes about 10 fritters,



The fritters were something Sami's mother used to make, packing them up to serve four to six

*Getting ahead:* Both the sauce and the batter can be made up to a day ahead for her kids to take to school. They're still a Tamimi favorite, eaten either fresh Sauce

and kept in the fridge, if you like, ready to fry and serve.

out of the pan or at room temperature later on. Leftovers are also fine the next 1¼ cups/300g sour cream

Mint Yogurt (optional)

day, eaten at room temperature or reheated in the oven for a few minutes. As 1 tbsp sumac

1 cup/250g Greek yogurt

ever, piling them into flatbread makes for the best kind of quick lunch, but 1 lemon: finely grate the zest to

½ tsp dried mint

they're also great as they are, to snack on before supper. If you're serving them get 1 tsp, then juice to get 1 tbsp

2 tbsp lemon juice

To make the sauce, place all the ingredients for the sauce in a bowl. Whisk as a snack, make them half the size so that they can be eaten in a few bites.

1 tbsp olive oil

1 tbsp olive oil

well to combine and keep in the fridge until ready to serve. Line a baking sheet ¼ tsp salt



½ tsp salt

*Getting ahead:* The batter keeps for a day in the fridge, if you want to get with paper towels.

ahead, ready and waiting to fry.

7½ cups/150g baby spinach

1 small cauliflower, cut into

Bring a medium saucepan of salted water to a boil and add the spinach. Stir, 2½ cups/ 300g frozen peas,

1½-2-inch/4–5cm florets

*Shortcut:* The mint yogurt is a lovely addition, but there's enough going on, just to wilt, then drain through a sieve. Rinse under cold running water, to defrosted

(3 cups/300g)

flavor-wise, for the fritters to be eaten as they are, if you like, with just a squeeze stop the spinach from overcooking, and drain well. Transfer to the prepared 2 preserved lemons, flesh and

1 cup/120g all-purpose flour

of lemon.

baking sheet well spread out, and set aside for 5 minutes to dry. Finely chop seeds discarded, peel finely

1 cup/20g parsley, finely chopped

the spinach, then place in a large mixing bowl and set aside.

chopped (2 tbsp/20g)



1 onion, finely chopped

1 green chile, seeded and

Place the peas in a food processor, pulse a few times until roughly crushed,  
( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/100g)

finely chopped

then add them to the spinach along with preserved lemon, chile, ricotta,  
eggs, 2 eggs

Place all the ingredients for the sauce, if using, in a bowl with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of salt.

6 tbsp/100g ricotta

cornstarch, za'atar, chile flakes, baharat, cardamom, aniseed, mint, parsley,  
 $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground cumin

Mix to combine and keep in the fridge until ready to serve.

3 eggs, beaten

dill, 1 tsp of salt, and a good grind of pepper. Mix until just combined.

$\frac{3}{4}$  tsp ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup/45g cornstarch

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground turmeric

Bring a medium pan full of salted water to the boil and add the cauliflower.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

3 tbsp za'atar

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or



Simmer for 4 minutes, then (making sure to reserve 3–4 tbsp of the cooking  
½ tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or

¼ tsp regular chile flakes)

water) drain it into a colander. Using a fork or potato masher, slightly crush  
Pour the oil into a large, flat frying pan and place over medium-high heat.

¼ tsp regular chile flakes)

½ tsp baking powder

the cauliflower, then transfer it to a large bowl along with all the remaining  
Once hot, use 2 small spoons to scoop up the mixture; don't worry about ¼  
tsp baharat (see page 190)

1 cup/250ml sunflower oil

ingredients for the fritters (apart from the sunflower oil), 1¼ tsp of salt and  
a making them uniform in shape, but they should be about 3¼-inches/8cm  
⅓ tsp ground cardamom

Salt and black pepper

good grind of black pepper. Add 3 tbsp of the cooking water and mix well,  
until wide and ¾-inch/2cm thick. Carefully lower into the oil—you should  
be able ¼ tsp ground aniseed

the mix has the consistency of a slightly runny batter.

to do 3 or 4 fritters at a time—and fry for 3–4 minutes, turning once, until ¾  
cup/15g mint leaves, finely

they are golden brown. If they are cooking too quickly and taking on too  
shredded

Heat the oil in a large sauté pan—about 22cm wide—and, once very hot  
much color, just decrease the temperature.



¾ cup/ 15g parsley, roughly

(120°C if you have a cooking thermometer), carefully spoon 2–3 tbsp of chopped

batter per fritter into the oil. You'll need to do this in batches—4 or 5 fritters Using a slotted spoon, transfer them to a plate lined with paper towels while ¾ cup/ 15g dill, roughly chopped

at a time—so as not to overcrowd the pan, and use a fish slice to keep them you continue with the remaining fritters. Once they are all fried, lay the fritters Salt and black pepper

apart. Fry for about 5 minutes, flipping them over halfway through, until both out on the prepared baking sheet and bake for 4–5 minutes, or until cooked 7 tbsp/100ml sunflower oil

sides are golden brown. Transfer to a plate lined with kitchen paper and set through. Serve warm (or at room temperature), with the sauce and a wedge 1 lemon, cut into wedges, to serve

aside while you continue with the remaining batches. Serve warm or at room of lemon alongside.

temperature, with the yogurt sauce on the side.

*Pictured on the next page*

*Pictured on the next page*

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## Kubbeh

On every table full of mezzeh, in every kitchen across the Levant, there will be kubbeh. These tightly packed balls of bulgur and ground meat are the king of all snacks, eaten with your hands and dipped in tahini sauce or served as part of a large mezzeh spread, with a freshly chopped salad.

*Getting ahead:* Kubbeh can be made up to a day ahead and kept in the fridge before frying. They can also be frozen once shaped and cooked straight from the freezer. Makes about 32 kubbeh, to serve

the freezer. When freezing, lay them out on a baking sheet (one that fits into twelve as a snack or six as a main

your freezer). Once they are frozen, transfer them to a sealable bag or airtight container so that they don't take up all the freezer space. For more on the Filling



practice of “hawader”—getting things into the freezer for whenever they are 2½ tbsp olive oil

needed—see page 337.

⅓ cup/45g pine nuts

3 onions, finely chopped

(3¼ cups/450g)

7 oz/200g beef (at least 15% fat)

To make the filling, put 1½ tbsp of olive oil into a large sauté pan and place 1 tsp ground cinnamon

over medium-high heat. Add the pine nuts and cook for about 3 minutes, 1 tsp ground allspice

stirring continuously, until evenly golden. Drain in a sieve placed over a bowl, 4 tsp pomegranate molasses

to collect the oil, then return the oil to the pan. Add the remaining 1 tbsp of ¼ cup/5g parsley leaves,

oil, along with the onions, and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring from time roughly chopped

to time, until soft and lightly golden. Add the beef, cinnamon, and allspice and Salt and black pepper

cook for another 2 minutes, using a spoon to break up the beef, until the meat is no longer pink. Remove from the heat and stir in the pine nuts, molasses, Shell

parsley, 1¼ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Set aside to cool.

1 onion, roughly chopped



(1 cup/150g)

To make the shell, put the onion into a food processor and pulse until very 1 lb 2 oz/500g ground beef

finely minced, but not liquidized. Add the beef, cinnamon, allspice, 1 tbsp of (at least 15% fat)

salt (a lot, we know, but it needs it), and a good grind of black pepper. Pulse a 2 tsp ground cinnamon

few times, for about 15 seconds in total, to form a paste. Transfer to a separate 1½ tsp ground allspice

large bowl and set aside.

1⅔ cups/270g fine bulgur

Put the bulgur into a sieve and place under running water for about 2 minutes, Tahini sauce

or until the water runs clear. Set aside to drain for a couple of minutes, then ¼ cup/75g tahini

add to the raw beef mixture. Knead for about 3 minutes, or until you have a 5 tbsp/75ml water

sticky mass that holds together well when pinched.

1½ tbsp lemon juice

¼ tsp salt

*Continued on the next page*

About 2 cups/500ml sunflower oil

1 tsp sumac



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When shaping the kubbeh, line a baking sheet with parchment paper and have a bowl of water nearby; you'll need to dip your hands into the water as **Spicy olives and roasted red pepper**

you shape, to help seal the kubbeh. Begin by rolling out Ping-Pong-sized balls *Zaytoun bil shatta*

of the kubbeh shell—they should weigh 1¼ oz/35g each. You should make about 32 balls. Working one at a time, hold a ball in your left hand and use the index finger of your right hand to make an indentation in the center of This is somewhere between a condiment and a salsa, as happy to be spooned the ball. (Hands are reversed if you are left-handed.) Gently swivel your finger alongside some pan-fried fish or meat as it is to be stirred into a simple bowl around, while pushing upward with your left hand, to form a cavity with sides of rice.

about ⅛ inch/¼cm thick. Fill the cavity with 1½ tsp of the filling and gently *Keeping notes:* This keeps for about 4 days in the fridge, so make more than seal the shell around it, so that no filling is exposed. Using both hands, form Serves four as a condiment

you need so that you have it on hand.

the kubbeh into an oval shape that is somewhat pointed at one end, making or as part of a mezzeh spread

sure no cracks appear and that the kubbeh is completely sealed on all sides.

Transfer to the prepared baking sheet and continue with the remaining filling 1 large red bell pepper (5¼ oz/150g)

and shell mixture.

4 tsp olive oil

Preheat the oven to 450°F fan. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.



½ tsp red shatta; recipe follows

To make the tahini sauce, put all the ingredients into a bowl. Whisk well to (or rose harissa)

Place the bell pepper on the prepared baking sheet, toss with 1 tsp of oil, combine and set aside.

1 cup/170g pitted green olives

and bake for 35–40 minutes, until soft and charred. Transfer the pepper to a 2 small preserved lemons, flesh

When ready to fry, line a plate with paper towels. Put the oil into a medium bowl, cover and set aside for 10 minutes or so. Once cool enough to handle, and pith discarded, peel finely

saucepan and place over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot (180°C if remove the skin, stem, and seeds and place the flesh—you should have about sliced (2 tbsp/25g)

you have a thermometer), add the kubbeh in batches of 6 or 7, and fry for 3 oz/80g—in the small bowl of a food processor. Blitz until smooth, then ½ cup/10g parsley, finely chopped

about 4 minutes, until deeply browned and crispy on all sides. Transfer to the transfer to a bowl with the shatta or harissa and the remaining 1 tbsp of oil.

2 green onions, finely sliced

prepared plate and keep warm while you continue with the remaining kubbeh.

Mix well to combine, then add all the remaining ingredients and stir again.

(¼ cup/20g)



Transfer to a serving platter, sprinkle with the sumac, and serve warm, with ½ green chile, seeded and

*Pictured on the next page*

the tahini sauce to dip into or pour over.

finely sliced

1½ tbsp lemon juice

### **Shatta (red or green)**

Sami knew that he had a true partner in culinary crime in Tara when he spotted a jar of this in her bike basket one day. “I don’t go anywhere without some,” Tara said, as casually as if talking about her house keys. This fiery condiment is as easy to make as it is easy to become addicted to. Shatta(ra!) is on every Palestinian table, cutting through rich foods or peppering up others.

Makes 1 medium jar

Eggs, fish, meat, vegetables—they all love it. Our recommendation is to keep a jar in your fridge or cupboard at all times. Or your bike basket, if so inclined.

9 oz/250g red or green chiles,

*Kit note:* As with anything being left to ferment, the jar you put your chiles into stems trimmed, very thinly

needs to be properly sterilized (see page 341 for instructions).

sliced (with seeds)

1 tbsp salt

3 tbsp cider vinegar



1 tbsp lemon juice

Place the chiles and salt in a medium sterilized jar and mix well. Seal the jar  
Olive oil, to cover

and store in the fridge for 3 days. On the third day, drain the chiles, transfer them to a food processor, and blitz; you can either blitz well to form a fine paste or roughly blitz so that some texture remains. Add the vinegar and lemon juice, mix to combine, then return the mixture to the same jar. Pour enough olive oil on top to cover, and keep in the fridge for up to 6 months. The oil will firm up and separate from the chiles once it's in the fridge, so just give it a good stir, for everything to combine, before using.

*Pictured on the next page*

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## **Beet and sweet potato dip with pistachio bulgur sauce**

Beet was not something Sami grew up eating. This dish, therefore, shows how the ingredients that bookend Sami's palate—the ground cinnamon and allspice, the labneh and tangy feta, the bulgur and olive oil—can be used in a fresh way. The dip is lovely as it is, as part of a spread, or can be served as a Serves four as part of a

side to an oily fish, like salmon or mackerel.

mezzeh spread

*Getting ahead:* If you are making your own labneh, you'll need to get this going at least 24 hours before serving. The dip keeps well in the fridge for up to 1 lb 2 oz/500g raw beets (about



3 days. The sauce can be made up to a day before serving and kept in the fridge.

4 medium), unpeeled

As always, bring both elements back to room temperature before serving.

1 medium-sized sweet potato

(8½ oz/240g)

*Shortcut:* The dip works well alone without the bulgur sauce, if you are keeping ½ cup/70g bulgur

things simple. If you do this, just increase the pistachios to ¾ cup/100g. If you 5 tbsp/75ml water

want the sauce to be gluten-free, use cooked quinoa instead of the bulgur.

Salt

½ cup plus 1 tbsp/75g pistachios,

lightly toasted (see page 339)

and finely chopped

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

¾ cup/15g parsley, finely chopped

¾ cup/15g mint, roughly chopped,

Tightly wrap the beets and sweet potato individually in aluminum foil and plus a few leaves to serve

bake for about 1 hour, or until a knife inserted into the middle of each beet and 1½ tbsp lemon juice



the potato goes in easily. Timing will vary, depending on the size of the beets.

7 tbsp/105ml olive oil

Remove from the oven and, once cool enough to handle, peel and discard the Black pepper

skins of both vegetables. You should end up with 6 $\frac{1}{3}$ -7oz/180–200g of cooked 4 garlic cloves, crushed

sweet potato flesh and about 14 oz/400g of beet. Roughly chop the beets into  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground cinnamon

large chunks and set aside. The sweet potato can stay as it is. Keep the two  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp ground allspice

separate, until needed.

1 Medjool date ( $\frac{3}{4}$  oz/20g), pitted

and soaked in 3 tbsp of boiling

Put the bulgur into a small saucepan with a lid, along with the water and  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp water for about 20 minutes

of salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, then remove from the heat. Set aside, 2 tbsp cider vinegar

covered, for about 20 minutes, then fluff the bulgur up with a fork. Tip into a 6 tbsp/100g labneh (see page 48)

bowl and set aside for about 20 minutes, to cool. Stir in the pistachios, parsley, or thick Greek yogurt

mint, lemon juice, 3 tbsp of oil,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of salt, and a grind of black pepper. Set 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  oz/35g feta, roughly crumbled

aside until needed.



Put 3 tbsp of oil into a small sauté pan and place over medium-high heat. Once hot, add the garlic and cook for about 2 minutes, or until lightly browned. Add the spices, cook for another couple of seconds, stirring frequently, then remove from the heat. Set aside to slightly cool and then put into the bowl of a food processor. Add the beet, 1 tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Remove the date from its water, add to the food processor, and blitz the mixture for about 1 minute, or until smooth. Add the sweet potato and pulse for another 20 seconds, until just incorporated.

Transfer the mixture to a bowl and add the cider vinegar and 3 tbsp/50g of labneh. Fold to combine—you still want to see some streaks of the labneh

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then spread out on a large platter or in a shallow bowl. With the back of a spoon, smooth out the surface and make a well in the center. Top with the remaining 3 tbsp/50g of labneh, swirling it gently into the mix without incorporating it too much. Fill the dip with the bulgur sauce, top with the feta and extra mint leaves, drizzle with the remaining 1 tbsp of oil, and serve.

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**Nablus**



Say “Nablus” to someone who hasn’t traveled around Israel, the West Bank, and the Galilee and, chances are, they won’t have heard of it. Destination-wise, other places are clearly on the map. Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem: these are the cities firmly rooted in the minds of those who want to bear witness to various sites of huge religious importance. The Church of the Nativity, Manger Square, the Basilica of the Annunciation, Temple Mount, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane; this is to name just a few of the landmarks which mean so much to those who want to stand where the birth, life, and death of Jesus are said to have taken place. The buses getting everyone from Bethlehem to Nazareth and Jerusalem are big, full, and constantly on the move, as are the hotels housing and feeding everyone along the way. The well-trodden path in the region (see page 302)—Nablus is where the compass needs to be pointing.

is as smooth as the olive-wood carvings being bought as souvenirs to take back Walking around the cobbled streets of the bustling market, the smell of melted ghee, from the Holy Land.

baked semolina pastry, and sweet white cheese wafts around each corner, pulling There’s something about all the wood, though—to invert the forest-for-the-trees people on from the piles of seeds and nuts they’ve stopped to try or buy. If it’s not nuts saying—that can hide the reality of being able to see the everyday “trees”: the day-to-and seeds it’ll be mountains of fresh soft herbs, enormous eggplants, tiny eggplants, day stuff of life going on in a busy, bustling, functioning city. The selling and buying of plastic buckets full of hallucinogenically colored pickles, Jenga-like displays of fresh food and household goods, for example, the everyday business of moving about, peaches stacked up into a pyramid, live chickens, not-so-live fish and meat, Adidas commuting, navigating hooting cars and yellow taxis, chatting over coffee and slices trainers, shiny high heels and vast arrays of variously colored pants.

of cake: the highs and lows, the bitter and sweet, the norms of city life.

The market, in short, is a welcome assault on the senses: the colors, the For all this—and for the sweet things in particular—Nablus is the place to smells, the sounds, the clash of offerings on display. But step into Majdi



Abu Hamidi's be. Slightly off the tourist track (65 kilometers north of Jerusalem, located between Al-Aqsa bakery on Al-Naser street, a well-known institution in the city, and time Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim), the city has always been a key trading point for stands still for a moment. Plastic stools are pulled up at Formica tables and portions olive oil, soap, and cotton across the Levant. With a population of just under 130,000, of knafeh are transferred from meter-wide round trays to the plates they are being it's one of Palestine's largest cities. It's had a tough and troubled past, though, served on. Portions are either large or *really* large and strong, black coffee appears in suffering badly during the height of the second intifada in 2002, and continues to small cups on big trays. Abu Hamidi, who has been making and serving knafeh from be challenged by the Israeli military occupation. The reality of multiple checkpoints this spot for over forty-five years, hands out the coffee. Coffee is fine—necessary, interrupting the flow of goods in and out of the city, for example, is a huge problem.

even, to take the edge off the sweetness—but customers are encouraged (only Despite all this, the city has a strong sense of resilience about it; defiance, even.

half-jokingly) not to drink water for half an hour after eating his knafeh, to allow the If the sense of resilience is palpable, then so too is the smell. The smell of taste to linger. Memories last for a lot longer than this, though: the sight of groups warm sugar being poured over mild white cheese in a baking sheet that looks like a of friends or family huddled around a table, sharing a sweet moment, or—just as giant lily pad turning around, day in and day out, inside one of the many bakeries in common and as meaningful—locals pulling up a bench by themselves, taking five town. Nablus is, for those whose pilgrimages are shaped more by their appetites than or ten minutes out from their day to sit and delight in the sheer comfort, simple by their faith, *the* city for pastries and sweets. If you want the best knafeh around—

sweetness, and incomparable pleasure that is knafeh Nabulsi.

the warm, soft, sugar-syrup-drenched, melt-in-the-mouth cheesy pastry so popular 78





## **Charred eggplant with tahini and herbs Roasted red pepper and walnut dip**

*M'tabbal*

*Muhammara*

If Tara were to take ten things to her desert island, to live off forever, this The word *muhammara* can mean both “roasted” and “red” and can also is what the list would look like: eggplants, tahini, garlic, lemons, olive oil, (though not here) refer to the use of paprika in a dish to bring a smoky depth pomegranate seeds, fresh mint, dried mint, parsley, and salt.

M'tabbal, of flavor and reddish color. Muhammara is Syrian in origin, moving freely to then—quite literally a roll-call of her top ten—is one of Tara's favorite dishes.

Palestine and Lebanon when the Levant was a single territory. It still moves Serve it either as a side to some pan-fried fish or grilled meat or as part of Serves four to six as part of a

Serves four as part of a



freely now, across whichever table it is served at, acting as a dip, spread, or a larger spread. For instructions on how to char your eggplants to smoky mezzeh spread

mezzeh spread

side in all sorts of contexts. Scoop it up with warm toasted pita, for example, perfection see page 335.

spoon it alongside some cooked lima beans or lentils or any roast meat, pair 4 large eggplants, charred

1 cup plus 2 tbsp/110g walnut

it with some creamy hummus or cheese, or use it as part of a mezzeh spread.

*Keeping notes:* This keeps well in the fridge for up to 5 days. As always, serve (see page xx; 2 lb 2 oz/1kg)

halves

You can't really go wrong.

it at room temperature rather than fridge-cold.

3 tbsp tahini

6–7 red bell peppers (2 lb 2 oz/1kg)

*Keeping notes:* This keeps well in the fridge for up to 3 days.

2 large garlic cloves, crushed

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup/80ml olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml lemon juice

1 red onion, finely chopped



*Gluten-free note:* Adding the panko makes the mix firm up and slightly dry,  
Salt

(1 cup/120g)

Scoop the flesh out of the charred eggplant; you should have about 1 lb 2oz/  
in a good way. For a gluten-free alternative, use an equal quantity of ground  
2 tbsp pomegranate seeds

4 garlic cloves, crushed

500g. Set this aside in a colander over the sink or over a bowl for at least  
almonds or increase the quantity of walnuts by about 2 tbsp/20g.

¼ tsp dried mint

2 tsp tomato paste

1 hour (or overnight, in the fridge) to drain.

About 10 picked mint leaves

2 tsp ground cumin

¼ cup/5g parsley leaves,

Once drained, put the eggplant flesh into a large mixing bowl and, using 2  
tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or 1 tsp

roughly chopped

your hands, start to mash it; you want to create long, thin strands. Add the  
regular chile flakes)

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

About 1 tbsp olive oil



tahini, garlic, lemon juice and 1 tsp of salt and mix to combine. Spoon the ½ cup/ 35g panko breadcrumbs

mixture onto a serving plate with a lip (or into a bowl) and sprinkle with the 1½ tbsp pomegranate molasses

Spread the walnuts out on a prepared baking sheet and roast for about pomegranate seeds, dried mint, and fresh herbs. Finally, drizzle with the oil 2 tsp lemon juice

8 minutes, until lightly toasted. Remove from the oven and set aside.

and serve.

Salt and black pepper

1 tbsp parsley leaves, roughly

Increase the oven temperature to 450°F. Place the bell peppers on the second *Pictured on the next page*

chopped

prepared baking sheet and toss with 1 tsp of oil. Bake for about 40 minutes, or until completely softened and charred. Transfer to a bowl, cover with a clean dish towel or a plate and let cool for about 20 minutes. Once cool enough to handle, remove and discard the skins, stems, and seeds—the remaining flesh should weigh about 13⅓ oz/380g.

Put 2 tbsp of oil into a medium sauté pan and place over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook for about 7 minutes, stirring a few times, until softened and browned. Add the garlic, tomato paste, and spices and cook for 30 seconds, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and tip into a food processor, along with the roasted pepper, panko breadcrumbs, pomegranate molasses, lemon juice, 1 tbsp of oil, 1 tsp of salt, and a grind of black pepper.



Blitz for about 30 seconds, to form a coarse paste, and then add 1 cup/90g of the walnuts. Blitz for another 20 seconds or so; not much longer than this, as you want the walnuts to just break down rather than form a paste. Transfer to a serving platter and drizzle with the remaining 2 tbsp of oil. Roughly crush the remaining 2 tbsp walnuts with your hands and sprinkle these and the parsley on top and serve.

*Pictured on the next page*

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**Butternut squash m'tabbal**

**Tahini sauce**



## *M'tabbal qarae*

Makes 1 medium jar

Tahini sauce: the creamy, nutty, rich addition to many a snack, dish, or feast.

It's on every table in Palestine, ready to be dipped into or drizzled over all sorts. The difference between m'tabbal and baba ganoush is the addition of tahini.

Rounded ½ cup/150g tahini,

of things—roasted vegetables, fish or meat, and leaf-, pulse- or grain-based. For us, if it has tahini in it, then it's m'tabbal. Other opinions, as always, are plus more as needed.

salads. It keeps well in the fridge for 3–4 days, so always make the full recipe available. Whatever you call this sort of dip, three rules remain absolute: it's ½ cup/120ml water, plus more

here, even if what you are cooking only calls for a few tbsp.

all about the smokiness of the eggplants, lemons will be squeezed, and there as needed

will be garlic. The squash is our own (quite literally) sweet addition.

Serves eight as a dip,

2 tbsp lemon juice, plus more

or six as part of a spread

Serve this as a dip, to scoop up with warm pita, or as a side to all sorts of as needed

Mix together all the ingredients. If it is too runny, add a bit more tahini. If it things: grilled meat or fish, for example, or a range of roasted veg.



1 garlic clove, crushed

1 small butternut squash

¼ tsp salt

is too thick, add a bit more lemon juice or water. You want the consistency to (2 lb/900g)

*Keeping notes:* Double the batch and make more than you need, if you be like that of a smooth, runny nut butter. It will thicken up when left to sit 3 tbsp olive oil

like; it keeps well in the fridge for up to 3 days. Just bring it back to room around, so just give it a stir and some more lemon juice or water every time Salt and black pepper

temperature rather than serving it fridge-cold.

you use it.

1 large head of garlic

(about 2½ oz/70g)

4 eggplants (2 lb2 oz/1kg)

¼ cup/75g tahini

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

3 tbsp lemon juice

Cut the squash in half, lengthwise, and then scoop out and discard the seeds.

½ red chile, thinly sliced into rounds



Using a knife, make shallow crosshatch cuts across the flesh and then place  
½ tsp dried mint

cut side up on a prepared baking sheet. Drizzle each half with 1 tsp of olive  
5g mint leaves, torn

### **Tahini parsley sauce**

oil and sprinkle with ⅛ tsp of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Bake  
for 1 green onion, thinly sliced

50 minutes, or until the squash is very soft.

(2 tbsp/10g)

### *Baqdunsieh*

While the squash is roasting, slice the top off the head of garlic,  
horizontally, Makes 1 small jar

so that the cloves are exposed. Place in the middle of a square of aluminum  
Like the tahini sauce above, this keeps well in the fridge, so make the full  
foil and drizzle with ½ tsp of olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper.  
Wrap ¼ cup/75g tahini

quantity even if your recipe asks for less. You'll find it goes with pretty  
much tightly in the foil and bake for 40 minutes (at the same time as the  
squash is ¼ cup/60ml water, plus more

whatever else you are eating in the next few days.

in the oven), until the cloves are soft and golden brown.

as needed

2 tbsp lemon juice, plus more

Remove both the squash and the garlic from the oven and set aside to cool.



as needed

Once cool, scoop out the flesh of the squash and mash it coarsely with a 2 garlic cloves, crushed

Put the tahini, water, lemon juice, garlic, 60ml of water, and salt into a small spoon or fork—this should weigh about 1 lb 2 oz/500g. Place the flesh in a ¼ tsp salt

bowl. Whisk well until smooth, then stir in the parsley. Thin it out with an mixing bowl and set aside. The skin can be discarded. Squeeze out the cooked 1 cup/20g parsley, finely chopped

additional 1 tbsp or so of water or lemon juice, if you need to, if it's been garlic cloves, roughly chop them, and add to the bowl with the squash. The sitting around. You want it to have the consistency of creamy nut butter.

papery skin and the foil can be discarded.

For instructions on how to chargrill the eggplants, see page 335. Once you have the charred flesh, roughly chop it to form a coarse mash; this should weigh around 12¼ oz/350g. Add this to the bowl of squash and garlic along with the tahini, lemon juice and 1½ tsp of salt. Mix well to combine—we like the texture rough, but use an immersion blender to blitz and make it a bit smoother, if you prefer—then spread out on a large serving platter or individual plates. Top with the chile, dried mint, mint leaves, and green onions. Drizzle with the remaining olive oil—just over 2 tbsp—and serve.

*Pictured on previous page*

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## **VEGGIE**

## **SIDES**

## **AND**

## **SALADS**

No Palestinian table is considered set without vegetable sides and salads. Not one There are also some salads we would have liked to include but haven't because big bowl of salad and a veggie or two, but a great big array of dishes all served in the ingredients are hard to source outside Palestine. Green almonds, for example, their own little bowls. A simple chopped salad will always be there, of cucumbers, picked young and fresh from the tree and eaten by the handful, mark the beginning tomatoes, bell peppers, chiles, and fresh herbs. Fattoush as well, using up of spring in Palestine. Their taste and texture is distinct: fuzzy-skinned and crunchy yesterday's leftover bread, now pulled into chunks and bulking out today's salad.

like an unripe apricot or peach but without any of the tartness you'd expect. Picked Sides of fried cauliflower and steamed carrots; cubes of roasted eggplant stirred at this stage, green almonds are sold in big bags by the side of the road, ready to into bulgur; lentils with tahini and crispy onions—the list goes on and on. For those be snacked on as they are or cut into thin



slivers to add to leafy salads. We tried who like their vegetables, it's a very happy sight.

to experiment with very firm apricots, peaches, or plums to make a substitute So ubiquitous is the salad offering that, when eating out in the restaurants but nothing really came close. Other ingredients that we would have used if they of Bethlehem, Haifa, Nazareth, Jenin, or East Jerusalem, for example, these dishes were more widely available include vegetables such as akkoub—a prickly thistle will arrive at the table spontaneously, at the beginning of a meal. Whether or not which, when its spines are removed, is one of the most celebrated foods of village they've been ordered, they appear along with the bread and often won't feature cuisine—or yaqteen, a smooth long gourd that is shaped like a bottle with a nozzle on the bill. On the one hand, it's great that all these vegetables are as integral to on top. Colocasia—a root vegetable with a pink stem poking through—is another, the meal as bread. There's a downside to this ubiquity, though, and to the fact that as is molokhieh, the much-loved jute leaves that are widely grown. We came up the customers don't often expect to pay for these dishes. The offering can, in all with a substitute for these in besara (see page 150)—a molokhieh soup—and in our honesty, get rather stuck in a rut and be made without a whole lot of “nafas” (see recipe for chicken meatballs in molokhieh (see page 239) but, uncooked, didn't feel page 339)—heart and soul—or imagination being put into it.

happy with any of the alternatives we could have used.

It's completely understandable and the bind works two ways: customers know A lot of the salads and sides here are robust enough to handle being played what they want and often want what they know, so are not always keen to experiment around with, though, alternatives are suggested in each recipe depending on what is or suddenly start paying for something that has, previously, turned up by itself at the in season or what you have. Likewise with the dressings and the amount of chopping table. Chefs, therefore, either continue to stick to the status quo, saving their energy you want to do, play with alternating a tahini or yogurt dressing where a lemony and imagination for the main dish, or run the risk of pushback if they try to elevate one is suggested and vice versa. And so with the chopping, if you



don't like the idea (and start charging for) a salad. This tension is touched upon in the "Tale of Two of chopping a large bunch of vegetables into ½-inch/1cm dice, then don't. It will Restaurateurs" profile (see page 164), but it's something we saw time and again on still taste good if everything is roughly chopped. Start with the ripest, sweetest our travels, when a chef's imaginative approach to a salad or veggie side was, more ingredients you can get hold of, cook what's in season, and you can't go far wrong.

often than not, quietly relegated to the "chef's special" board.

And, if ever in doubt, just add cubes of tangy feta or some chunks of creamy avocado For our part, then, we have a real mix of dishes here. Some are traditional—

and a great big squeeze of lemon. "Everything's better with feta!" as Tara says, near-the chopped salad three ways (see page 92), braised fava beans with olive oil and on every day.

lemon (see page 123), or shulbato (see page 140), for example. With others, we've taken the traditional but given it a twist: fattoush with a tangy buttermilk dressing, (see page 99), tabbouleh three ways (see pages 102–4) or roasted new potatoes with an injection of punchy flavor (see page 137).

Reflecting all the years Sami has spent working, eating, and shaping his palate in London, several of the salads will, however, be much more familiar to the Ottolenghi customer than they will be recognizable on the traditional Palestinian table. These are the dishes for which Sami has taken the ingredients of his hometown, ramped up their boldness and put them on platters and plates so large they'd cast a shadow over all the little bowls they'd otherwise be served in. These are big and bold dishes in all senses, not just the platters. They're big on flavor, big in color, big in surprise. In salads such as the baby gem lettuce with charred eggplant yogurt and shatta (see page 96), or the roasted figs with radicchio and goat's cheese (see page 100), the ingredients are traditional—they're just shown in a deliciously new light.



## Veggie Sides and Salads

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#### **Chopped salad: three ways**

#### **Spicy herb salad with**

*Salata Arabieh*

#### **quick-pickled cucumber**

Salata mafrumeh, salata na'ameh, salata baladiye, salata fallahi: whatever This is a green leafy salad dialed right up to ten. It's packed with flavor, so name this goes by, it's the same fresh chopped Palestinian salad. It's as keep what you're serving it with really simple. Pan-fried salmon or cod, for ubiquitous as it is compulsory alongside every meal. It's there at breakfast, to example, both work really well.

have with hummus and falafel. It's there at lunch, inside a warm pita stuffed with kofta. It's there at supper, alongside the spread of pickles and olives and *Getting ahead*: Make more of the seeds than you need; they keep well in an Serves four as a side

Serves four as a side

a rich meat stew. There are many versions on the theme, we've offered three.

airtight container for a week or so and are lovely sprinkled over all sorts of One as it is, allowing the ingredients to really sing, one with a nutty tahini salads or roasted vegetables.

Original version

Seeds

dressing and one with a yogurt dressing. Play around as you like, though, 4 small Persian cucumbers (or



1 tsp white sesame seeds, toasted

If you want to get ahead with the salad then you can pick all the herbs and cubes of tangy feta, black olives, or creamy avocado are a really nice addition, 1 large regular cucumber),

2 tbsp/20g pumpkin seeds, toasted

have them prepped. Don't assemble until just before serving, though; the as is a sprinkle of za'atar. Just two rules: start with vegetables as ripe and sun-quartered lengthwise,

1½ tsp coriander seeds,

leaves will wilt if they sit around for too long.

kissed as possible and a knife as sharp as you can get it. It's a simple salad but seeds removed, and cut into

toasted and roughly crushed

one that requires a lot of chopping.

¼-inch/½cm dice (2 cups/300g)

in a mortar and pestle

14¾ oz/420g ripe tomatoes

½ tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or ¼ tsp

*Getting ahead:* Do all your chopping a few hours in advance, if you like (it can (either 2 large heirlooms or

regular chile flakes)

take a while, particularly if you are scaling up the recipe to feed a crowd), but To prepare the seeds, place all the ingredients in a bowl. Mix to combine and 6 plum tomatoes), cut into



½ tsp sumac

don't assemble this too long before serving. It'll get watery if it sits around.

set aside.

¼-inch/½cm dice

¼ tsp flaky sea salt

1 red bell pepper, cut into

Using a vegetable peeler, peel both cucumbers from top to bottom, to make ¼-inch/½cm

2 cucumbers (1 lb 7 oz/650g)

long, wide, thin ribbons. Keep going until you get to the seedy center, which can dice (1 cup/140g)

Flaky sea salt ¼ cup/60ml

be discarded (or eaten). Place the ribbons in a bowl with 1 tsp of flaky salt and *To make the original version*, place all the ingredients in a large bowl along with 2 green chiles, seeded and

cider vinegar

mix well. Transfer to a sieve placed over a bowl and set aside for 15 minutes, for 1¼ tsp of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Mix well to combine, then finely chopped

1 tbsp sugar

some of the liquid to drain. Put the vinegar and sugar into a separate bowl and transfer to a serving platter or individual plates.

7 green onions, finely sliced



2 lemons: leave 1 whole, and juice

whisk until the sugar dissolves. Add the cucumber, toss to combine, and set  
*To make the tahini version*, add the tahini, 1½ tsp of salt, and a good grind  
of (Scant 1 cup/70g)

the other to get 1 tbsp

aside for 20 minutes, to lightly pickle.

black pepper to the bowl with all the other ingredients. Mix well to  
combine, 1½ cups/30g parsley, very

1 cup/20g parsley leaves

Using a small, sharp knife, trim the top and tail off the whole lemon. Cut  
down transfer to a serving platter or individual plates, and sprinkle with the  
sumac.

finely chopped

(with some stem attached)

¾ cup/15g mint leaves,

along its round curves, removing the skin and bitter white pith. Release the  
½ cup/10g tarragon leaves

*To make the yogurt version*, place the cucumbers, tomatoes, bell pepper,  
chiles, finely shredded

segments from the lemon by slicing between the membranes, then roughly  
¾ cup/15g dill leaves

green onions, herbs, garlic, and ½ tsp of salt in a colander and set it over a 1  
large garlic clove, crushed

chop the lemon flesh. Put into a large bowl along with the lemon juice,  
parsley, ¾ cup/15g mint leaves, roughly torn



bowl for 20 minutes, for the water to drain. Put the yogurt into a separate 2 lemons: finely grate the zest to

tarragon, dill, mint, green onions, lamb's lettuce, oil, 1 tsp of flaky sea salt, 6 green onions ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/60g), thinly

large bowl along with 2 tsp of dried mint, the lemon zest and juice, the olive get 2 tsp, then juice to get 3 tbsp

and a good grind of pepper. Mix well to combine. Drain the pickled cucumber, sliced at a sharp angle

oil, 1 tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Add the drained salad to the 3 tbsp olive oil

discarding its liquid, and add to the bowl along with half the seed mixture. Mix 2 cups/40g lamb's lettuce

yogurt dressing and mix well to combine. Transfer to a large serving platter, or Salt and black pepper

to combine, then transfer to a serving platter or individual serving plates. Top  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp olive oil

individual plates, sprinkle with the remaining tsp of dried mint, and serve.

with the remaining seeds and serve at once.

Black pepper

*Pictured on the next page*

*Pictured on the next page*

Tahini version

All the ingredients for the

original, plus



Rounded ¼ cup/80g tahini

1 tbsp sumac

Yogurt version

All the ingredients for the  
original, plus

1 cup/250g Greek yogurt

1 tbsp dried mint

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## **Baby gem lettuce with charred eggplant**

### **yogurt, smacked cucumber, and shatta**

This works well either as a stand-alone starter or as part of a spread or side.

It's lovely with some hot smoked salmon or trout. "Smacked" cucumbers sounds a bit dramatic but, really, it's just a way of bruising them so as to allow all the flavor to seep through to the flesh. Thanks to Ottolenghi chef Calvin Von Niebel for this salad.

Serves four generously

*Playing around:* Some crumbled feta on top works very well, and if you don't Eggplant yogurt

have the Urfa chile flakes, just use a pinch of black nigella seeds or some 2 large eggplants, charred

black sesame seeds.

(see page xx; 1 lb 2 oz/500g)

*Getting ahead:* Make all the elements well in advance, here, if you like: up to 2 tbsp Greek yogurt

a day for the cucumber and the eggplant yogurt, and the shatta needs to be ½ garlic clove, roughly chopped

made in advance, so you'll be all set here.

1½ tbsp lemon juice

1½ tbsp tahini

½ tsp salt

To make the eggplant yogurt scoop the flesh out of the charred eggplant;  
Smacked cucumber



you should have about 5¼ oz/160g. Place this in the bowl of a food processor 1 regular English (i.e., not a

along with the yogurt, garlic, lemon juice, tahini, and salt. Blitz for about small Lebanese) cucumber,

1 minute, until completely smooth, then set aside until needed.

peeled, sliced in half lengthwise,

and watery seeds removed

To prepare the cucumber, place each half on a chopping board, cut side facing (6⅓ oz/180g)

down. Using the flat side of a large knife, lightly “smack” them until bruised 1¼ cups/25g parsley, roughly

but still holding their shape. Cut the cucumber into roughly ½-inch/1cm dice chopped

and set aside.

1¼ cups/ 25g mint leaves, roughly

chopped

Clean the food processor, then add the parsley, mint, garlic, olive oil, and ½ garlic clove, roughly chopped

salt. Blitz for about 2 minutes, scraping down the sides a couple of times if 3 tbsp olive oil

you need to, to form a smooth paste, then add to the cucumber. Set aside for ¼ tsp salt

at least 20 minutes (and up to 1 day in advance if kept in the fridge) for the flavors to infuse.



5–6 baby gem lettuces

(1 lb 2 oz/500g), bases trimmed

Slice each head of baby gem lengthwise to make 8 long thin wedges (per  
Salt and black pepper

lettuce). Arrange the lettuce on a round platter, overlapping the outer and  
1½ tbsp shatta (red or green;

inner circle to look like the petals of a flower. Lightly sprinkle the wedges  
see page 73; or rose harissa,)

with salt and a grind of black pepper, then splatter with the eggplant yogurt.

½ tsp Urfa chile flakes (or a small

Spoon on the cucumber, drizzle with the shatta, sprinkle with the chile  
pinch of black sesame seeds)

flakes, and serve.

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### **Na'ama's buttermilk fattoush**

Very few meals are complete in Palestine without bread. Very few dishes are served in Palestine without a chopped salad. That fattoush is such a staple salad, then—which uses up day-old bread—makes complete sense. You can use any flatbread—Turkish flatbread, naan, pita bread—torn into bite-size chunks. If you only have fresh flatbread that's also fine; just toast it a bit or broil it for a few minutes to dry it out. It'll soon firm up as it cools down.

Serves six

The buttermilk is not a traditional addition, but it is the version of the salad Sami grew up on. Na'ama was Sami's mum—this was her version of the Sumac onions

salad, and he would not change it for the world. It can be played around with,  $\frac{1}{2}$  onion, cut in half, then each half



though, depending on what you have to hand—chunks of feta are, as ever, a thinly sliced ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/ 100g)

nice addition, as are some black olives or green capers. For a more traditional  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp sumac

version of the salad just follow the recipe, leaving out the buttermilk.

1 tbsp olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp salt

*Getting ahead:* Get all the chopping and prep done for this in advance if you like, and even mix the vegetables and herbs with the buttermilk, but don't 2 large day-old naan, Turkish

assemble it with the bread until you are ready to serve. It's not a salad that flatbread, or pita (see page 278),

likes to sit around for too long.

torn into roughly 4cm pieces

(9 oz/250g)

*Ingredients note:* Start with Persian cucumbers (sometimes just called  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups/300ml buttermilk

“mini cucumbers”) if you can—they're much less watery than larger English 3 large tomatoes, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch/

cucumbers, so have a lot more flavor. If you only have English cucumber  $1\frac{1}{2}$ cm dice (2 cups/380g)

that's absolutely fine: just slice in half, lengthwise, scoop out the watery 10–11 radishes, thinly

seed-filled core, and use the firm flesh you're left with.



sliced (1 cup/100g)

2–3 Persian small cucumbers

(or 1 regular English cucumber),

peeled and cut into ½-inch/1cm

To make the sumac onions, place all the ingredients in a bowl. Mix well and dice (1⅔ cups/250g)

set aside.

1 cup/20g mint leaves,

roughly chopped

Put all the remaining ingredients into a large mixing bowl with 1½ tsp of salt 1 cup/20g parsley leaves,

and a good grind of black pepper. Mix well and set aside for about 10 minutes.

roughly chopped

Add half the sumac onions, mix to combine, then transfer to a large serving 2 tbsp thyme leaves

platter or individual plates. Sprinkle with the remaining onions, drizzle with 2 garlic cloves, crushed

additional olive oil, finish with the remaining ½ tsp of sumac, and serve at once.

3 tbsp lemon juice

¼ cup/60ml olive oil,

plus more to serve



2 tbsp cider vinegar or white

wine vinegar

1½ tsp sumac, plus ½ tsp to serve

Salt and black pepper

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### **Roasted figs and onions with radicchio and goat cheese**

With figs, the riper the better when it comes to flavor and texture. The joy of roasting them, however, is that the sweetness and softness can be drawn out if the fruit is a little underripe. Here the figs and onions could be set aside to cool for 15 minutes before the salad is assembled, to prevent the



cheese from melting. Don't build this pause in if you don't want to; the salad is wonderfully Serves four as a starter or side

luxurious if you toss it straight away and let the goat cheese melt slightly.

### Dressing

2½ tbsp balsamic vinegar

Serve this as either a stand-alone starter or a side. It works particularly well

1½ tbsp pomegranate molasses

with grilled meat or with a nutty grain salad.

1½ tsp honey

2 garlic cloves, crushed

*Getting ahead:* The dressing can be made up to 3 days in advance. Make Flaky sea salt and black pepper

more of it than you need, if you like, to have around for drizzling over other 5 tbsp/75ml olive oil

salads or dishes.

12 figs, sliced in half lengthwise

(15 oz/430g)

2 red onions, peeled, each

Preheat the oven to 425°F fan. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

onion sliced into 8 wedges

(2⅔ cups/240g)



To make the dressing, mix together the vinegar, molasses, honey, garlic, 1 tsp olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of flaky salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Slowly pour in the oil,  $\frac{1}{2}$  head of radicchio, core

whisking the whole time until combined and smooth.

removed and leaves roughly

Place the figs and onions in two separate bowls and add  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp of the torn ( $6\frac{1}{3}$  oz/180g)

dressing, along with  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp of salt and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of oil to each bowl. Toss well to 3 cups/60g arugula

combine, then transfer to the prepared baking sheets, cut side up for the  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g mint leaves

figs. Both baking sheets can go into the oven at the same time: the figs need  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup/40g walnut halves, toasted

20 minutes, or until softened and slightly caramelized, and the onions need (see page 339) and roughly broken

25–30 minutes, tossing once during baking, until they have softened and Black pepper

taken on some color. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for about  $4\frac{1}{4}$  oz/120g soft goat cheese,

15 minutes.

roughly crumbled into large chunks

Flaked sea salt and black pepper

Put half the roasted onions into a large bowl along with the radicchio, arugula,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp lemon juice



mint, walnuts, ½ tsp of flaky salt, a good grind of black pepper, and half the remaining dressing. Toss well to combine, then transfer half the leaves to a large serving platter (or individual plates). Top with half the goat cheese and half the figs, cut side up. Repeat with the remaining salad, goat cheese, figs, and onions. Drizzle with the remaining dressing, drizzle the lemon juice over the top, and serve.

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## Veggie Sides and Salads

### **Green tabbouleh**

### **Rice tabbouleh**

*Tabbouleh khadra*

*Tabboulet ruz*

Tabbouleh is so ubiquitous across the Levant that we didn't feel the need This is a great way to use up leftover cooked rice, if you have any (but also to publish our own traditional take on this well-known salad. Rather than delicious enough to start from scratch if you don't!). If you do this you'll need tweaking the bulgur and parsley version, we've offered three rather novel to start with 1 cup/190g of cooked rice. Eating leftover rice is fine, as long as versions: a green one with kale, a version that uses rice instead of bulgur you chill what you are not going to use soon after it's made, rather than letting (facing page), and a wintry-citrus-purple version (see page 104) as well.

Serves four

Serves four to six

it sit around at room temperature for too long. Take it out of the fridge about 20 minutes before you want to eat the tabbouleh, though: you don't want it to Sami's mother used to make a version of this to take on picnics in Jericho in Dressing



6 tbsp/75g basmati rice

be fridge-cold. You won't need the olive oil, turmeric, or water here; just add the summer months. The salad was kept fresh by the addition of a few cubes  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup/80ml lemon juice (from

(or 1 cup/190g cooked rice,

the rice as it is along with all the remaining ingredients.

of ice to the bottom of the basket, wrapped up in newspaper. Picnics were, about 2 lemons)

if starting with leftovers)

typically, an elaborate affair. Preparations would start the day before, with *Getting ahead*: Do all the chopping ahead of time, if you like—up to about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp/35ml olive oil

$1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp olive oil

everyone coming together to chop and prepare for the movable feast.

4 hours—and the rice can be made a full day ahead. It can be mixed in an hour  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp ground turmeric

or so before serving, but not much more than this.

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp ground allspice

This is as nice throughout the year as a side or part of a spread, as it is eaten on Salt

a picnic outdoors. The dressing is lemony and sharp, so it works particularly  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/170ml water



*Playing around:* The rice can just as well be replaced by other grains, if you  
1/3 cup/50g bulgur (regular or whole

well with oily fish or rich meatballs.

want. Quinoa is a gluten-free option, like the rice, and couscous,  
mograbiah, wheat, for extra nuttiness)

Tabbouleh

and fregola also all work well.

*Playing around:* The kale can be replaced by all sorts of other cabbages, 5  
tbsp/70ml boiling water

4 cups/80g parsley leaves,

depending on what's in season: white cabbage, hispi (aka "pointed") green  
1 1/2 cups/100g kale leaves (or 6 1/3 oz/

finely chopped

cabbage, spring greens and young cauliflower with its tender leaves  
attached 180g if starting with kale on the

1 cup/20g mint leaves, thinly

all work very well.

stalk, which you then need to

shredded

Put the rice, oil, turmeric, and 1/8 tsp of salt into a small saucepan with a lid.

remove), finely shredded

2 medium very ripe tomatoes,



Mix well, until the rice is well coated, then pour in the water. Bring to a boil  
*Getting ahead:* You can prepare the salad in advance but don't add the 4 cups/75g parsley (mostly leaves,

finely chopped (1½ cups/270g)

over high heat, then decrease the heat to low. Cover the pan and cook for dressing until serving, and shred (rather than chop) the herbs: this will not stalks), finely shredded

2 small Persian cucumbers (or ½ a

about 17 minutes, or until the rice is cooked. Spoon the rice onto a plate and prevent them from bruising and losing their color. The difference between 1¾ cups/35g mint leaves, finely

regular English cucumber), finely

set aside until completely cool.

chopping and shredding, for us, is the number of times the knife goes through shredded

chopped (no need to peel or seed)

the herb leaf. Chopping sees it getting cut many times—chop, chop, chop—

3 large (or 6 regular) green onions,

(1¼ cups/180g)

To make the tabbouleh, place all the ingredients in a large mixing bowl, along whereas shredding sees the knife just go through once, in a cleaner motion.

very thinly sliced (¾ cup/60g)

6 green onions, thinly sliced



with  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp of salt. Add the cooked rice, mix well, then spoon onto a large Salt and black pepper

( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/60g)

serving plate. Sprinkle with the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp sumac and serve.

2 tbsp lemon juice

3 tbsp olive oil

Place the bulgur in a small bowl, pour in the boiling water, then set aside for  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground allspice

about 20 minutes, or until the water has been absorbed.

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp ground cinnamon

$1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp sumac, plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp to serve

To make the dressing, whisk together all the ingredients with  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp of salt and a grind of black pepper, and set aside.

Transfer the bulgur to a large mixing bowl and add all the remaining ingredients. Pour the dressing over the top, toss well, and serve.

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## **Winter tabbouleh with a blood orange dressing**

### *Tabbouleh shatwiah*

Blood oranges have a distinct color and tartness that make them really stand out in a salad or dressing. Their season is short, though, so regular oranges are absolutely fine for the rest of the year. As with our other tabbouleh salads (see Serves six to eight

pages 102 and 103), the bulgur can be replaced by an equal quantity of quinoa, if you like, for a gluten-free alternative. If you do this, then cook quinoa as you

normally do—in a pan of boiling water for 9 minutes or so, and rinsed under 1 blood (or regular) orange, juiced

running water. Set it aside to dry, then add the olive oil and spices.



to get 3 tbsp

*Keeping notes:* This is a robust salad, so you can make it a good few hours  
2 tbsp lemon juice

before serving, if you want to get ahead. Leftovers are also lovely the next day.

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

¼ tsp allspice

2 tsp pomegranate molasses

1 tsp sugar

To make the dressing, combine the orange juice, lemon juice, cinnamon, Salt and black pepper

allspice, molasses, and sugar in a bowl with ⅛ tsp of salt and a good grind of ½ cup plus 1 tbsp/130ml olive oil

black pepper. Whisk to combine, then, continuing to whisk as you slowly add the oil until the mix is thick and emulsified. Set aside.

1¼ cups/200g bulgur

½ tsp ground cinnamon

Put the bulgur, cinnamon, allspice, 2 tsp of olive oil, the boiling water, and ½ tsp ground allspice

¼ tsp of salt into a medium sauté pan with a lid. Bring to a boil over medium 1 tbsp olive oil

heat, then cover the pan, remove from the heat, and set aside for 30 minutes.

¾ cup plus 3 tbsp/



Remove the lid, fluff the bulgur with a fork, and set aside to cool.

225ml boiling water

Salt

Put the cavolo nero into a bowl with the remaining 1 tsp of oil and a tiny pinch of salt. Using your hands, mix well, gently massaging the leaves, then set aside.

discarded (or saved to chop up and pan-fry for another dish)

Tip the cooled bulgur into a very large bowl and add the cabbage, parsley, and leaves roughly shredded

mint, green onions, oranges,  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp of salt, and a generous grind of black pepper. Mix well to combine, add the cavolo nero and pour in the dressing.

Mix  $\frac{1}{2}$  small head of red cabbage, just to combine, then transfer to a serving platter or individual plates.

Finally, core cut out and discarded, sprinkle with the pomegranate seeds and serve.

thinly sliced by hand or with a mandoline (4 cups/550g)

2 cups/40g parsley leaves,

roughly chopped

1 $\frac{1}{4}$  cups/25g mint leaves,



roughly torn

9 green onions, finely sliced

(mounded 1 cup/90g)

4 blood oranges (or 2 regular

oranges; 1 lb 2 oz/500g),

peeled and sliced into

¼-inch/½cm-thick rounds

Black pepper

Mounded ½ cup/85g pomegranate

seeds (from ½ pomegranate)

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**Vivien Sansour and the Palestinian Seed Library** Vivien Sansour is a strong woman. She has made a name for herself as a pioneering agriculturalist, botanist, and, perhaps most impressively, founder of the Palestinian Seed Library project. She's forty and feisty and has a vision for her country that she's growing, seed by seed. It's a vision that highlights the vital link between farmers and their land. It's a vision that suggests that the connection between people and place really means something and really matters—that it's not all just about making a quick big buck.

The road to success was not always straightforward for Vivien. Born in Jerusalem and raised in Beit Jala, she moved with her family to North Carolina in the 1980s, to make the most of the job opportunities offered in the States. Vivien's family perhaps had some inkling of where her future interests would lie when she enrolled in a PhD program to study agricultural life sciences. Nonetheless, it came as a surprise to everyone—including Vivien herself—when she decided to drop out part of the way through the course and move back to her home village on the outskirts of Jerusalem.



Her family thought she was crazy—she had no clear plan, she had not prepared for the move. But Vivien had something more important than a plan—she had a vision, however indistinct in those early days, and she is a woman with the strength to stay true to her vision.

So what had sparked this new direction for Vivien? The journey all started, in fact, with a single seed. Two seeds, actually, and one slide of the herb za'atar, shown to her in a lecture hall in North Carolina.

First, the slide. Vivien was already slightly uneasy with the thrust of her PhD

program. The emphasis seemed to be more on “this is what we need to be teaching farmers” rather than “this is what we should be learning from them.” It was a slide of za'atar, though, pictured clinically alongside its botanical Latin name, that snapped her into realizing it was time to go home. Vivien sat on a bench in the park and knew that she wanted to be *smelling* and feeling the za'atar she had grown up with rather than studying it from a distance. She wanted to be working with her hands, not her head. She wanted to be with the farmers, not the academics, of the world.

In Palestine, Vivien quickly landed on her feet, undertaking a two-year project while living in Jenin, in the north of the country. She'd connected with Nasser, the owner of the Canaan cooperative (see page 250), who commissioned her to travel the region meeting, hanging out with and writing about the cooperative's approximately thirty-five farmers.

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Time and again, as Vivien traveled the region, she would hear stories about a of mono-crop farming—producing strawberries year-round in greenhouses, for certain large variety of watermelon called the Jadu'l. Everyone had clear memories example—are obvious from an agri-business and commercial point of view. The of the Jadu'l, but it was no longer anywhere to be seen. Stories were told of people disadvantages to the land, though, and the way of life of those who farm in accordance hiding in



watermelon fields during the war, as the leaves were large enough to with the seasons, are just as obvious to see, but only by those who want to see them.

provide cover. But when she tried to seek out the seed, Vivien was told that she The outcome, in Vivien's words, is that "Palestinian farmers are being transformed was "looking for a dinosaur."

from agents of their own choice to becoming day laborers on their own farms."

Look for the dinosaur she did, though, eventually tracking down an elderly There are other challenges, as well. Challenges that are controversial to talk farmer-handyman in his garage workshop in Jenin. In a drawer full of nails and about and that incite different opinions depending on to whom you talk. Vivien takes hammers and behind a mish-mash of screws was a bag of dried-up heirloom Jadu'l it back to 1948, when Israel was created (and even pre-1948), and points to the myth watermelon seeds. They were no use to him anymore, he said—he was now working put forward by the Israelis of Palestine being a "dry area." Starting from this point, with hybrid seeds and fertilizers that were earning him more than these heirloom credit for the future fertility of the land—for "making the desert bloom"—can be seeds—so Vivien was welcome to them. She put them in her bag and went on her taken by those who are seen to be farming the land, i.e., the Israelis.

way, feeling like a detective who'd solved her first case.

Focusing instead on crops that don't need irrigation in the first place—ba'al Her second "case" took place closer to home, in her local market in crops (after the Canaanite fertility deity, worshipped for rain), such as figs, grapes, Bethlehem, shopping for vegetables. Vivien was seeking out the purple carrots her and olives, for example—Vivien has no truck with this narrative. Her passion, instead, mum used to make for her, cooked in a tamarind sauce. Again, this vegetable of which is on the genius of her ancestors, those who were clever enough to develop a system she had such fond memories was nowhere to be found. She scoured the market, of farming that was free, in large part, from the need for irrigation. "It kept us



alive for speaking to people as though she were trying to do a dodgy deal on the black market.

millennia and gave the world wheat.”

“If I felt like a detective seeking out the Jadu’l watermelon,” says Vivien, “I felt like a It’s a passion she instills in the school kids and visitors who come to look at the drug dealer looking for the purple carrots.”

seed library, which is now located in Battir, an agricultural village and UNESCO world Eventually, though, she found a man who knew a man who eventually lifted heritage site just outside Jerusalem (see page 58). “So often these kids are taught to up the cloth draped over his table in the market to reveal a sack of the bounty. He think of themselves as a colonized or victimized people; that they need to be white couldn’t give them all to her—they’d been promised elsewhere—but Vivien was or English-speaking, for example, to succeed.” Vivien tells them, instead, what their allowed two carrots, which she raced home to plant in the ground, where they would ancestors *gave* to the world and sees them puff up with pride. “It’s thanks to us that sprout and produce flowers and seeds.

Italians eat pasta! Why do the kids who come in to see my seed library not know this?”

And so, off the back of these two heirloom vegetables, the Palestinian Seed For such school kids, feeling proud of where you’ve come from is a great Library was born. “Seed as metaphor for growth” might seem a bit clichéd, but big step toward feeling pride and confidence in where you can go. For the farmers clichéd it isn’t in a place where the very existence of certain heirloom seeds and that Vivien met during her two years in Jenin, like Khadir Khadir (see page 250), the crops, and the way of life surrounding their farming, is in crisis. For those whose lives, assistance they receive from the likes of Vivien and Nasser at Canaan enables them livelihood, identity, and connection to the past are so tied up with the land, it all feels to feel supported, as well, in what they can do.

very unmetaphorical indeed. Preserving, archiving, protecting, and propagating Conditions are tough, no doubt, and “the reality is true,” says



Vivien. “But individual heirloom seeds is a very real way to preserve, protect, and record the way of it’s also true that we have the seeds and in these seeds we have our DNA.” In terms life of a people living under occupation. However tough, or even hopeless, something of messaging, it’s all a long way from a dusty slide pulled up in a lecture hall that looks—or shriveled and dried out in the case of the Jadu’l watermelon seeds Vivien afternoon back in North Carolina. At the time of writing, Vivien was propagating was given—put it in the ground and nurture it and great things will happen: life will three seeds: the white cucumber, the “tall dark” Abu Samra wheat, and an heirloom start all over again.

tomato. It’s exciting to think how much more can be grown.

The threat and challenges faced by small farmers are many and complex and come from all sides. Accusations are leveled as much at the Palestinian authorities, for example, as they are at the Israeli government, for their setting up of industrial zones for which the main focus is short-term profit. The main challenge is the big incentives given to farmers to abandon their traditional way of farming—using a variety of heirloom crops and working in accordance with the seasons, for example—in favor of a mono-crop approach to farming. The choice between making a living in the short term versus holding out and preserving things for the benefit of the long term is not, for most Palestinian farmers, one they have the freedom to make. The advantages 108

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**Roasted cauliflower and charred eggplant Roasted eggplant, feta yogurt,**

**with tomato sauce**

**Aleppo chile and pistachio**

We spent three nights in Haifa on one of our trips and spent two of those There are lots more sheep and goats than there are cows in Palestine, as eating supper at the same restaurant, Fattoush, in town. The reason we went cows are not traditionally reared. Much of the yogurt and cheese, therefore,



back two nights in a row was because we ate a version of this salad the first is made from sheep or goat milk. It's tangy—sour, even—in a way that works night and then went to bed dreaming about it. We went back the next night particularly well against the rich “meatiness” of roasted eggplant. The further and duly ordered a whole portion each. All the elements here are delicious in the yogurt or cheese is taken—whether that's being hung in the case of Serves four generously

Serves four as a starter or side

and of themselves: the combination of all three is positively wonderful.

labneh (see page 48) or fermented in the case of kishek (see page 54)—the more intense the tanginess. Here—in this dish, which features often on the 4 medium eggplants, charred

4 medium eggplants (2 lb 2 oz/1kg)

*Getting ahead:* You can char and marinate the eggplant a day or two ahead, Ottolenghi menu—we use feta. It has a similar tangy-sour flavor profile at the (see page xx; 2 lb 2 oz/1kg)

¼ cup/60ml olive oil

then finish the dish off on the day of serving.

same time as being instantly ready to use.

1 garlic clove, crushed

Salt and black pepper

1½ tsp lemon juice

2 tbsp pistachios, lightly toasted

*Playing around:* The feta yogurt and other toppings work equally well on other 2 tbsp cider vinegar



(see page 339) and roughly

roasted vegetables—roast wedges of beet or butternut squash, for example

---

Salt

chopped

Scoop the flesh out of the charred eggplants; you should have about 1 lb 2 oz/

as they do with the eggplant.

1 large cauliflower (or 2 medium),

¼ cup/5g mint leaves

500g. Place in a colander set over a bowl and set aside for at least 1 hour (or cut into roughly 1¼-inch/3cm

¼ cup/5g dill leaves

*Getting ahead:* If you want to get ahead, all the various elements can be made overnight, in the fridge), to drain. Once drained, put the eggplant flesh into a florets (8 cups/800g)

¼ tsp Aleppo chile flakes

up to a day in advance. Keep the eggplant and the feta yogurt in the fridge, medium mixing bowl and, using your hands, pull it apart to create long, thin 3 tbsp olive oil

(or ⅛ tsp regular chile flakes)

separately, returning the eggplant to room temperature before serving.

strands. Add the garlic, lemon, vinegar, and 1 tsp of salt. Mix to combine and 1 tsp coriander seeds



set then aside (in the fridge if you are making this a day ahead).

$\frac{3}{4}$  tsp ground turmeric

Feta yogurt

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

2 tsp whole milk

Tomato sauce

1 tbsp lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Put the cauliflower into a large bowl along with the oil, coriander seeds, 3 large tomatoes, cut into  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch/

2½ oz/75g feta, finely crumbled

turmeric,  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp of salt and a good grind of pepper. Mix well to combine, then  $\frac{1}{2}$ cm dice ( $1\frac{1}{3}$  cups/240g)

Cut each eggplant, lengthwise, into wedges. They should be about  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch/

1¼ cups/300g Greek yogurt

spread out on the prepared baking sheet. Roast for 30 minutes, until the  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g parsley, roughly

2cm wide at the base. Place them in a large bowl with the oil,  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of salt, and  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp salt

cauliflower is golden and tender. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool chopped

a good grind of black pepper. Mix to combine, then spread out on the prepared to room temperature.



1 tbsp oregano leaves,

baking sheet. Roast for 30 minutes, until cooked through and golden brown, roughly chopped

then remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

To make the sauce, while the cauliflower is roasting, place all the sauce 2  
tbsp olive oil

ingredients in a bowl. Mix to combine.

To make the feta yogurt, put the milk, lemon juice, feta, yogurt, and salt 2  
tbsp lemon juice

into a bowl. Whisk well to combine, breaking apart the feta until it almost  
½ tsp salt

Spread the eggplant on a serving plate that has a lip and arrange the  
disintegrates, then keep in the fridge until ready to serve.

cauliflower on top. Spoon on the sauce, sprinkle with the mint and parsley,  
To serve

and serve.

Arrange the eggplant wedges on a large platter or individual serving plates  
¼ cup/5g mint leaves (small ones if

and spoon on the feta yogurt. Top with the pistachios, mint, dill, and chile  
*Pictured on the next page*

you can, or larger ones, shredded)

flakes and serve.

¼ cup/5g picked parsley leaves,

whole or roughly chopped



*Pictured on the next page*

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**Roasted squash and zucchini**



## **with whipped feta and pistachios**

This is great as either a starter or as part of a spread. It also works as a side dish, served alongside meatballs or roast chicken. Use yellow zucchini if you can; the clash of color looks great with the squash.

*Playing around:* You don't need to do both the squash and the zucchini, if  
Serves four

you'd prefer to have just one or the other. You can also play around with other vegetables—carrots work just as well as the squash, for example.

½ small butternut squash

*Getting ahead:* Roast the squash and zucchini a few hours before serving and (unpeeled), sliced lengthwise

mix them with the dressing, they're happy to sit around for 3–4 hours, at room seeds scooped out, then each half

temperature, before serving. The whipped feta and yogurt mix can also be cut crosswise into ¾-inch/1½cm-made up to a day ahead and kept in the fridge until ready to serve.

slices (1 lb 3 oz/550g)

2½ tbsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

3–4 yellow (or green) zucchini

Preheat the oven to 475°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

(1 lb 2 oz/500g), sliced in half,

lengthwise and then crosswise (to



Put the squash into a large bowl with 1½ tbsp of oil, ¾ tsp of salt, and a good pinch (get 4 pieces from each zucchini),

grind of black pepper. Mix well, then spread out flat on a prepared baking sheet. Bake for 25 minutes, turning over halfway through so that both sides get lengthwise, to make wedges

some color. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool. Leave the oven on.

1 tbsp honey

2 garlic cloves, crushed

While the squash is cooking, grease a grill pan and place over high heat. Put

1 tbsp cider vinegar

the zucchini into a large bowl with the remaining 1 tbsp of oil, ½ tsp of salt, ¼ cup/5g tarragon leaves, roughly

and a good grind of black pepper. Once the grill pan is smoking hot, add the chopped

zucchini, in two batches if you need to, and cook for about 3 minutes, rotating 1 cup/250g ricotta

the wedges so that they have grill marks on all sides. Transfer to the second 3 tbsp Greek yogurt

prepared baking sheet and bake for 5 minutes, or until they're cooked through 3½ oz/100g feta, roughly crumbled

but still retain a bite.

1 lemon: finely grate the zest to get

1 tsp, then juice to get 1½ tbsp



Put the honey, half the garlic, the vinegar, tarragon, and ⅛ tsp of salt into a ⅓ cup/50g pistachios, toasted (see

large bowl and mix to combine. Add the squash and zucchini and stir very page 339) and roughly chopped

gently, to coat. Set aside until needed.

1½ tsp coriander seeds,

Put the ricotta, yogurt, 2¼ oz/60g of feta, the lemon zest and juice, the remaining toasted and roughly crushed

garlic, ⅛ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper into a bowl. Mix well in a mortar and pestle

until smooth, using a whisk to break apart the feta. Spread the mixture out on ¾ tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or ⅓ tsp

a large serving platter and top with the zucchini and squash. Scatter with the regular chile flakes)

remaining 1¼ oz/40g feta, followed by the pistachios, coriander seeds, and About ¼ cup/5g small mint leaves

chile flakes. Top with the mint leaves and serve.

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Veggie Sides and Salads

**Yogurt-roasted cauliflower with Chunky zucchini and tomato salad**

**quick-pickled chiles, golden raisins,**

*Mafghoussa*

**and red onions**



Mafghoussa, meaning “mashed” in Arabic, is more of a spread than a salad.

We’ve kept our version nice and chunky but, if you want a spread, the vegetables Roasting cauliflower florets in spiced yogurt makes them feel almost tandoori—can be lightly crushed. Either way, it’s delicious as it is—spooned up with some like. It creates a lovely crisp crust that works so well against everything else in pita—or served alongside all sorts of grilled meats, rice dishes, and other salads.

the dish—the soft sweetness of the golden raisins, the creamy crunch of the  
Serves four as a side

Some lightly toasted and roughly chopped walnuts mixed in are also a  
really Serves six

pine nuts. This works well either as a stand-alone salad or served along with  
nice addition.

some chicken and rice.

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup/85g Greek yogurt

2 lb 2 oz/1kg zucchini (either

The vegetables for mafghoussa are traditionally charred on the embers  
*Getting ahead:* The cauliflower can be roasted ahead of time, but don’t mix  
the 2 garlic cloves, crushed

10 small pale green ones,

in a taboon oven, the clay (and often communal) oven found outdoors in  
salad together until you are ready to serve: the herbs will wilt if they sit  
around  $\frac{1}{3}$  tsp ground turmeric

ideally, or 5 large darker green

Palestinian village homes (see page 341 for more on taboon). It’s great at  
for too long.



1½ tsp paprika

ones), trimmed and sliced in

a summer barbecue, when tomatoes and zucchini are at their best and the 2  
tsp ground cumin

half lengthwise (or quartered

barbecue will be out and ready. In the absence of either a taboon oven or the  
5 tbsp/75ml olive oil

lengthwise, if large)

right weather for a barbecue, a grill pan set over high heat on the stove also,  
3 tbsp lemon juice

5 large very ripe tomatoes (1¾ lb/

happily, works very well.

Preheat the oven to 475°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

Salt and black pepper

800g), cut in half crosswise

1 large head of cauliflower,

3 tbsp olive oil

*Getting ahead:* The vegetables can be grilled, chopped, and left to drain the  
Put the yogurt, garlic, turmeric, paprika, cumin, 2 tbsp of oil, 1 tbsp of  
lemon leaves and all (2½ lb/1.2kg)

Salt and black pepper

day before serving, if you want to get ahead. Mix them with the yogurt and  
juice, 1 tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper into a large bowl.



Whisk ¼ cup/30g golden raisins

1¼ cups/300g Greek yogurt

herbs on the actual day, though.

well to combine, then set aside.

½ red chile, seeded and

1 large garlic clove, peeled

thinly sliced (1 tbsp/10g)

and crushed

Pull the leaves away from the cauliflower; they'll have different lengths, but

½ red onion, cut into thin rounds

1 lemon: finely grate the zest to get

keep their shape intact. Slice the larger leaves down the middle, vertically,  
(mounded ½ cup/60g)

1 tsp, then juice to get 2 tbsp

Preheat the oven to 425°F, line two baking sheets with parchment paper,  
place and place them (along with all the other leaves) in a medium bowl  
along with 4 tsp cider vinegar

1 tbsp date molasses, plus 2 tsp

a ridged grill pan over high heat, and ventilate the kitchen well.

1½ tsp of oil, ⅛ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Mix to  
combine, ¼ cup/25g pine nuts, toasted

2 red chiles, seeded and finely



then spread out on the prepared baking sheet. Set aside. Remove the stalk (see page 339)

chopped

Spread the zucchini and tomatoes on the prepared baking sheets, cut side up.

from the cauliflower and slice it into roughly ¼-inch/½cm-thick pieces. Cut ½ cup/10g parsley leaves

¼ cup/5g mint leaves, roughly

Brush with 2 tbsp of olive oil (in total) and season with ½ tsp of salt and plenty the cauliflower into large florets, about 2½-inches/6cm, and add these, along ¼ cup/5g mint leaves

chopped, plus 1 tbsp small leaves

of pepper.

with the stalks, to the bowl of yogurt. Mix until well coated, then transfer to ¾ cup/15g parsley, roughly chopped,

the second prepared baking sheet, spreading the pieces out so that they're not By now the grill pan should be piping hot. Place a few of the zucchini on the plus 1 tbsp chopped parsley

overlapping. Transfer both sheets to the oven. Bake the leaves for 15 minutes, pan, cut side down, and cook for 4–5 minutes; the zucchini should be nicely until they're softened and charred, and the cauliflower for 30 minutes, or until charred on one side. If you've quartered your zucchini lengthwise, adjust cooked through and charred in places. Remove from the oven and set both them on the grill pan halfway through so that both exposed sides get charred.

aside to cool completely.



Return them to the baking sheet, arranging them all cut side up, and continue with the remaining zucchini and tomatoes in the same way—the tomatoes. While the cauliflower is roasting, put the golden raisins, chile, onion, vinegar, just need a minute or so less on the grill. Transfer the vegetables to the oven and a tiny pinch of salt into a large bowl (the cauliflower will all be added to and roast for 20 minutes, until the zucchini are very tender and the tomatoes this). Mix to combine, then set aside for about 20 minutes, to pickle.

are cooked through but still retain their shape. Remove the baking sheets from the oven and allow the vegetables to cool down slightly. Chop them. Once the cauliflower is completely cool, add it, with the leaves, to the bowl roughly into 1 inch/2.5cm pieces and let drain in a colander for 15 minutes.

along with the pine nuts, herbs, remaining 2½ tbsp of oil, and the remaining 2 tbsp of lemon juice. Mix well to combine, then transfer to a serving platter. Meanwhile, whisk the yogurt, garlic, lemon zest, lemon juice, 1 tbsp date and serve at once.

molasses, and two-thirds of the chiles in a large mixing bowl. Add the chopped vegetables, ¼ cup/5g mint, ¾ cup/15g parsley, 1 tsp of salt, and plenty of pepper. Stir well, then transfer to a large, shallow serving plate.

Spread it all over, then garnish with the remaining 1 tbsp parsley, one-third chile, and 1 tbsp mint leaves. Finally, drizzle over the remaining 2 tsp of date molasses and the remaining 1 tbsp of olive oil and serve.

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## **Roasted eggplant with tamarind and cilantro**

*Batinjan bil tamer hindi*

Tara's kids are always asking which of them is her favorite child. "I have a favorite daughter," she says, to her only daughter, Scarlett. "And definitely a favorite oldest son," she says to Scarlett's twin brother, Theo. "And, of course, my favorite Serves six as a side or part of

youngest child will always be Casper," she says to the little one, before he punches a spread, or four as a main

the air and runs off to make some noise. When it comes to vegetable "favorites,"

though, no such qualifications are needed: it's eggplants all the way. So loved is 3½ oz/100g tamarind pulp (or



the mighty eggplant, and in this dish in particular, that they swiftly became Tara's 6 tbsp/70g tamarind paste, if

new screensaver for her phone when they were shot for the book. Tara's favorite starting with ready-made)

daughter—who'd previously taken the coveted screensaver spot—was distinctly ½ cup/120ml boiling water

unimpressed to have been bumped out by a vegetable.

4 eggplants, sliced in half

This can be served either as a veggie main, with some rice and yogurt spooned lengthwise (2 lb 2 oz/1kg)

alongside, or as a side to all sorts of things—some pan-fried tofu, for example, 6 tbsp/90ml olive oil

or a lamb chop.

Salt and black pepper

4 large garlic cloves, crushed

*Getting ahead:* This is a dish that can be made and assembled a good few hours 2 lemons: finely grate the zest

before serving; it's happy to sit around for 4–5 hours. It can even be made the of both to get 1½ tsp, then juice

day before, if you like. Keep it in the fridge overnight, and either warm it through to get ¼ cup/60ml

for a few minutes (before sprinkling with the fresh cilantro) or bring it back to 2 tsp sugar

room temperature before serving.



½ tsp coriander seeds, lightly

toasted, then roughly crushed

in a mortar and pestle

¼ cup/5g cilantro leaves

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Place the tamarind pulp in a bowl and pour in the boiling water. Set aside for 20 minutes or so, stirring or squeezing the pulp into the water from time to time. (If starting with ready-made paste you don't need to do this.) Use a small, sharp knife to make 4–5 deep, parallel incisions in the cut side of each eggplant half. Don't go so far through the flesh that you reach the skin on the other side, though. Repeat at a 45-degree angle to create a diamond pattern. Place the eggplants on the prepared baking sheet, cut side up, and brush evenly with ¼ cup/60ml of oil. Sprinkle with ¾ tsp of salt and a good grind of black pepper and roast for about 35 minutes, turning the sheet around halfway through roasting, until the eggplants are cooked through, soft, and golden brown.

While the eggplants are roasting, pass the tamarind mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl; it should weigh about 2½ oz/70g. The seeds and pulp left behind in the sieve can be discarded. Add the remaining 2 tbsp/30ml of oil along with the garlic, lemon juice, sugar, ¾ tsp of salt, and a grind of black pepper. Mix well and then, when the eggplants have been roasting for 35 minutes, generously spoon this sauce on their cut sides. Sprinkle with the coriander seeds and return to the oven for a final 5 minutes. There will be a bit of excess sauce on the baking sheet but that's fine; you can just spoon this over the eggplants when serving.

Remove the eggplants from the oven and allow to cool for 10 minutes (or longer if serving at room temperature) before transferring to a serving platter or individual plates. Sprinkle with the lemon zest and cilantro and serve.



## Veggie Sides and Salads



### **Summer squash and chickpeas cooked in yogurt**

*Kousa bil laban*

Cooking vegetables in yogurt is common all over Palestine but particularly characteristic in the north, due to the Syrian and Lebanese influence. Cooking things in a sauce of yogurt (rather than, say, a tomato sauce) happens due to Serves four to six

practical reasons—there is so much yogurt around that it's a building block of the traditional cuisine—but, also, because it's such a good way to enrich 1 small summer squash or

a dish and make it luxurious. Here, for example, two thoroughly humble zucchini 1¾ lb/800g

ingredients—chickpeas and summer squash—are totally transformed into 5 tbsp/75ml olive oil



something rich and comforting. Don't start with a large summer squash, 1 onion, roughly chopped

they can taste bitter and their flesh can be watery. If you can't find summer (1 cup/140g)

squash, use an equal weight of zucchini. If you do this they'll just need a 1 green chile, finely chopped

couple of minutes less cooking.

1<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cups/400g Greek yogurt

Serve this either warm or at room temperature, as a side or as part of a spread.

1 egg yolk

1 x 14-oz/400g can of cooked

*Getting ahead:* This is best eaten the day it's made. Leftovers are fine for a chickpeas, drained and rinsed

couple of days, though. Just bring back to room temperature or gently warm (1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups/240g)

through before eating.

Salt and black pepper

2 large garlic cloves, crushed

1 cup/20g cilantro leaves,

finely chopped

Top and tail the summer squash, then quarter the whole squash lengthwise.

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp Aleppo chile flakes or <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> tsp



Using a small knife, cut away and discard the core flesh and seeds. Cut the regular chile flakes (optional)

remaining firmer flesh into ½-inch/1½cm dice and set aside.

Put 2 tbsp of olive oil into a large saucepan, about 8 inches/20cm wide, and place over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 5 minutes, stirring a few times. Add the chile, cook for 1 minute, then add the summer squash. Cook for another 5 minutes, stirring a few times, until the summer squash has become slightly greener and is starting to soften.

Put the yogurt and egg yolk into the small bowl of a food processor (or a countertop blender) and blend for 30 seconds, until smooth and runny. Pour into a small saucepan and place over high heat for about 3 minutes, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until the yogurt starts to bubble. Take care it does not come to a boil, as this will cause the yogurt to split. Once hot, add this to the pan of summer squash, along with the chickpeas, 1½ tsp of salt, and some black pepper. Cook gently over low heat, stirring from time to time, for another 5 minutes. Keep an eye on the yogurt toward the end of cooking; it will split if it gets too hot.

Meanwhile, put the remaining 3 tbsp of olive oil into a small saucepan and place over medium heat. Once hot, add the garlic and cook for 1–2 minutes, stirring frequently, until the garlic is a very light golden brown. Add the cilantro, stir for 5 seconds, and then set aside.

Spoon the summer squash and sauce into a deep bowl (or individual serving bowls) and top with the garlic-cilantro mix. Sprinkle with the chile flakes, if desired, and serve either warm or at room temperature.

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Veggie Sides and Salads

**Zucchini, garlic, and yogurt Braised fava beans with olive oil**

*M'tawaneh*



**and lemon**

*Foul akdar*

M'tawaneh is, traditionally, made with the scooped-out flesh of zucchini after they've been hollowed in order to be stuffed. Here, however, we're short-cutting the process by starting with the whole zucchini, skin and all. It This is a simple dish but, thanks to the generous amount of lemon juice and has a bit more texture as a result, which we love, making it more of a veggie the even more generous olive oil, wonderfully sharp and rich. It's lovely as side or condiment than a completely smooth dip. The result is rich, light, and it is, warm or at room temperature, with a bowl of rice or some plain yogurt Serves four as a dip or side

Serves four as a side

comforting all at once.

alongside, or as a side or as part of a mezzeh spread. Leftovers are also or part of a spread

delicious and keep well for a couple of days, so double or triple the batch 2 tbsp olive oil, plus more to serve

Serve this either as it is, scooped up with some warm pita for a light lunch if you have a glut of beans.

1 onion, finely chopped (1 cup/150g)

6 tbsp/90ml olive oil

with some black olives, or as a side to all sorts of things. Pan-fried fish, grilled 4 large zucchini, chopped into

1 onion, finely chopped (1 cup/150g)

chicken, or roasted beets, for example, all work particularly well.



*Ingredients note:* For those used to taking fava beans out of both their ½-inch/1cm dice (6⅔ cups/800g)

3 garlic cloves, crushed

pods and their individual fibrous skins, braising them whole will be a little  
*Keeping notes:* This keeps well in the fridge for up to 3 days.

Salt

1 lb 5oz/600g fresh fava beans,

revelation. The younger and more tender the beans that you start with, the  
⅔ cup/200g Greek yogurt

stalks trimmed, stringy

more melt-in-the-mouth they will feel.

3 large garlic cloves, crushed

part removed, then cut on

½ tsp dried mint

the diagonal into roughly

Put the oil into a medium sauté pan and place over medium-high heat. Add  
1 tsp dried pink peppercorns

1½-inch/4cm-long pieces

the onion and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring from time to time, until it  
has (not the kind in brine), roughly

¾ cup plus 2 tbsp/200ml chicken

Put the oil into a large sauté pan with a lid, and place over medium-high  
heat.



started to soften. Add the zucchini and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of salt, and cook for 1 minutes or crushed in a mortar and pestle

(or vegetable) stock

Add the onion and cook for about 7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft so, stirring a few times, until the zucchini are soft. Remove the pan from the heat and set aside to cool.

and golden brown. Add the garlic and cook for another 30 seconds, until heat and set aside to cool.

1 lemon: finely grate the zest to get

fragrant, then add the fava beans, stock,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of salt, and a good grind of  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp, then juice to get 2 tbsp

black pepper. Bring to a simmer, then decrease the heat to medium-low and Put the yogurt, garlic and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of salt into a large bowl and mix to combine.

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp dried mint

cook for about 25 minutes, covered, until the beans are very soft.

Once the zucchini are cool, add to the yogurt and stir to combine. Transfer  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/ 10g parsley leaves,

to either a flat serving platter (with a lip) or a shallow bowl. Sprinkle with the roughly chopped

Stir in the lemon juice and dried mint and set aside either to cool, if serving at room temperature, or for just 10 minutes if serving warm. Scatter the

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup/ 10g mint leaves, roughly

parsley, chopped just before serving



chopped mint, and lemon zest on top and serve.

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## Veggie Sides and Salads

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## Spiced chickpeas

### *Balilah*

As a kid, Sami used to snack on balilah on the way home from school in East Jerusalem. Traditionally, it's a street-food piled into cone-shaped newspaper packages and served warm, but it also works as a salad, served warm or at room temperature. As a salad, it works with all sorts of things: some grilled fish or chicken with a simple green salad or just wedges of roasted butternut Serves four as a salad, or six as

squash, for example.



## part of a spread

*Getting ahead:* This is served either warm, soon after assembly, or at room temperature, it can happily sit around for a few hours. Leftovers are also great chickpeas, soaked overnight in

for the lunchbox the next day. Keep in the fridge overnight and bring back to twice their volume of water and

room temperature before eating.

1 tsp baking soda (or 2 x 14-oz/

400g cans of cooked chickpeas,

as an alternative)

Salt

If the chickpeas have been soaking overnight, drain them, place in a large 2 lemons

saucepan, and cover with plenty of cold water. Bring to a boil over high 1½ tsp cumin seeds, lightly

heat, then decrease the heat to medium-low. Simmer for 40–60 minutes (or toasted and roughly crushed

5–10 minutes, if starting with canned), skimming any scum off the surface in a mortar and pestle

of the water a few times, until the chickpeas are very soft but still retain their 1½ tsp coriander seeds, lightly



shape. Toward the end of the cooking time—5–10 minutes before they are toasted and roughly crushed

ready—add  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp (or  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp, if starting with canned) of salt.

in a mortar and pestle

5 tbsp/75ml olive oil

Meanwhile, finely zest one of the lemons to get 2 tsp zest. Set this aside in  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g parsley leaves, roughly

a large bowl (the chickpeas will end up here). Peel the same lemon, cutting chopped, plus a few leaves

away the bitter white pith. Roughly chop the flesh, removing any seeds,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g mint leaves, roughly

and add this, along with all of the juices, to the bowl with the zest. Halve the torn, plus a few leaves

remaining lemon, lengthwise, and squeeze the juice of one half into the bowl.

3 green onions, thinly sliced

Slice the remaining half into very thin slices, discarding any seeds as you go ( $\frac{1}{3}$  cup/30g)

along, and add these to the bowl as well.

1 tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp

regular chile flakes)

Drain the chickpeas once they are cooked and, while they are still hot, add  $\frac{1}{2}$  red onion, very finely



them to the lemon in the bowl. Add the cumin seeds, coriander seeds, oil, chopped (½ cup/70g)

herbs, green onions, half the chile flakes, half the onion, 1½ tsp of salt (or just Black pepper

1 tsp if starting with canned chickpeas), and a good grind of black pepper.

Mix well to combine, then transfer to a serving platter. Top with the remaining onion and chile flakes and the remaining parsley and mint leaves. Serve either warm or at room temperature.

Veggie Sides and Salads 125



**Lentils with tahini and crispy onion**

*Aadaas bil thineh w al basal*



This is a really useful and completely addictive side to all sorts of grilled vegetables, meat or fish dishes. It's nutty and creamy from the tahini and almonds, hearty and wholesome from the lentils and, thanks to the crispy fried onions, very hard indeed to stop eating.

Serves six to eight

*Getting ahead:* You can make the lentils a day ahead, if you like, adding the nuts and crispy onions just before serving. Keep the lentils in the fridge but, 1¾ cups/350g green lentils

as ever, bring them back to room temperature before serving. The onions can also be made a day ahead (and stored separately from the lentils). They need Crispy onions

to be kept at room temperature, in an airtight container.

About 1⅔ cups/400ml sunflower oil

2 onions, cut in half, then each

half thinly sliced (2½ cups/300g)

1½ tbsp cornstarch

Put the lentils into a large saucepan and pour over 1½ liters of water. Set aside Salt

for 1 hour, to soak.

To make the crispy onions, put the oil into a large frying or sauté pan: you want ¼ cup/60g tahini

it to rise about 2cm up the side of the pan. Place over medium-high heat. Mix 2 large garlic cloves, crushed

the onions with the cornstarch, then, when the oil is hot, add them in two or 2 large green chiles, finely chopped



three batches. Cook for 8–14 minutes (timings vary greatly depending on how  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml lemon juice

hot your oil is), stirring from time to time, until the onions are really golden (from about 2 lemons)

and crispy. Transfer to a plate lined with kitchen paper—spread them out so  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground cumin

that the onion does not get soggy—and sprinkle lightly with salt. Set aside Salt

while you continue with the rest of

Mounded  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/60g sliced almonds,

the onions.

toasted (see page 339)

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup/15g parsley leaves,

Bring the pan of lentils to the boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to roughly chopped

medium-low and cook for about 15 minutes, until the lentils are soft but still  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml olive oil, to serve

retain a bite. Drain the lentils and rinse straight away under cold water, to  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp paprika, to serve

stop them cooking. Drain well, then tip into a large mixing bowl along with the tahini, garlic, chiles, lemon juice, cumin and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of salt. Mix well to combine, then set aside for 10 minutes.

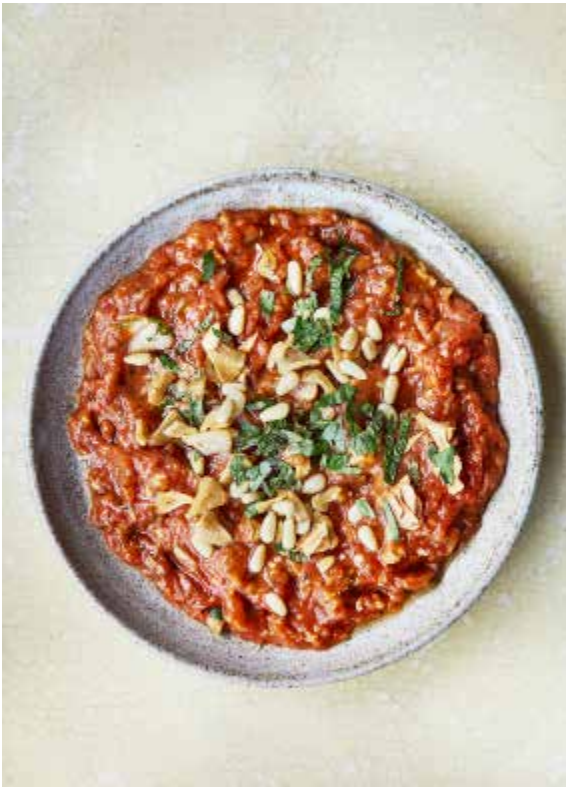
When ready to serve, put half the crispy onions, most of the toasted almonds and a third of the parsley into a wide serving bowl. Mix to combine, then add the lentils. Give everything a gentle stir, and top with the



remaining onions, almonds and parsley. Drizzle over the olive oil and finish with a sprinkle of paprika.

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## Veggie Sides and Salads



### **Sautéed tomatoes**

#### *Galayet banadoura*

This is somewhere between a tomato dip and stewed tomatoes. Either way, it's rich, silky, and really versatile. Serve it either as part of a mezzeh, with some crusty white bread to mop it all up, or as a side to all sorts of dishes. Any grilled meat or fish, for example, some pan-fried tofu, and all sorts of grain and pulse dishes work well. It's also really delicious as a pasta sauce.

Serves four as part of

a mezzeh selection



*Getting ahead:* The tomatoes keep well in the fridge, for 3–4 days. The garlic and pine nuts can also be prepared well ahead (kept at room temperature), 1¾ cups lb/800g plum tomatoes

ready to be spooned on when assembling the dish.

(8 or 9)

6 tbsp/90ml olive oil

1 green chile, halved lengthwise,

then roughly chopped, seeds

Core the tomatoes and score the base with an “X”: this makes it easier to and all

remove their skins. There are two ways to do this. The first is to bring a medium 8 garlic cloves: 2 crushed and

saucepan of water to a simmer, over medium-high heat, and lower in the the remaining 6 very thinly

tomatoes. Cook for 1–2 minutes, or until the skins start to shrink back, then sliced lengthwise

remove them with a slotted spoon. While the tomatoes are still warm, peel Salt and black pepper

off and discard the skins. The second way is to place them in a large bowl and ½ tsp dried mint

cover them with boiling water. Let soak for 1–2 minutes, then drain. Again, 2 tbsp pine nuts

while the tomatoes are still warm, peel off and discard the skins. Once peeled, ¼ cup/ 5g mint leaves, shredded

slice each tomato into 6 wedges and set aside.



¼ cup/ 5g parsley leaves,

roughly chopped

Put 3 tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan and place over medium-high heat. Add the tomatoes, chile, crushed garlic, 1 tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Cook for about 18 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes have broken down and the sauce has thickened. Stir in the dried mint and transfer to a serving platter. Set aside to cool slightly.

Meanwhile, put the sliced garlic and remaining 3 tbsp of oil into a small frying pan and place over medium heat. Cook for about 4 minutes, or until the garlic starts to become lightly golden. Add the pine nuts and cook for another 3 minutes, or until they have taken on some color. Pour the mixture, along with the oil, over the tomatoes and garnish with the mint and parsley. Serve warm or at room temperature.

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## **The Tent of Nations: one family's story of peaceful resistance**

*Sumud* is the Arabic word for “steadfastness”: the stubborn, patient insistence that, despite the odds, things will work out. The Tent of Nations, a small farm 7 kilometers southwest of Bethlehem, is a case study in Palestinian *sumud*. The story of the farm is one-of-a-kind but only by degree. The issues at the heart of the story—namely the threat Palestinians feel to their autonomy over, ownership of, and freedom within the land of their ancestors—play out for family after family, day after day, all throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories (see page 339).

The Tent of Nations is home to the Nassar family. Daoud and Amal are husband and wife and they live on the land with their extended family, including Amal's brother, Daher, and their mother, Milada. It's been their home since 1916, when Amal's grandfather bought the land. Amal's father,



Bishara, was born in one of the eight caves within the land. The family has been living there, simply, ever since. At the same time, they've been in court since the early 1990s—around thirty years at the time of writing—peacefully and legally defending their right to stay there. Steadfast, they remain.

At the heart of the long-standing case is the question of land ownership.

This goes back to the Oslo Accords, written up in 1993, which stated that the West Bank was to be divided into three distinct areas: A, B, and C. On paper, the thinking was simple: dividing the land up this way would make it clear who was allowed to be where, and who was responsible for the upkeep, protection, and governance of each particular area. Area A, 18 percent of the West Bank, remained under Palestinian Authority (PA) control and security authority. Area B, about 22 percent of the West Bank, was to be shared responsibility, with civil administration under PA control, and exclusive security control under the Israeli jurisdiction (with limited cooperation from Palestinian police). Area C, by far the biggest chunk of land at 63 percent of the West Bank, remained under full direct Israeli civil and security control. According to those who drew up the accords, this all made sense and seemed pretty fair, with a plan in place to ensure that full Palestinian governance was achieved by 1999.

Twenty years later, that goal has clearly been missed along the way, and the effects of that missed goal are felt far and wide. Palestinians in Area C feel particularly let down by a system that does little to protect their services and needs.

Area C contains most of the West Bank's natural resources and open areas, but the 130

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distribution of these resources—most noticeably water and the freedom to build—

“At every turn,” says Daoud, “we are given the option to get violent or to is far from equal. If a Palestinian in Area C needs a police car or an



ambulance or a resign and leave. At every turn we choose not to take these options. Nobody can trash collection, chances are there won't be one rushing to them any time soon.

force us to hate. We refuse to be victims and we refuse to be enemies. We want to The Tent of Nations is in Area C. It's surrounded by five Israeli settlements.

live in peace and dignity on our own land." If this all sounds a bit syrupy, then we The nearest is close enough that the Nassar family can hear the voices of the are not doing a good enough job conveying the contrast between the reality Amal settlers on the farm, carried down the valley. The largest, Beitar Illit, has a and Daoud have to put up with on a daily basis, and the grace, hope, and faith with population of more than 40,000. The settlements are all deemed illegal under which they do so.

international law, a fact refuted by the Israeli government. If the feeling of being The family has a strong Christian faith, rooted in the "turn the other encroached upon was mainly visual for the Nassar family, as the settlements were cheek" line of thinking rather than the "eye for an eye" school of thought. Their built and expanded throughout the 1980s, it became actual in the early 1990s, faith is also strengthened by the steady stream of volunteers and visitors—both when the military authorities declared that more than 90 percent of the farm international and local—who support their efforts in various ways. Volunteers, for belonged to the State of Israel. A loophole had been found in the system and was example, can come and stay for a number of days or weeks and provide support set to be exploited.

Unfortunately for the Israelis, however, the Nassars had the with farm work, particularly during times of harvest, after which jams are made, faith and, crucially, the paperwork to start their long, determined but peaceable fruit and nuts are dried, and olives are pressed. It took twelve years to get their first battle. Both their deep faith and robust paperwork were thanks to Amal's volunteer to come to the farm in 2011, says Daoud. Now, they get about 8,000 a grandfather, who'd had the unusual foresight to register the land in 1924.

year. "No one believed we could withstand the system but we kept going. It's this—



The loophole was a piece of legislation dating back to the Ottoman Empire, something coming from nothing—that gives us hope.”

which said that if a piece of land is considered “uncultivated” for over three years Some visitors stay for weeks to work, while others, just as important, come for (even if this is due to its owners being denied the access to cultivate it) then day trips to see the farm, have a meal cooked for them by Bishara’s widow, Milada,

“ownership” will revert automatically to the state. The Nassars received their first and hear from Amal and Daoud about the work being done to fight peacefully for of many demolition orders. Peacefully, they refused to budge. Peacefully, they justice. “COME, SEE, TELL” is written on a sign as you enter the farm. It’s a powerful have been in court ever since.

reminder of the importance of visiting, bearing witness to and then telling people This is just one of the cases keeping them in court. Two others are against who don’t know (or aren’t listening) about it, to propel them in turn to take action.

the military, following the destruction of their fruit trees in 2014 and the hundreds Local school kids also visit, either for day trips or for longer summer camps.

of olive trees that have since been uprooted. Demolishing these trees is an act of Donations also help, whether large or small. A solar-energy system is thanks destruction in two ways. On one hand, it’s an actual way of preventing the land to German sponsorship, for example. On a smaller scale, individuals are able to from being properly cultivated, thus creating “facts on the ground” that can be sponsor single or multiple olive trees to replace those that have been destroyed.

used by the Israeli authorities in court. And on the otherhand, in a land where olive This all goes an enormous way to restoring not only the land but also the spirits of trees are so deeply rooted in the identity and livelihood of the people, it’s also, those who live on it—but of course there is still a long, long way to go.



symbolically, as well as literally, devastating.

The Tent of Nations is one-of-a-kind, but, in a land where the number of Again, the frustrating irony for a Palestinian trying to take action in Area settlements continues to grow, it's a testament more widely to the power of a C is that, because the officials call the shots, the officials can, and do, make it Palestinian family's faith, sumud, and desire to stay rooted to the land they feel as madly difficult as possible for the family to proceed in court. The situation so part of. It's not just about the actual plot of land and it's certainly not about the is Kafkaesque. Amal has lots of stories about attempts that have been made to money. "The last check we received [from a settler, to buy the land] was blank,"

thwart their legal efforts and progress. After ten years in the military courts, for says Daoud. "We were told by an anonymous caller that we could write out the example, they were told that their Palestinian lawyer was not eligible to contest check with any amount we wanted." It's about the principle, about doing the right the case in Israel's Supreme Court because he carried West Bank identity papers.

thing, about not accepting that the only options open to them are violence or

"Consequently," Amal says, "we found an Israeli firm willing to take it on." On a resignation.

separate occasion, they were asked to bring witnesses to support the claim that Amal's name means "hope" in Arabic. "*Inshallah hasam*: tomorrow will be the land had been farmed over three generations. They rented a bus for more than better," she says. Their eldest daughter has just graduated from school, studying thirty local villagers to go to the military court near Ramallah. After five hours of international human rights law. The next generation stands ready to take on the waiting in the heat of the sun, a single soldier came out and told them "We don't battle; the battle that the Nassar family call active hope and peaceful resistance.

want witnesses; go home."









## **Spicy roasted new potatoes with lemon and herbs**

*Batata bil filfil*

Sometimes—oftentimes!—all a dish needs alongside it is some roasted new potatoes. This is the side for the job.

Serves four as a side

*Getting ahead:* Take this up to the point before the potatoes are ready to go into the oven, if you want to get ahead; the potatoes and tomatoes can sit 3 tbsp olive oil

around on the baking tray for a couple of hours. Don't put them into the oven 1 tsp cumin seeds, lightly crushed

ahead of time, though, they want to be eaten freshly roasted.



in a mortar and pestle

1 tsp coriander seeds, lightly

crushed in a mortar and pestle

7 large garlic cloves, thinly

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

sliced (3 tbsp/20g)

1 large red chile, thinly sliced

Put the oil into a large sauté pan and place over high heat. Add the cumin (¼ cup/20g)

seeds and coriander seeds and cook for 1 minute, stirring frequently. Add the 7 oz/200g cherry tomatoes,

garlic and cook for another 1 minute, until the garlic starts to color. Add the sliced in half

chile and tomatoes and cook for another 2 minutes, stirring from time to time, 1 lb 10 oz/750g baby new potatoes,

until the tomatoes have started to soften. Add the potatoes, sugar, 1 tsp of quartered

salt, and a generous grind of black pepper. Give everything a good stir, then ½ tsp sugar

transfer the mixture to the prepared baking sheet. Roast for about 40 minutes, Salt and black pepper

tossing once halfway through, until the potatoes are crispy and cooked and 1 large lemon: finely grate the

the tomatoes are breaking down.



zest to get 2 tsp, then juice to

Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for 5 minutes before adding the  
get 2 tbsp

lemon zest, lemon juice, cilantro, and dill. Toss gently and serve at once.

½ cup/10g cilantro leaves, roughly

chopped

¼ cup/5g dill, roughly chopped

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**Mashed turnip with greens, caramelized  
onions, and feta**



This started off as a way to use up all the turnip and potato flesh we'd generated from recipes in which turnips and potatoes were stuffed. The turnips made the cut (see page 241); the potatoes did not. The resulting mash turned out so good, though, that it soon became a reason to buy the vegetables in the first place!

Necessity (not to discard good food) was indeed the mother of great invention Serves four to six as a side

here (along with Noor, of course, our crucial right-hand lady on the book, who created the recipe!). If you are making the stuffed turnips, though, and do have ½ cup/120ml olive oil

all that spare flesh, save it to make this the next day. Just cover it with water  
2 onions, thinly sliced

until ready to use, to prevent discoloration.

(2½ cups/300g)

4 garlic cloves, crushed

*Playing around:* Don't be too precious with what herbs and greens you add  
1 tbsp cumin seeds, roughly

here; amounts try to keep the the same but, if you have more spinach than crushed in a mortar and pestle

cavolo nero to use up, for example, or parsley rather than dill, that's absolutely 7 oz/200g cavolo nero, woody

fine. It's meant to be a bit of a fridge-raid-of-leftovers recipe.

stems discarded and leaves

roughly torn (2¼ cups/140g)

Salt and black pepper



5 cups/100g baby spinach

Put 2½ tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan and place over medium heat. Once ¼ cup/5g parsley leaves, roughly

hot, add the onions and cook for about 35 minutes, stirring only every so chopped, plus more to garnish

often, until deeply browned and caramelized. Scrape the onions into a bowl ¼ cup/5g dill, roughly chopped,

and return the pan to medium-high heat. Add 1½ tbsp of oil, followed by the plus more to garnish

garlic, and cook for 1 minute, stirring continuously. Add the cumin seeds and 1 lb 10 oz/750g turnips,

cook for another 30 seconds, or until fragrant. Add the cavolo nero, ¼ tsp of peeled and cut into roughly

salt, and a good grind of black pepper and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring ¾-inch/2cm chunks

often, until softened and lightly charred. Add the spinach and cook for about 1 lb 5 oz/600g russet potatoes,

1 minute, until just wilted. Transfer to a bowl and stir in the herbs.

peeled and cut into roughly

While the onions are cooking, put the turnips, potatoes, and 2 tsp of salt into 1¼-inch/3cm chunks

a large saucepan with a lid. Fill the pan with water so that the vegetables are 6 tbsp/100g Greek yogurt

covered, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Decrease the heat to 4¼ oz/120g feta, roughly



medium-low, cover, and cook for 15 minutes, or until the vegetables are easily crumbled into large chunks

pierced with a knife. Drain through a sieve and return to the pan along with the yogurt, 2 tbsp of oil, ½ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Use a potato masher to create a chunky mash, and transfer to a serving platter.

Scatter half of the feta and half the onions over the top. Pile the greens into the center and top with the remaining onions and feta and the remaining herbs. Drizzle all over with the last 2 tbsp of oil and serve.

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### Veggie Sides and Salads



**Bulgur, tomato, and eggplant pilaf**

*Shulbato*



This makes either a simple lunch, served with some thick Greek yogurt, or a side to all sorts of things; grilled chicken, pan-fried tofu, salmon fillet—they all work well.

*Getting ahead:* The eggplant cubes can be roasted ahead of time, if you like, Serves four as a light meal or side

and warmed through with the bulgur before serving.

*Playing around:* Cubes of creamy avocado or tangy feta are a nice addition, 2 medium eggplants, cut into

dotted on top before serving. Also, if you're looking for an alternative to the roughly ¾-inch/2cm dice

eggplant then zucchini can be used. Cut them into roughly ¾-inch/2cm dice (5 cups/420g)

and add them to the pan at the same time as the bulgur.

5 tbsp/75ml olive oil

Salt

1 onion, thinly sliced

(1½ cups/180g)

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

1 garlic clove, crushed

1 tbsp tomato paste

Place the eggplants in a large mixing bowl with 3 tbsp of oil and ½ tsp of salt.

1 tbsp sugar



Mix well, then spread out on the prepared baking sheet. Roast for 20 minutes, 3 medium-sized ripe tomatoes,

or until soft and golden brown. Remove from the oven and set aside.

roughly chopped (2 cups/380g)

2 green chiles, seeds and all

While the eggplants are roasting, put the remaining 2 tbsp of oil into a large 1<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cups/400ml boiling water

saucepan with a lid, and place over medium heat. Add the onion and cook 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups/350g coarse bulgur

for about 8 minutes, or until the onion has softened and started to color. Add 1 tsp ground cumin

the garlic and cook for another 2 minutes, then add the tomato paste and ¼ tsp ground cinnamon

sugar. Stir for 30 seconds, then add the tomatoes, chiles, and water. Bring to Black pepper

a boil, then add the bulgur, spices, 1¼ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Return to a boil, then decrease the heat to low. Cook for 15 minutes, To serve

covered, then remove the pan from the heat. Keep the lid on and set aside for ½ cup/10g cilantro leaves, roughly

10 minutes.

chopped

About ½ tsp Aleppo chile flakes

Add the eggplants to the pan and gently stir in.



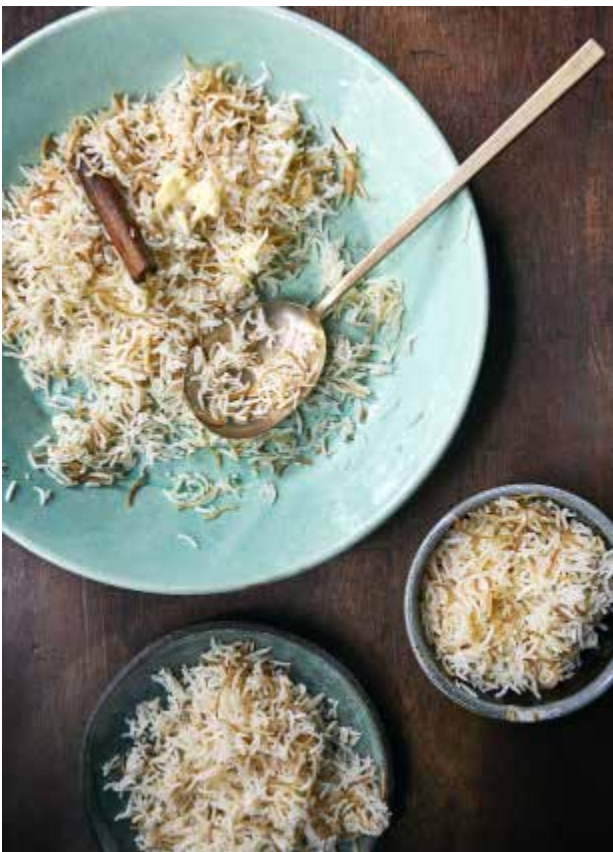
(or ¼ tsp regular chile flakes)

To serve, spoon onto a serving platter or individual plates, sprinkle with the Greek yogurt (optional)

cilantro and chile flakes, and serve with a spoonful of yogurt, if desired.

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## Veggie Sides and Salads



### **Buttery rice with toasted vermicelli**

*Ruz bil sh'arieh*

There's a old wives' tale that a woman used to add pasta to rice only if she was an unconfident cook or couldn't cook rice properly. The theory was that adding pasta was a guaranteed way to prevent the rice from sticking together.



True or otherwise, it's a guaranteed way to get it seriously fluffy and it's a good few steps up from regular steamed rice. Here, the pasta brings texture, Serves four as a side

the butter brings comfort, and the cinnamon brings a hint of spice.

1½ cups/300g basmati rice

*Ingredients note:* Don't get the flat Asian rice noodles here; you want the 3  
tbsp unsalted butter

Italian wheat vermicelli nests. They are like spaghetti, but thinner. Regular  
1 cinnamon stick

spaghetti makes a fine alternative.

1¾ oz/50g vermicelli wheat noodles

or spaghetti, roughly broken into

1¼-inch/ 3cm pieces

2¼ cups/520ml hot water or hot

Place the rice in a bowl and allow tap water to run over it until the water is  
chicken stock (optional)

clear. Set aside to soak for at least 1 hour (or overnight, if you are getting  
Salt and black pepper

ahead). Transfer the soaked rice to a sieve placed over a bowl and let drain  
for about 15 minutes.

Put 2 tbsp of butter and the cinnamon into a medium saucepan with a lid  
and place over medium-high heat. Add the vermicelli or spaghetti and cook  
for 3 minutes, stirring continuously, until deeply golden. Mix in the rice for  
about 30 seconds, then add the water (or stock), along with 1½ tsp of salt  
(or slightly less—about 1 tsp—if using stock and it is salty) and a good



grind of black pepper. Cover the pan tightly with aluminum foil and put the lid on top of this.

Decrease the heat to low and cook for 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and set aside for 15 minutes, covered, to steam.

Remove the lid and foil and dot with the remaining 1 tbsp of butter. Set aside for another 10 minutes, covered with the foil and lid, or just the lid, before serving.

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## **SOUPS**





You don't need to grow up eating soup for it always, somehow, take you straight back home. It's an inherently comforting thing to eat, nurturing and reassuring at the end of the day. For Sami, growing up, what was made into soup at home reflected what was being grown in the fields and sold in the market. Batches made were big and the cost of feeding a large family was kept in check. Spring meant *besara*, for example, making use of all the fava beans, *molokhieh*, and soft herbs in season. Autumn and winter meant dark green chard and lentil soup or something hearty, like *freekeh* with chicken meatballs.

For all their power to comfort and soothe, soups can also be made to surprise and delight. This can either be from a great big squeeze of lemon (which we've reached for in all but one of our soups in this chapter), or a texture-giving topping. Fried onions are a frequent addition to lots of soups in Palestine—it makes them quite addictive—but we've only used this winning trick once here, on the chard and lentil soup (see page 157). Layers of texture and topping have been brought about in other ways—with caramelized pistachios, for example, or spicy pumpkin seeds (see pages 153 and 149). A mix of roasted eggplant cubes and chopped walnuts also works well (see page 152), or leaving some fava beans whole to stand out from those that are blitzed in the *besara*. As well as bringing crunch and contrast, these sorts of toppings are also a way to bulk out a soup, making it into a



meal in itself, served with, of course, the ubiquitous bread (or rice), olives, or pickles.

A clash in color, as well as texture, can also work really well to bring an element of surprise to a soup; a green herb oil drizzled over an orange butternut squash soup, for example (see page 153), or the addition of finely diced tomatoes to a green cucumber soup (see page 149).

Another great thing about soups is how un-precious they are—as happy to be made ahead of time, waiting in the fridge or freezer to be eaten, as they are to be spooned up there and then. They’re also robust enough to be played around with in terms of toppings and garnishes. They can be dressed down for a midweek supper, or dressed up for a stand-alone meal or impressive starter with friends.

There’s a soup for all occasions, a soup for all seasons, and a soup for all sorts of reasons. It’s the ultimate home-cooked food.

## 146 Soups



**Chilled cucumber and tahini soup with  
spicy pumpkin seeds**



If you want something to be rich and creamy and vegan all at once, tahini is often the big secret, ingredient-wise. Swirled in a sauce, a dressing, or in a soup, as here, tahini is a wonderful way to enrich a dish. With the cucumber, lemon, and herbs doing all the work at the other end to freshen and lighten Serves four

things up, this is a perfect meal for a summer day.

*Playing around:* Double or triple the batch for the pumpkin seeds, if you like: Spicy pumpkin seeds

they keep for a week in a sealed container, at room temperature, and are lovely 3 tbsp olive oil

sprinkled over all sorts of salads and roast vegetables.

¼ cup/40g pumpkin seeds

1 tsp ground cumin

*Getting ahead:* The soup can be made up to a day in advance: it keeps well and ¼ tsp chile flakes

doesn't lose its color. Just give it a stir before serving, as there'll be a little 1/8 tsp salt

water separation.

3 large cucumbers

(2 lb 2 oz/1kg), peeled

¼ cup/65g tahini

To prepare the pumpkin seeds, put all the ingredients into a small sauté pan 2 tbsp olive oil, plus more to serve

and place over medium heat. Cook for about 8 minutes, stirring frequently, 2 lemons: finely grate the zest to get



until the seeds begin to color lightly and pop. Transfer to a bowl (or to an 2 tsp, then juice to get ¼ cup/60ml

airtight container if making a batch) and set aside to cool.

2 large garlic cloves, crushed

½ cup/10g dill, roughly chopped,

Cut off a roughly 3 oz/80g chunk of cucumber and slice in half. Scoop out the plus a few fronds

seedy core and put this in a countertop blender(or a deep bowl if you are using ¾ tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or ½ tsp

an immersion blender), then finely chop the remainder into 1½-inch/1cm regular chile flakes)

dice. Set this aside. Roughly chop the remaining cucumber into ¾-inch/2cm 3½ oz/100g ice cubes

chunks and transfer to the blender along with the tahini, oil, lemon zest, 1 cup/20g mint leaves

lemon juice, garlic, dill, chile flakes, ice cubes, half the mint, half the parsley, 1 cup/20g parsley, roughly chopped

1 tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Blitz for about 2 minutes, until Salt and black pepper

completely smooth, then keep in the fridge until ready to serve.

1 tomato, cut into ¼-inch/½cm dice

(½ cup/80g)

Divide the soup between four deep bowls and spoon the reserved cucumber and diced tomato on top. Shred the remaining mint and sprinkle this over



each portion, along with the remaining parsley, the dill fronds, the spicy pumpkin seeds, and a final drizzle of oil and serve.

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### **Molokhieh soup with fava beans**

#### *Besara*

Besara is somewhere between a soup and a thick, warm dip. Fava beans are the main ingredient, pointing to its Egyptian origins before the dish spread across the Levant. By the time it got to Palestine, the herbs in the Egyptian version—cilantro and parsley—were matched by Palestine's flavor-packed green leaf, molokhieh. Wherever it is made across the Levant, the presence of Serves four

fried onion, chile, lemon, and olive oil are a constant.



1½ lb/700g frozen shelled

Molokhieh is a bit like spinach but its texture is distinct—slimy, almost fava beans

(without the word putting people off!). It's used a lot in the Middle East but the 9 oz/250g frozen chopped

leaves, fresh or frozen, can be hard to find outside of Middle Eastern stores.

molokhieh, or 5¼ oz/150g okra,

We've come up with an alternative of spinach cooked with a bit of okra, which sliced into ⅛-inch/3mm rounds,

is then all blitzed together. Texture-wise, the result comes pretty close (see plus 14 oz/400g spinach, stems

page 339 for more on this).

discarded (7 oz/200g)

2 tbsp olive oil

*Getting ahead:* This keeps in the fridge and keeps its color for 2 days, or longer 1 onion, finely chopped (1 cup/150g)

if frozen.

3 large garlic cloves, crushed

1 tsp cumin seeds, lightly

toasted and roughly crushed

in a mortar and pestle

Remove the fava beans from their skins by covering them with boiling 2 tsp coriander seeds, lightly



water for 30 seconds before refreshing them under cold running water and toasted and roughly crushed

squeezing them out of their skins. They should now weigh about 1 lb/450g.

in a mortar and pestle

*If using just the molokhieh*, put the oil into a large saucepan, about 8 inches/

3 cups/700ml chicken

20cm wide, and place over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook for (or vegetable) stock

about 8 minutes, stirring from time to time, until the onion is golden brown.

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup/15g cilantro leaves, roughly

Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Take half this mixture out of the pan and chopped, plus a few chopped

set aside; this will be used when serving. Add the molokhieh to the mixture leaves to serve

remaining in the pan—it should go in frozen—along with most of the fava

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup/15g parsley leaves, roughly

beans and all the cumin seeds and coriander seeds. Pour in the stock and chopped, plus a few chopped

bring to a gentle boil over medium heat, skimming any scum from the surface leaves to serve

as you go. Cover the pan and simmer over low heat for 5 minutes, then add all  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/15g dill leaves, roughly

the herbs, 1½ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Return to a boil, chopped, plus a few chopped



then simmer gently for a final 5 minutes, with the pan covered.

leaves to serve

Salt and black pepper

*If using the combination of okra and spinach*, put the oil into a large saucepan, 1 large red chile ( $\frac{1}{2}$  oz/15g),

about 8 inches/20cm, and place over medium-high heat. Add the onion and thinly sliced

cook, stirring from time to time, for about 7 minutes, or until softened and 1 lemon, quartered

lightly browned. Add the garlic and cook for another 1 minute. Take half this Warm bread, to serve (optional)

mixture out of the pan and set aside: this will be used when serving. Add the okra to the onion remaining in the pan and cook for 3 minutes, then add the spinach, spices, stock,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Bring to a boil, then decrease the heat to medium and cook for 20 minutes, or until the okra has completely softened. Add the herbs and most of the fava beans, and cook for another 5 minutes.

Using a blender (immersion or countertop), roughly blitz the soup—you don't want to blitz too much, as you still want to see pieces of broad bean.

Ladle the soup into bowls, and top with the reserved fried onions and whole fava beans, followed by a sprinkle of sliced chile and the additional herbs.

Serve with a wedge of lemon alongside and some warm bread, if you like.

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**Grilled eggplant and lemon soup Butternut squash and saffron soup with**

**caramelized pistachios and herb oil**



The more you char your eggplants here, the smokier and better the soup will taste. For more on the ways and wonders of charring eggplant, see page 335.

This is the soup to launch your autumn cooking, whether you're looking *Getting ahead:* Both elements here—the soup and the fried eggplant for a comforting midweek meal or an impressive starter for a feast. Don't topping—can be made a day or two in advance. Keep them both in the fridge, make both toppings if you don't want to: the soup works well with either the separately, and just warm through before serving.

pistachios or the herb oil alone. The combination of all three, though, is a Serves four

special one.

Serves four generously

or six as a starter

*Getting ahead:* All the elements can be made well in advance. The soup keeps 6 eggplants (3 $\frac{1}{3}$  lb/1.5kg)

Cut 2 of the eggplants into roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch/2cm cubes. Place them in a sieve well in the fridge for 3 days (or longer in the freezer). The herb oil can also be 1 quart/1 liter chicken

2 $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp olive oil

set over a bowl or the sink, sprinkle with 1 tsp of salt, mix well, let drain for made a day or two ahead; it keeps its color well. The pistachios keep well in a (or vegetable) stock

2 large onions, roughly chopped

30 minutes, then pat dry with paper towels.

sealed container (at room temperature); they'll get less crunchy with time but 6 tbsp/90ml lemon juice



(2⅓ cups/320g)

still taste good. Double the batch for these, if you can; they're lovely sprinkled (from about 4 lemons)

5 garlic cloves, crushed

Place the remaining 4 eggplants directly over the flames on your stove top (if over salads or just to have around to snack on.

4 garlic cloves, crushed

1 large butternut squash, peeled,

you have a gas stove) or in a grill pan over high heat. For instructions on how 1 tsp ground cinnamon

seeded, and cut into roughly

to chargrill eggplants, see page 335. Once you have your charred, drained 2 tsp ground cumin, plus ½ tsp

½-inch/1½cm dice (2 lb 2 oz/1kg)

flesh, chop it finely; it should weigh about 14 oz/400g.

3 tbsp olive oil

1 large potato, peeled and chopped

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Salt

Put the eggplant flesh into a large saucepan along with the stock, ¼ cup/  
into roughly ½-inch/1½cm dice

About 1¼ cups/300ml



60ml of lemon juice, the garlic, cinnamon, 2 tsp cumin, 2 tbsp of olive oil, (mounded 1 cup/250g)

Put the oil into a large saucepan with a lid, and place over medium heat.

sunflower oil, to fry

2 tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Bring to a boil over medium-  
1 tsp paprika

Add the onions and cook for about 12 minutes, stirring often, until soft and  
1 red chile, finely chopped

high heat and, once boiling, decrease the heat to medium and simmer for ¼  
tsp saffron threads

golden brown. Add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds, until fragrant, then  
(1 tbsp/10g)

30 minutes; the liquid will reduce by about a third.

1 quart/1 liter vegetable stock

add the squash, potato, paprika, saffron, stock, 2 tsp of salt, and a good ½  
cup/10g cilantro leaves,

Salt and black pepper

grind of black pepper. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then decrease  
Meanwhile, put the sunflower oil into a medium sauté pan and place over  
finely chopped

the heat to medium-low and simmer for about 25 minutes, covered, or until  
medium-high heat. Line a plate with paper towels. Once the oil is hot, add  
the 1 cup/100g walnut halves, roughly

Caramelized pistachios



the vegetables are completely soft and cooked through. If you like your cubes of eggplant (in three or four batches, so as to not overcrowd the pan) chopped

1 cup/150g pistachios

soup smooth, use a blender (immersion or countertop) to blitz it as much and fry for about 5–6 minutes, until they are a deep golden brown. Transfer to ½ cup/150g Greek yogurt

(or pumpkin seeds)

as you want. We like to half-blitz it so that some texture remains; if using a the prepared plate while you continue with the remaining batches. Put all the 2 egg yolks

1 tsp Urfa chile flakes (or ½ tsp

countertop blender, transfer half the soup to this, blitz until smooth, then eggplant into a bowl along with the remaining 2 tbsp of lemon juice and 1 tbsp 2 tsp cornstarch

regular chile flakes)

return this to the un-blitzed soup in the pan. Keep warm until ready to serve.

of olive oil, the chile, cilantro, and walnuts. Mix to combine, then set aside.

Black pepper

1 tsp orange blossom water

(optional)

To make the caramelized pistachios, while the soup is cooking, put all the Put the yogurt, egg yolks, and cornstarch into a medium bowl and whisk well 2 tsp light corn syrup



ingredients into a bowl and mix well to combine. Tip out onto the prepared until smooth. Spoon a ladleful of the hot soup into the yogurt and stir well to 2 tsp maple syrup

baking sheet and bake for about 15 minutes, stirring halfway though, until combine. Repeat this one more time before stirring the yogurt mixture into 1 tbsp olive oil

the nuts are golden and bubbling. Remove from the oven, set aside until the soup. Doing this prevents the yogurt from splitting when it's added to the ¼ tsp flaky sea salt

completely cool, then roughly chop the nuts. Set aside (or keep in an airtight hot soup. Cook over medium-low heat for 2 minutes, stirring continuously, container if making in advance) until needed.

until the soup has come together and slightly thickened.

Herb oil

To make the herb oil, put all the ingredients into a bowl with ¼ tsp of salt and ¾ cup/15g parsley leaves,

Divide the soup between four bowls and sprinkle with the remaining ½ tsp of a grind of black pepper. Stir to mix, then set aside until ready to serve.

finely chopped

ground cumin. Top with the fried eggplant and walnut mix and serve at once.

½ cup/10g oregano leaves,

Ladle out the soup and top with a generous spoonful of the pistachios. Drizzle *Pictured on the next page*

finely chopped

with the herb salsa and serve at once.



1 shallot, finely chopped

( $\frac{1}{3}$  cup/50g)

*Pictured on the next page*

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp chile flakes

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup/120ml olive oil

1 tbsp cider vinegar

Salt and black pepper

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**Freekeh soup with chicken meatballs Chard, lentil, and preserved lemon soup**

*Shorbet freekeh*

*Shorbet adas w sliq*



It's hard to talk about any form of chicken soup without talking about If something is verging on the holier-than-thou in the kitchen, top with some comfort. Pulling this back from the brink of slippers and Sunday night, though crispy fried onions, we say. They work particularly well when paired with that (not that anyone ever needs to resist), is the freekeh (see page 336 for more).

most virtuous of all things—the lentil!—in something such as mjaddarat el Adding this smoked cracked wheat, with its nutty bite, to this soup makes it burgul (see page 178), rummaniyya (see page 176) or, as here, this soup. For the best of all worlds: comforting *and* classy.

Serves four

Serves four

those happy feeling holy, though, the soup also works well as it is, without the onions. If you still want a crunch, then some toasted pumpkin seeds (see *Getting ahead*: The meatballs can be made and pan-fried a day in advance.

Chicken meatballs

1 cup/200g green or brown lentils

either page 93 for herb salad ones or page 149 for chilled cucumber ones), The soup also keeps well, once cooked, for up to 3 days in the fridge.

10½ oz/300g ground chicken thighs

2 tbsp olive oil

caramelized pistachios (see page 153) or croutons all go really well.

or turkey thighs (either ask your

1 onion, finely chopped (1 cup/150g)

*Getting ahead*: The soup can be made well ahead—up to 3 days if keeping butcher to grind them or follow



3 garlic cloves, crushed

in the fridge, or longer if you are going to freeze it—and the onions also keep the instructions in the recipe)

1½ tsp cumin seeds

To make the meatballs, if grinding your own chicken thighs, either pop them well in a sealed container at room temperature for a couple of days. Make 1 large slice of sourdough bread,

1 tsp coriander seeds, roughly

into the freezer for half an hour, to firm up, or if you don't have time, put them more of the onions than you need, if you like—they are lovely to have to crusts removed, cut into roughly

crushed in a mortar and pestle

straight into the bowl of a food processor. Firming them up in the freezer sprinkle on all sorts of things: lentils and rice, for example, oven-roasted ½-inch/1cm dice (1¾ cups/55g)

½ tsp ground turmeric

helps them to grind cleanly, but skipping this stage is also fine. Either way, veg, or grilled meat.

3 tbsp buttermilk

¼ tsp chile flakes

blitz until finely ground.

3 green onions, finely sliced

9 oz/250g Swiss chard, stalks

(⅓ cup/30g)



removed and finely chopped,

Put the bread and buttermilk into a large bowl. Set aside for about 5 minutes, ¼ cup/5g parsley, finely chopped

leaves roughly torn

then use your hands to squish the mixture into fine crumbs. Add the ground  
Rinse the lentils in plenty of cold water and place them in a medium ½  
cup/10g mint, finely chopped

Salt and black pepper

chicken and all the remaining ingredients for the meatballs, along with ¾  
tsp saucepan. Cover with 1 quart/1 liter of water and bring to a boil over  
high 1 green chile, seeded and

3 cups/750ml chicken (or

of salt and a generous grind of black pepper, except the sunflower oil. Mix  
heat. Decrease the heat to low and simmer for 30 minutes, or until the  
lentils finely chopped

vegetable) stock

to combine, then form the mixture into small balls, each weighing about are  
just soft. Drain and set aside.

½ tsp ground cinnamon

1 preserved lemon, seeds discarded,

½ oz/15g: you should make about 30 balls.

½ tsp ground allspice

skin and flesh finely chopped



Put the oil into a medium saucepan—about 8 inches/20cm wide—and place  
Put the sunflower oil into a large frying pan and place over high heat. Line a  
Salt and black pepper

(2 tbsp/20g)

over medium heat. Once hot, add the onion and cook for 10 minutes,  
stirring plate with paper towels. Once the oil hot, add the meatballs and fry  
for about 2 tbsp sunflower oil

1 lemon, quartered into wedges

occasionally, until soft and golden brown. Add the garlic, cumin seeds, and  
3 minutes, turning throughout, so that they are nicely browned on all sides  
(optional)

coriander seeds and cook for 1 minute, then add the turmeric, chile flakes,  
but not cooked through. Remove from the pan and set aside on the prepared  
2 tbsp olive oil

chard stalks, 1½ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Mix well to  
plate until needed.

1 large leek, trimmed, cut in

Crispy onions

combine, then add the lentils and stock. Bring to a boil, then decrease the  
half lengthwise and finely

¾ cup plus 2 tbsp/200ml

heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes before adding the chard Put  
the oil into a large saucepan with a lid, and place over medium heat. Add  
sliced (2 cups/200g)

sunflower oil



leaves and preserved lemon. Cook for 4 minutes, then remove from the heat.

the leek and celery and cook for about 12 minutes, stirring from time to time, 3 stalks celery, trimmed and finely

1 onion, cut in half, then thinly

until the vegetables are soft but not taking on any color. Add the spices, garlic, sliced (1¼ cups/150g)

sliced (1¼ cups/150g)

Transfer about half the soup to a countertop blender (or to a separate bowl, if and tomato paste and cook for 1 minute, until fragrant. Add the freekeh, 1 tsp cumin seeds, roughly ground

2½ tsp cornstarch

using an immersion blender) and blitz until smooth. Return the blitzed soup 1 cup/20g of cilantro, the parsley, stock, 2 tsp of salt, and a good grind of in a mortar and pestle

to the un-blitzed soup in the pan and set aside until ready to serve.

black pepper. Simmer for about 40 minutes, with the pan half covered, or until 1 tsp ground cinnamon

the freekeh is soft and the liquid has reduced by a third. Add the meatballs To make the crispy onions, put the sunflower oil into a large, shallow frying ½ tsp ground allspice

and simmer for 10 minutes, with the pan covered, until they are cooked pan and place over medium heat. Once hot, reduce the heat to medium-low.

4 garlic cloves, crushed

through. Stir in two-thirds of the green onions, the remaining ½ cup/10g of Mix the onions with the cornstarch and add them to the oil in two or three 1



1/2 cup/120g tomato paste

cilantro and 3 tbsp of lemon juice and keep warm until ready to serve.

batches. Cook for 10–15 minutes, until the onions are really golden and crispy.

1 cup/170g freekeh

Transfer them to a plate lined with kitchen paper—spread out so that the 1½ cups/30g cilantro,

Combine the buttermilk with the dried mint, the remaining 1 tbsp of lemon onions do not get soggy—then sprinkle lightly with salt and set aside while roughly chopped

juice, and ¼ tsp of salt.

you continue with the remaining batches.

1 cup/20g parsley, roughly chopped

6⅓ cups/1½ liters chicken stock

Divide the soup between four bowls, drizzle with the buttermilk mixture, To serve, warm the soup through and divide between four bowls. Top with the Salt and black pepper

sprinkle with the remaining green onions, and serve at once.

crispy onions and a squeeze of lemon, if you like.

3 green onions, finely sliced

(⅓ cup/30g)

¼ cup/60ml lemon juice

(from about 2 lemons)



½ cup/120ml buttermilk

¼ tsp dried mint

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**VEGGIE**

**MAINS**





How food is cooked at home in Palestine is very different from the way that it is cooked in restaurants. In restaurants, the emphasis is on food that can be cooked fast: marinated and skewered meat, for example, ready to be quickly grilled.

Ground meat shaped into kofta, ready to be fried or baked. This sort of cooking—

quick-on-and-off-the-heat—is called “mashawi.” It’s something that restaurants in Palestine are really good at. All the work can be done in advance, ready to be quickly whipped up when the order comes through. These are the kebabs and shawarma joints, the falafel, kofta, and pita stands, seen on many a street corner in the cities (and in chapters two, six and seven in this book).

Restaurants are also good at mazzeh, or mezzeh, the spread of little bowls and dishes that take over the table (and much of chapters two and three) at the beginning of a meal. These, again, are all dishes that can be prepared, in



bulk if needed, in advance: carrots can be chopped and steamed, cucumbers and tomatoes can be diced, eggplants can be charred and drained for baba ganoush. Lemons are squeezed, bread is made and ready to be warmed through, olives are pickled and ready to be portioned up, labneh is hung. This is all food that is as happy to appear at the table, at the snap of a finger, as it is to sit around for a day or so if service is slow and the food needs to go back into the fridge overnight. No time, money, or food is wasted. It's an efficient, delicious, often grilled or fried business.

Home cooking, on the other hand, is different. Home cooking is about sheet-pan recipes or stews, about stuffed vegetables or meats, about roasts and things that take a bit more time to make. This sort of cooking—"tabeeekh"—is the opposite of the "grab-and-eat" style of restaurant cooking; it's slower and more comforting.

This can be the stuffed dishes, "mahashi"—vegetables which need coring and hollowing out before being stuffed and cooked. Or it can be the category of cooking known as "sawani"—the roasts, braises, and sheet-pan recipes—dishes which use up the vegetables and herbs you have in the fridge and which, when served from the pan they are baked in, are often described as "rustic." These are the dishes which start with the ingredients often called "humble"—pasta, chickpeas, wilted spinach—and rice. These are the recipes for easy, comforting, everyday cooking and are what this chapter—and so much Palestinian home cooking—is all about.





**Pan-fried okra with tomato, olives,  
and haloumi**

*Bamia bil siniyhe*

Having noted the difference between home and restaurant cooking (see page 160), this is a dish that blurs any such distinction. Although it feels

“rustic” and “homey,” it’s one we first ate and were inspired to re-create after Serves two as a main or

a meal at Daher Zeidani’s Alreda restaurant in Nazareth. The fact that the dish four as a side

blurs the restaurant-home distinction says a lot about Daher himself (see page 166 for more), as much a seasoned chef as he is host, focal point, and 3 tbsp olive oil



bringer together of community. People spend time at Alreda not just to eat 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

(though eat very well they do): they come to the restaurant also to meet with  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp ground cumin

their neighbors, to talk, drink, listen to music, and debate. This is a dish with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp paprika

bold flavors, which is quick and easy to make. It works as well as a main—

1 tbsp shatta (see page 73;

served with bread or rice—as it does as a side or as part of a spread.

or rose harissa)

*Getting ahead:* This is a quick and easy dish but you can make it a few hours in 1 tbsp cider vinegar

advance, if you like, up to the point before it goes under the broiler. That way 1 tsp sugar

you can just finish it off in the oven for 10 minutes before serving.

Salt

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml water

*Ingredients note:* If you see bags of small frozen okra in a Middle Eastern 14 oz/400g okra, trimmed (but

supermarket, do get hold of these. Not needing to be trimmed, smaller okra not so far so that you expose the

don't run the risk of their seeds being exposed (which is what gives okra its seeds, see headnote), or frozen



reputation for being “slimy”). Starting with regular okra is absolutely fine, baby okra, defrosted

though; trim the tips but not so far that you can see the seeds.

6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> oz/180g cherry tomatoes

(about 15), sliced in half

Mounded <sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup/70g pitted

Kalamata olives

Preheat the broiler to a 475°F grill setting.

4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>/120g haloumi cheese or

feta, broken into roughly

Put the olive oil into a large ovenproof frying or sauté pan, about 12 inches/

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-inch/1cm chunks

30cm wide, and place over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook for just under a minute, or until it starts to color. Add the cumin, paprika, and shatta  
To serve

and cook for 30 seconds, then add the vinegar, sugar, water, and 1 tsp of salt.

1 green chile, thinly sliced

Bring to a boil, then add the okra and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes, <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup/5g parsley, roughly chopped

stirring once or twice. Add the tomatoes, olives, and haloumi to the pan and  
Olive oil



cook for another 2–3 minutes, shaking the pan from time to time so that 1 lemon, cut into wedges

things don't get stuck to the base.

Place the pan directly under the broiler for 10 minutes—you want the cheese and okra to take on lots of color and even blister in parts. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for 5 minutes.

To serve, top with the chile, parsley, and a good drizzle of oil and pass the wedges of lemon alongside.

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## Veggie Mains



### **A tale of two restaurateurs:**

### **the politics (or not) of food**

We ate one night in Haifa, up north from Tel Aviv, on the coast. The next night, we were in nearby Nazareth, eating again. The same central activity, but the two evenings could not have been more different. Both chef-owners were Palestinian and they both served us great food. What made the two



experiences so polar opposite, though, was the chef/owners' relationships to their food and customers, and what they saw as the purpose of having a restaurant in northern Israel.

Contrasting the two shows how different opinions can be about the role of food in the region and how strongly held these opinions are. After sitting at their respective tables, over the course of two nights, we walked away thinking two things. One was that both ways of seeing food in northern Israel, from a restaurateur's point of view, are entirely valid; that we, as guests at their table, should restrict any judgements we might have to their food. The second was that we were getting to eat very, very well. This is the tale of two restaurateurs, then: one in Haifa and the other in Nazareth.

First, "hip" Haifa. Haifa is a port city, rising steeply up from the Mediterranean Sea on the slope of Mount Carmel. It's home to a lot of start-ups and has the feel of a real technological hub. Through the city stretches a long, wide main road. It reaches from the coast right up to the incongruously coiffed, vibrant restaurant—caters to what his customers want. In the early days, Alla tried to push green terraces of the Bahá'í Gardens, backdrop to many a selfie.

the boat out and experiment with the menu, but there was no point. People wanted In Haifa, we had supper at the then newly opened Lux restaurant. Located seafood linguine and a kids' menu, not the foams and finishes Alla had learned on the port road in Haifa's lower city, Lux is as bustling as the Independence Road while working in a Michelin-starred restaurant in Sweden. "People just didn't want it looks out on to. It was Sami's partner Jeremy's birthday the night we were there, it," he said. With rent and salaries to pay and plans to expand both his family and and we feasted to celebrate. The open kitchen was in full swing, the music was his business, Alla's goal is to make great food that makes enough money to allow playing, the bar stools were high, and all the food that came our way was excitingly him to carry on making great food. Giving the market what it wants and letting tasty and something fresh. Chef/owner Alla Musa (pictured opposite) was creating the food speak for itself is not any sort of cop-out, says Alla, it's just plain good a stir locally, taking the ingredients of the area—the fish, spices, yogurt, and business sense.



nuts, for example—and giving them to his customers in a sexy, different, and very Alla Musa couldn't have been more generous with his time, beer fridge, and delicious way. Standouts, for us, were pan-fried seafood on a spread of herbed bottle of arak. He was happy as anything to sit around and chew the food-related labneh, and a fillet of sea bass with charred eggplant and baby okra. We'd gone to fat, and the conversation flowed as steadily as the drinks, until one topic came up Haifa in search of something new and noteworthy being done with fish, and this that was evidently out of bounds: politics. Tara asked whether the local Palestinian was the night we found it.

fishermen were affected by restrictions on the water they could fish in and was We'd chatted with Alla the day before in El Marsa, the other restaurant met by an affable diversion. Sami asked the seemingly impartial question whether he owns and runs in Akka. Akka is a really pretty fishing port close to Haifa.

Alla's business partner at Lux, Ahmad Asadi, was an Israeli or a Palestinian Arab.

With a steady flow of tourists and locals on their days off, El Marsa—a seafood

“He's local,” said Alla. “How would you describe yourself?” followed up Sami.

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“I don't want to talk politics, and saying whether someone is an Arab or Palestinian pork sausages that have been soaked in white wine and then cooked in a tangy red or Israeli just turns everything into politics.”

pepper sauce flavored with cloves, allspice, garlic, slices of lemon, pine nuts, and Alla's determination not to talk about politics does not mean he doesn't know parsley. It was all packed full of flavor and wonderful to eat.



the lay of the political land. He's politically savvy enough, for example, to know that Daher explained how difficult it is to please his Israeli customers, using the when there is tension at the Gaza border it affects who his customer base will be for flowers and fruit salad as an example. If he was to make a traditional "Arabic salad,"

the next few days and weeks. His Israeli regulars, who normally sit side by side with with chopped vegetables, white cheese, and a lemony dressing, people visiting Haifa's Arabs, just don't turn up. Alla is young, ambitious, and completely nuts about from Tel Aviv would say, "Why have we come all the way for this? We could have his food. If he upped the politics of it—if he made it into a question of identity and had this at home; show us something new." Adding his twists—the flowers and struggle and connection to the land—he'd be reducing the flow of customers who raisins—to traditional dishes, though, means that the next table of Israelis to sit come through the door. Israeli, Palestinian, Palestinian-Israeli, Arab-Israeli, Arab down might balk at the idea that this is "allowed" to be called an Arabic salad. We'd of the Negev, the people of the north, people of the West Bank, 48ers, Inside Arab, seen this tension time and again on our travels; certain salads and dishes stuck in the Shamenet Arab, Arab al beseder: whatever his customers call themselves, Alla a traditional rut, on the one hand, but then on the other hand not "allowed" to be just wants them to come and eat, drink, and be merry. No politics, no tension, no played around with or moved forward if they were still to be called, for example, problem; let's party! With that, Alla finds out that it's Jeremy's birthday the evening an "Arabic salad." Trying to open the point up more generally—suggesting that we are in, and the shot glasses appear.

this tension is as likely to be observed by local Arabs as it is by visiting Israelis and The following night we are in Nazareth, pulling up our chairs at the acknowledging all the reasons why this might be the case—does not generate Alreda restaurant, opened by Daher Zeidani in 2003. After the previous night's much conversation at the table.

celebrations, we'd resolved to have a night off booze. Chef/owner Daher pulled For all his talk, though, you get the impression that Daher is really



not too up a chair to talk with us before we ordered our food. “Don’t you think it’s so rude,”

bothered what anyone, apart from his regular locals, might think. Unlike Alla he opened with, “when customers go to a restaurant and don’t have a drink? Who Musa in Haifa, Daher has been in the restaurant game for several decades and his are these people who think it’s okay to just ask for water all night? I am the host priorities have changed. Unlike Musa, when asked about the day-to-day logistics and I want my guests to sit back and eat what I give them and have a drink.”

of running a restaurant and whether life is made inconvenient for him, Daher Cripes, we thought, that’ll be three beers then. It was just one of Daher’s very takes a deep breath, pulls in his chair, and pours out a drink. We hear about the many strong opinions.

Israeli health minister who forced Daher to cancel so many of his dishes due to If Alla Musa’s food was all about the food, then Daher’s food was food being ingredients that weren’t “allowed” to be used. We hear about his sister’s freshly served with a very large side order of politics. This was food with a strong Arabic picked olives and olive oil, for example, needing to be replaced by canned olives identity, served in a restaurant that felt like an old Arabic house made by a chef/

from an Israeli factory. The traditional unpasteurized Arabic cheese he loved had owner who didn’t give two hoots about whose feathers he might be ruffling. The to be replaced by a more industrially made version. The chicken wing pastilla for Germans! The English! The Japanese! Israelis! Never let it be said that national which he was known had to be taken off the menu, as the three days it takes to stereotypes don’t live on! Having ruled out half of Europe, Asia, and the Middle actually make a pastilla was too long. And on it goes: the obstacles put in the way East, Daher clarifies his position, unashamedly, “This is not a superficial place. This of running his restaurant are part of Daher’s every day. “They only come every four is a place for enlightened liberals.” The very irony of his position—having such a years, though,” Daher says, referring back to the visits of the health minister, “so fixed (i.e., illiberal) view on what constitutes being a liberal customer—hangs, with we can hide.”



the cigarette smoke, in the air.

This is a guy who is not afraid to air his opinions, no matter who might hear. The customers that Daher is interested in and keen to serve and please them or whose toes he might be treading on. “Did you hear about the Palestinian are his local, Arabic, regulars, about 80 percent of whom he knows by name. The chef who sold out and set up shop in London with an Israeli chef?” he remarks.

restaurant feels as much like a social club as it does a formal restaurant, with lots

“That was me!” says Sami, before they burst into shared laughter and raise hands of hand-shaking and back-patting as Daher pulls up a chair at one of the tables for a high five. And for just a moment, around that table of shared food and time, whenever he feels like it. “I am the host. Why is it odd for me to pull up a chair, tell not a single opinion in the world matters.

my guests what they should be eating, and then later sit down and ask them if they like the food and what they think?”

Do-as-we-were-told we duly did, then, welcoming the food Daher made for us. A salad of “flowers and fruit” was followed by a spread of dishes, including the okra baked in tomatoes that inspired us to make our own version once back home (see page 162). We also tried Daher’s famous Nazareth salsiccia, long thin beef or 166



# EXEMPTION

ENTRANCE TO

*ALREDA*

IS NOT CONDITIONED BY  
CURSE OR CONDEMNATION OF:  
CHURCHILL, THE QUEEN,  
HER FATHER, HER SON AND  
THEIR SPIRIT







## Eggplant, chickpea and tomato bake

### *Musaqa'a*

Echoes of Greek moussaka are correctly heard here, both in the name and the feel of the dish. It's a vegetarian take on the hearty, humble, healthy and completely delicious sheet-pan dish. It works well either as a veggie main or as a side with all sorts of things—piled into a baked potato, for example, or served alongside some grilled meat, fish, or tofu. It's just the sort of dish you Serves four as a main or

want to have in the fridge ready to greet you after a day at work. It's also lovely or six as a side

at room temperature, so it's great for an on-the-go lunch.

5 medium eggplants (2¾ lb/1.25kg)

*Getting ahead:* You can make and bake this in advance; it keeps in the fridge ½ cup/120ml olive oil

for up to 3 days, ready to be warmed through when needed.

Salt and black pepper

1 onion, finely chopped (1 cup/160g)

6 garlic cloves, crushed

1 tsp chile flakes

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

1 tsp ground cumin

Use a vegetable peeler to peel away strips of eggplant skin from top to ½ tsp ground cinnamon



bottom, leaving the eggplants with alternating strips of black skin and white  
1½ tsp tomato paste

flesh, like a zebra. Cut crosswise into round slices, ¾ inch/2cm thick, and 2  
green bell peppers, seeded and

place in a large bowl. Mix well with 5 tbsp/75ml of oil, 1 tsp of salt, and  
plenty cut into 1¼-inch/3cm chunks

of black pepper and spread out on the prepared baking sheets. Roast for  
(1⅓ cups/200g)

about 30 minutes, or until completely softened and lightly browned.  
Remove 1 x 14-oz/400g can of chickpeas,

from the oven and set aside.

drained and rinsed (1¾ cups/240g)

1 x 14-oz/400g can of chopped

Decrease the oven temperature to 400°F.

tomatoes

1½ tsp sugar

While the eggplants are roasting, put 2 tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan and  
¾ cup plus 2 tbsp/200ml water

place over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook for about 7 minutes,  
¾ cup/15g cilantro, roughly

until softened and lightly browned. Add the garlic, chile flakes, cumin,  
chopped, plus ¼ cup/5g

cinnamon, and tomato paste and cook for 1 minute, or until fragrant. Add 4  
plum tomatoes, trimmed



the bell peppers, chickpeas, canned tomatoes, sugar, water, 1¼ tsp of salt, and sliced into ½-inch/1½cm-and a good grind of black pepper. Decrease the heat to medium and cook rounds (12¼ oz/350g)

for 18 minutes, or until the bell peppers have cooked through. Stir in the ¾ cup/5g cilantro and remove from the heat.

Spread out half the plum tomatoes and half the roasted eggplants in a large baking dish, about 9 x 13 inches/23 x 33cm. Top with the chickpea mixture, then layer with the remaining tomatoes and eggplants. Drizzle with the remaining 1 tbsp of oil, then cover with aluminum foil and bake for 30

minutes. Remove the foil and bake for another 20 minutes, or until the sauce is bubbling and the tomatoes have completely softened. Remove from the oven and let cool for about 20 minutes. Top with the remaining ¼ cup/5g cilantro and serve either warm or at room temperature.

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## **Beet and feta galette with za'atar and honey**

Beet, feta, ricotta, honey, and thyme: some flavor combinations are just a match made in heaven. All wrapped up in some short, flaky, golden pastry and you're welcome! Our work here is done. Serve this with a green salad (the spicy herb salad on page 93, for example) alongside.

Serves four

*Getting ahead:* There are lots of ways to get ahead here; the beet can be roasted and sliced a day in advance, the onions can be prepared in full a day  
2 small purple beets (7oz/200g)

ahead and the pie crust also keeps well in the fridge for up to 3 days (or frozen 1 small golden beet (3½ oz/100g)



for longer). Once assembled, the pie can wait in the fridge for a good few  
Salt and black pepper

hours—at least six—before going into the oven. Once baked, the pie is best  
1½ tsp olive oil

eaten the same day, either slightly warm or at room temperature.

Crust

*Ingredients note:* A mix of purple and golden beets looks great here, but  
don't ⅔ cup/80g all-purpose flour,

worry if you can't find golden. Just increase the purple beet to 10½oz/300g.

plus extra for dusting

⅓ cup/35g whole wheat flour

1½ tsp sugar

½ tsp flaky sea salt

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

1 tbsp oregano leaves,

finely chopped

Wrap the beets individually in aluminum foil and bake for 1–1½ hours, or  
until 1½ tsp thyme leaves, finely chopped

completely soft and cooked through; timing can vary quite a lot, depending  
½ cup/115g unsalted butter,

on the size of your beet. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for  
fridge-cold and cut into



10 minutes, then use an old dish towel to gently rub away the skins. Slice each ½-inch/1½cm cubes

beet into ⅛-inch/3mm slices and (if you are starting with a mix of purple and ¼ cup/60ml ice-cold water

golden) place in two separate bowls. Combine the golden beet with ⅛ tsp of salt, a good grind of black pepper, and ½ tsp of oil. Combine the purple beet 1 tbsp unsalted butter

with a good grind of black pepper, ¼ tsp of salt and 1 tsp of oil. Set both aside 1 tbsp olive oil, plus 1½ tsp

until needed. (The next time the oven is used it will be 200°F, but turn it off 1 large red onion, cut into ¼-inch/

for now.)

½cm-thick slices (1½ cups/170g)

To make the pie crust, put both flours into a large bowl along with the sugar, 2 tsp sugar

salt, and herbs. Add the butter and use your fingers to rub it into the flour.

2 tbsp cider vinegar

Don't overwork the butter—you want chunks of it throughout the dough. Add Salt

the water and use your hands to gather the dough together into a shaggy ball.

1 tbsp za'atar

Transfer to a well-floured surface and roll out into a rough rectangle, about ¼ cup/5g parsley leaves,



28 x 18cm. The dough here is fairly wet and sticky, so you'll need to flour your finely chopped

hands, rolling pin, and work surface often. This is the way it is meant to be, ¼ cup/5g oregano leaves,

though (and it makes for a wonderfully short and flaky pastry).

finely chopped

¼ cup/60g ricotta

Fold the shorter ends in toward each other so that they meet at the center, 2 garlic cloves, crushed

then fold the dough in half, like a book. Roll out the dough once with a Black pepper

rolling pin and then just fold once in half again. Cover with plastic wrap ¾ oz/90g feta, crumbled into

(see page 342) and refrigerate for 1 hour (or overnight).

roughly ¾-inch/2cm chunks

1 egg, beaten

Put the 1 tbsp of butter and 1 tbsp of oil into a medium sauté pan and place 1 tbsp runny honey

over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring ½ tsp thyme leaves

occasionally, until softened and browned. Add the sugar, vinegar, and ⅛ tsp of salt and cook for 1 minute, or until most of the liquid has evaporated. Set aside to cool for about 15 minutes, then stir in 1 tsp of za'atar, the parsley, and the oregano.

*Continued on the next page*



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Put the ricotta, garlic,  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper into a bowl and set aside.

Generously flour a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch/30 cm square of parchment paper. Transfer the crust dough to the prepared parchment paper (about 30cm square) and roll out to form a rough circle. It will have uneven edges but should be about 11 inches/28cm wide. Lifting up both the baking parchment and the dough, transfer to a baking sheet; you don't want to be lifting it onto the sheet once filled.

Spread the ricotta mixture over the base of the dough, leaving a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch/1cm rim clear around the edges. Top with half the feta, then the onions. Next, and this time leaving a  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch/4cm rim clear around the outside, top with the beets, alternating between purple and golden, with a little overlap between each piece.



Wash your hands well (so that the feta does not turn red!), then scatter the remaining feta on top.

Using a knife, make incisions around the edge of the galette: you want these to be about 3¼ inches/8cm apart and ¾-inch/2cm deep. Creating these

“strips” will allow for the beets and cheese to be encased. Take a resulting dough strip at a time, fold it over the beet, in toward the center of the galette.

Repeat with the next strip, pulling gently to slightly overlap and seal the last fold. Continue this way with the rest of the strips, then refrigerate the galette for 30 minutes (or up to about 6 hours, if you are getting ahead).

Preheat the oven to 425°F.

Brush the edges of the pastry with the beaten egg and bake for 30 minutes, or until deeply golden and cooked through. Drizzle with the honey and the remaining 1½ tsp of oil, then scatter with the remaining 2 tsp of za’atar.

Transfer to a wire rack so that the bottom remains crisp and let cool for about 15 minutes. Garnish with the thyme leaves and serve.

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## **Pomegranate-cooked**

## **lentils and eggplants**

### *Rummaniyya*

*Rummaniyya* means “pomegranatey” in Arabic. It can refer to a dish either garnished lightly with pomegranate seeds or, as here, made rich and tart from an abundant use of pomegranate molasses in the cooking sauce. This Serves four as a main,

is great as a main, served with lots of bread to dip into the juices, or as part or six as a mezzeh or side

of a mezzeh spread. Leftovers are also lovely for breakfast, with a poached or fried egg on top.

2 eggplants, cut into 1¼-inch/3cm

*Getting ahead:* This keeps well in the fridge, for up to 3 days, ready to be dice (6 cups/500g)



warmed through or eaten at room temperature. If you are making it ahead, 4  
tbsp/60ml olive oil, plus 1½ tbsp

just hold back on the onions, these can be stirred in as you warm up the  
dish.

Salt and black pepper

¾ cup/150g green or brown lentils

4 garlic cloves, crushed

1 green chile, seeded and

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

finely chopped

1 tbsp ground cumin

In a large bowl, mix the eggplants with 2 tbsp of oil, ½ tsp salt, and a good  
1½ tsp fennel seeds or dill seeds,

grind of black pepper. Tip them onto the prepared baking sheet, so that  
roughly crushed in a mortar

the eggplants are spaced well apart. Roast for 25 minutes, stirring once and  
pestle

or twice throughout. Remove from the oven and set aside.

1 tsp ground coriander

1 tbsp cornstarch

Rinse the lentils and put them into a medium saucepan with 1 quart/1 liter  
¼ cup/80g pomegranate



of water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Once boiling, decrease the heat to molasses (80g)

medium and simmer for 20 minutes, until the lentils are almost cooked.  
Drain 2 tbsp lemon juice

the lentils over a bowl—you want to keep 1½ cups/350ml of the cooking 1  
tbsp tahini

liquid—and set both the lentils and liquid aside.

1 recipe Crispy Onions (page xx)

¼ cup/5g parsley, roughly chopped

To fry the onions, pour enough vegetable oil into a large sauté pan so it rises  
¼ cup/40g pomegranate seeds

1¼ inches/3cm up the sides of the pan. Mix the onions with the cornstarch 2  
red chiles, thinly sliced, with seeds

and, once the oil is hot, carefully add the onions in batches. Fry for 6–7  
minutes, stirring frequently to prevent the onions sticking together, or until  
golden Fried onions

brown and crisp (timing can vary quite a lot here, depending on the size of  
About 1⅔ cups/400ml vegetable oil

your batch and the temperature of the oil). Using a slotted spoon, transfer  
the 2 large onions, thinly sliced

onions to a wire rack lined with paper towels and sprinkle with a pinch of  
salt.

(2½ cups/300g)

Continue with the remaining onions in the same way, then set aside.

2 tbsp cornstarch



Wipe the pan clean (the oil can be reused for future frying) and pour in the 2 tbsp Salt

of oil. Place over medium-high heat and add the garlic and green chile. Fry for 2 minutes, stirring frequently, or until the garlic is a light golden brown. Add the cumin, fennel seeds, and coriander and stir continuously for 30 seconds. Stir in the cornstarch for 1 minute, then add the lentils, 1½ cups/350ml of reserved cooking liquid, ¾ tsp of salt, and plenty of pepper. Bring to a boil and cook for 5–6 minutes, stirring frequently, until the liquid has thickened to the consistency of a thick porridge. Add the pomegranate molasses, lemon juice, tahini, all the eggplants, and half the crispy onions. Stir well, then remove from the heat.

Either serve from the pan or transfer to a large shallow bowl. Sprinkle with the remaining crispy onions, the parsley, pomegranate seeds, and sliced red chile, and finish with the remaining 1½ tsp oil.

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## **Bulgur mejadra**

*Mjaddarat el burgul*

For many Palestinians and Arabs around the world, the answer to the question “What is your ultimate comfort food?” is mejadra. It’s the food a lot of kids grow up on and, for Sami, it will always take him straight back home. Like so many comfort foods, it’s a humble dish—lentils, spices, and then a grain in the form of rice, most typically, or the bulgur or freekeh we’ve Serves six

suggested here. In terms of what makes it so addictive, though, the fried onions are the secret weapon.

1½ cups/300g green lentils

Serve this warm or at room temperature with some yogurt (either plain or Fried onions



with some diced cucumber and shredded mint stirred in) alongside. If you 3 medium onions, cut in half, then

have some pomegranate seeds, these look lovely sprinkled on top.

each half thinly sliced (mounded

*Getting ahead:* The bulgur and lentils keep well in the fridge for a couple of 4 cups/500g)

days, ready to be warmed through or brought back to room temperature 2 tsp cornstarch

before eating. The onions can also be prepared ahead of time—stored in a Salt

sealed container at room temperature—but keep these apart from the rest About 1 cup/240ml sunflower oil

of the dish until ready to serve.

1½ tsp cumin seeds

1½ tbsp coriander seeds

1¾ cups/300g coarse bulgur or

Place the lentils in a medium saucepan, cover with plenty of water, and set freekeh (or basmati rice—see

aside to soak for 30 minutes.

headnote)

3 tbsp olive oil

To fry the onions. Line a colander with paper towels. Put the onions, cornstarch ½ tsp ground turmeric



and 1 tsp of salt into a large bowl and mix well with your hands. Put the 1 tsp ground allspice

sunflower oil into a large heavy-bottomed saucepan and place over medium-

½ tsp ground cinnamon

high heat. Once the oil is very hot, add one-third of the onions and fry for Salt and black pepper

3–4 minutes, stirring occasionally with a slotted spoon, until they are golden ¾ cups/750ml just-boiled water

brown and crispy. Use the slotted spoon to transfer the onions to the prepared colander and continue in the same way with the remaining two batches.

Place the saucepan with the lentils and their soaking liquid over high heat and bring to a boil. Decrease the heat to medium and cook for 10–12 minutes, or until the lentils have softened but still retain a bite. Drain in a colander and set aside.

Wipe the pan clean (the pan used to cook the lentils, not the onions) and add the cumin seeds and coriander seeds. Place over medium heat and toast for a minute or two, until fragrant. Add the bulgur, olive oil, turmeric, allspice, cinnamon, 1 tsp of salt, and plenty of black pepper. Stir so that everything is coated, then add the cooked lentils and the just-boiled water. Bring to a boil, then decrease the heat to low. Cover with a lid and simmer for 15 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat, lift off the lid, and quickly cover the pan with a clean dish towel. Seal tightly with the lid and set aside for 10 minutes, to steam.

Finally, add half the fried onions to the bulgur and lentils and stir gently with a fork. Pile up in a shallow serving bowl, or individual serving plates, top with the rest of the onions, and serve.



## Veggie Mains



**Rice with yogurt, roasted cauliflower,  
and fried garlic**

*Labaniet alzhahar*

This feels like a rich risotto or even, if you play around with the toppings as suggested, a thick congee. Either way, it's the most comforting of dishes, to be eaten either as a main, as Sami used to with his family, from a bowl with

Serves four as a main or

a spoon, or as a side to slow-cooked lamb, beef, or some roasted root veg.

six as a side



*Playing around:* Instead of (or in addition to) the cauliflower, try roasting 1 large cauliflower, cut into

some little turnips or wedges of squash. For the congee theme, put all sorts roughly 2½-inch/6cm florets

of toppings into lots of different bowls—some thinly sliced green onions, for (6½ cups/650g)

example, a drizzle of shatta, a spoonful of pan-fried ground lamb, charred 2 tbsps olive oil

cherry tomatoes, thin slivers of garlic fried until golden in oil. People can then Salt

make up their own bowl as they like.

1⅔ cups/400g Greek yogurt

1 egg yolk

*Getting ahead:* Ideally you want to cook the cauliflower, rice, and garlic all 1½ tsp cornstarch

at the same time (rather than waiting for one element to be finished before 3 cups/700ml whole milk

going on to the next), so that everything is warm and ready at once.

1 cup/200g arborio rice, rinsed

and drained

White pepper

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Fried garlic



Put the cauliflower into a large bowl with the oil and ½ tsp of salt. Mix 5 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced

well to combine, then spread out on the prepared baking sheet. Roast for ¼ cup/60ml olive oil

25–27 minutes, until golden brown and tender.

2 tsp coriander seeds, lightly

crushed in a mortar and pestle

While the cauliflower is cooking, place the yogurt, egg yolk, and cornstarch in a blender and blend on medium speed for 1 minute, until the mixture is About ¼ cup/5g parsley leaves,

smooth and runny. You can also do this by hand but, if you do, mix it really to garnish (optional)

well to prevent the sauce from splitting when cooked. Set aside.

Put the milk and rice into a large saucepan a lid, along with 1 tsp of salt and a pinch of white pepper. Bring to a boil over high heat, then decrease the heat to medium-low. Cook for 20 minutes, covered, stirring from time to time, until the rice is almost cooked. Add the yogurt mixture and cook for another 7 minutes, until the rice is tender.

To make the fried garlic, put all the ingredients into a small saucepan and place over medium-low heat. Cook for 2 minutes, until the garlic is golden, then remove from the heat and set aside.

Spoon the rice into a shallow serving dish or individual bowls. Arrange the cauliflower pieces randomly on top and spoon on the garlic. Garnish with the parsley, if using, and serve at once.

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## **Spinach and toasted orzo with dill and chile yogurt**

This is a quick, easy, and satisfying dish to make for a midweek supper.

It works either as a veggie main or as a side to something such as grilled salmon or chicken.

*Playing around:* Some cubes of feta or black olives also work well, dotted  
Serves four

over the orzo, either along with or instead of the yogurt.

1⅓ cups/250g orzo

5 tbsp/70ml olive oil,

plus more to serve



Place a large sauté pan with a lid over high heat. Add the orzo and toast for 2 onions, roughly chopped

10 minutes, stirring very frequently. Tip the toasted orzo into a bowl and set (mounded 2 cups/300g)

aside.

1 lb 2 oz/500g baby spinach

Return the same pan to medium heat and add the olive oil and onions. Cook 2 cups plus 2 tbsp/500ml water

for about 8 minutes, stirring a few times, until the onions start to turn golden.

Salt and black pepper

Add the spinach, in batches, stirring each batch until wilted. Add 2 tsp of salt and a good grind of black pepper, then pour in the water. Bring to a gentle Dill and chile yogurt

boil, then add the orzo to the pan, stirring it in and pushing it down with the  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup/200g Greek yogurt

back of a spoon. Decrease the heat to low and cook, covered, for 10 minutes, 1 green chile, seeded and

until the orzo is just cooked but still retains a bite.

finely chopped

1 garlic clove, crushed

To make the yogurt, meanwhile, mix together all the ingredients and then  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g dill, finely chopped

set aside.



1 tbsp lemon juice

1½ tbsp olive oil

Just before serving, stir the cilantro into the orzo. Divide it between four ¼  
tsp salt

bowls and top with the dill yogurt. Serve with a final drizzle of oil and a  
wedge 1½ cups/30g cilantro,

of lemon alongside.

finely chopped

1 lemon, quartered into wedges

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Veggie Mains





## **Pasta with yogurt and parsley**

### **breadcrumbs**

#### *Ma'caroneh bil laban*

Pasta was a favorite of Sami and his older brother Azam when they were kids.

Na'ama used to make it two ways. The first was ma'caroneh bil foroun, a kind of Palestinian pasta al forno—juicy thick macaroni soaked in a meaty tomato Serves four

sauce. Azam and Sami used to tussle over who got to the crispy bits on top first, then race to see who could slurp the tubes of pasta the fastest.

Na'ama's 5 tbsp/75ml olive oil

second pasta staple was lighter and more refreshing, baked this time with 4 tbsp/65g unsalted butter

yogurt and nuts. This is our take on that. It can be served warm or at room  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup/40g breadcrumbs

temperature.

Salt and black pepper

*Getting ahead:* The parsley breadcrumbs can be made a day ahead and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/15g parsley, roughly

kept in a sealed container at room temperature. Everything else should be chopped

freshly cooked. It's a quick dish to make, though, perfect for a comforting  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp chile flakes

midweek supper.

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup/60g pine nuts



½ tsp smoked paprika

2 cups plus 2 tbsp/500g

Greek yogurt

Line a plate with paper towels. Put 1 tbsp of oil into a medium sauté pan 3 garlic cloves, crushed

along with 1 tbsp of butter. Place over medium heat and, once bubbling, add 1 tsp ground cumin

the breadcrumbs, ⅛ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Cook for 2 egg yolks

about 8 minutes, stirring often, or until lightly golden. Add ¼ cup/5g of the 500g orecchiette or penne

parsley and the chile flakes and continue to cook for another 5 minutes, or or conchiglie pasta

until deeply crisp and golden. Transfer to the prepared plate (or an airtight ¼ cup/5g basil leaves, roughly torn,

container, if making in advance) and set aside.

to garnish

Wipe the pan clean and add the remaining 3 tbsp of butter. Place over medium heat and, once bubbling, add the pine nuts. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring often, then add the paprika. Cook for another 3 minutes, continuing to stir, until the pine nuts are deeply golden. Pour the mixture into a bowl and set aside.

Put the yogurt into a large bowl (large enough to hold the pasta once it's cooked) with the garlic, cumin, egg yolks, and remaining ¼ cup/60ml of olive oil. Whisk until smooth and set aside.



Bring a pan of salted water to a boil and add the pasta. Cook for about 10 minutes (or according to the package instructions), until al dente. Reserve  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml of the cooking liquid, then drain the pasta. Add the hot pasta to the bowl of yogurt, along with the reserved cooking liquid and the remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g of parsley. Stir well to combine, then divide between four shallow bowls. Spoon on the pine nut butter, sprinkle with the breadcrumbs, top with the basil, and serve at once.

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### Veggie Mains



**FISH**





Growing up in East Jerusalem, on the verge of the Judean desert, Sami didn't encounter many fishmongers in his day-to-day. There was one fishmonger his family would go to, in contrast to the dozens of butchers around. Fish feasts were saved for family trips up north in the summer months, to the coastal towns of Haifa and Akka. When we were traveling and eating our way around Palestine for *Falastin*, it was, still, really only in Haifa and Akka that we found fresh fish.

The West Bank is land-locked, obviously, and entry to Gaza, with its once thriving fishing community, is barred (see page 196).

Still, that didn't stop us pushing the boat out and coming home with all sorts of catches.

One of the reasons fish is so great and so easy to cook is that it takes very little time. With just a bit of preparation—making a batch of the fish spice mix (see page 190), or making the sauce in advance—many of the dishes in this chapter can be on the table less than ten minutes after you've started



making them; the spiced za'atar squid, for example, the roasted cod with a coriander crust, the baked fish in tahini sauce (see pages 191, 204 and 208).

At the same time, fish always carries with it a sense of occasion. From little stuffed sardines (see page 194) to whole mackerel baked in vine leaves (see page 211), bringing fish to the table will always be accompanied by a little “ta da!”

It's not all five-minute fast-food snacks and suppers, though, there are some real show-stoppers here as well; the prawn stew with cilantro pesto, (see page 212), or sayyadiéh—“the fisherman's dish” (see page 215)—showcasing what the fisherman has brought home that day.

In terms of sauces, we've gone two ways. White firm fish often likes to be paired with a rich tahini sauce. Cod, haddock, pollack, and so forth, these are all made comforting and hearty when baked in tahini or finished with a drizzle of this wonderful nutty, creamy paste. Oily fish or seafood, on the other hand, is often best paired with a sharp tomato sauce. A fresh tomato dagga or sharp spicy tomato sauce, (see page 194), can cut through the richness of sardines or mackerel. Most fish, though—as long as it is fresh and firm—is very often happy to be served as it is, packed with herbs or lightly spiced, quickly cooked, and dressed with little more than just a great big squeeze of lemon.





## **Spiced za'atar squid with tomato salsa**

### *Habar bil za'atar*

This works well either as a punchy starter or snack, or as a light meal in itself, served with a crisp green salad. If having it as a snack and eating it with your hands, the salsa can happily be replaced with just a squeeze of lemon.

*Getting ahead:* You don't really need to get ahead here—this is such a quick Serves four as a starter or

meal—but there are still steps you can take if you want to. The salad can be two as a light meal

made up to a day ahead and kept in the fridge, the fish can be scored, and the two bowls with the various spices can be prepared in advance. With this all Tomato salsa (optional)



done you're then looking at a less-than-five-minute meal.

2 tomatoes, roughly chopped

(mounded 1 cup/200g)

1 green chile, seeded (if you don't

want the heat) and roughly

To make the salsa, put all the ingredients into a food processor with  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp of chopped

salt and a good grind of black pepper. Blitz for just 10 seconds—don't take it  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/5g cilantro, roughly chopped

too far, as you still want it to be chunky. Transfer to a bowl and set aside until  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp lemon juice

ready to serve.

1 tbsp olive oil

Slice through each squid tube lengthwise to create two rectangular halves.

1 lb 2 oz/500g medium squid,

With the lines spaced about  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch/ $\frac{1}{2}$ cm apart, lightly score the outside of cleaned

each half to make a criss-cross pattern. Once scored, cut the squid into long  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup/50g cornstarch

vertical strips, each about  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch/2cm wide, and place in a bowl. Cut the 2 tsp ground coriander

tentacles in half, or leave them whole if they're not too large, and add them 2 tsp ground cumin



to the bowl as well. Pat the squid dry with paper towels, removing as much  
1 tsp ground allspice

moisture as possible.

3 tbsp za'atar

1 tsp flaky sea salt

Put the cornstarch, coriander, cumin, and allspice into a large bowl. Mix to  
About 1 cup/40ml sunflower oil

combine, then set aside.

Salt and black pepper

1 lemon, quartered

In a separate large bowl (big enough to hold all the squid once cooked),  
combine the za'atar and flaky sea salt.

Just before serving, put the oil into a large sauté pan and place over  
medium-Fish spice mix

high heat. Line a plate with paper towels. While the oil is heating up, add  
half the squid to the cornstarch mixture and toss well to combine. Shake off  
*Baharat samak*

the excess and, once the oil is hot, carefully lower in the squid and cook for  
1–2 minutes, or until golden brown and just cooked through. Using a slotted  
This mix is used throughout the chapter—in dishes such as the fish kofta,  
spoon, transfer to the prepared plate and set aside while you continue with  
roasted cod, spiced fish, and baked mackerel—so double or triple the batch,  
the remaining batch.

if you like. It keeps well in an airtight container at room temperature for up  
to Once all the squid is cooked, put it into the bowl of za'atar salt and toss  
well a month, and much longer in the freezer. It's also great to use as a



marinade to coat. Serve at once, with a wedge of lemon and the tomato salsa alongside.

for all sorts of things: cubes of chicken or tofu, for example, prawns for the  
2 tsp ground cardamom

barbecue, or roasted mixed vegetables.

2 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp paprika

2 tsp ground turmeric

Place all of the spices in a bowl and mix well to combine. If making more than you need, transfer to a sealed container where it will keep for a month.

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## **Fish kofta with yogurt, sumac, and chile**

### *Koftet samak*

These herb-and-spice-packed kofta make a lovely starter, or a light meal in themselves, packed into a pita and served with a chopped salad. They're a winner with kids as well—you might just want to leave out the chile.

Play around with the herbs that you add; cilantro, parsley, and mint (in any combination) also work. Just keep the total amount of herbs about the same.

Serves four

*Getting ahead:* These can be made in advance—a day, if you like—up to the 6 tbsp/90ml olive oil

point where they are about to go into the oven. Once cooked they can be 2 large onions, finely chopped



eaten the next day—the flavors actually improve—either at room temperature (2½ cups/360g)

or warmed through.

6 garlic cloves, crushed

1½ lb/700g cod fillet, skinless

and boneless, chopped into

1¼-inch/ 3cm chunks

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

2 red chiles: 1 finely chopped and

Put 3 tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan and place over medium-high heat.  
Once 1 finely sliced

hot, add the onions and cook for 12–14 minutes, stirring occasionally, or  
until ¾ cup/15g parsley leaves,

softened and golden. Add the garlic and cook for another 3 minutes.  
Remove roughly chopped

from the heat and set aside until completely cool.

¾ cup/15g dill, roughly chopped,

plus a few leaves

Put the fish into a food processor and pulse a few times until finely chopped  
1 lemon: finely grate the zest to get

but not a complete paste. Transfer to a large bowl and add the cooled onion  
2 tsp, then cut into 4 wedges



mixture, chopped chile,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/15g of each herb, lemon zest, egg, fish spice  
1 egg

mix, 2 tsp of sumac, 1 tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Mix  
well 2 tsp Fish Spice Mix (page 190)

to combine, then, using your hands, shape the mixture into about 15 kofta—

1 tbsp sumac

they should each be about 2 inches/5cm wide and weigh about  $2\frac{1}{3}$ oz/65g.

Salt and black pepper

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup/200g Greek yogurt

Put 2 tbsp of oil into a large frying pan and place over medium-high heat.  
Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Once the oil is hot, add the kofta  
in batches of two or three and fry for about 4 minutes, turning halfway  
through so that both sides are golden brown. Transfer to the prepared  
baking sheet and bake for 4 or 5 minutes, until just cooked through.  
Remove from the oven and set aside for 5 minutes or so, to slightly cool.

Spread the yogurt evenly among four serving plates and top each with 3 fish  
kofta, saving any extra for seconds. Sprinkle the kofta with the remaining 1  
tsp of sumac, the dill, and sliced chile. Drizzle with the last 1 tbsp of oil and  
serve, with additional lemon wedge, alongside.

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## **Stuffed sardines with spicy tomato dagga**

*Sardine ma' daggit banadora*

Green chile, garlic, dill seeds, sardines—this is a roll-call of ingredients which typify Gazan cuisine. As well as being the general term for all pounded dressings or sauces, *dagga* is, also, the name of Gaza's famous spicy tomato salad. It's traditionally paired with oily fish—sardines, mackerel, salmon—to offset their richness, but really, it can be eaten in abundance alongside anything. It's Serves six

wonderful with baked fish in tahini sauce (see page 208), kofta with tahini and potatoes (see page 234), or chicken shawarma pie (see page 260).

### **Stuffing**

1 cup/20g parsley leaves,



*Getting ahead:* You can prepare the stuffing a couple of days ahead and even finely chopped

stuff the sardines in advance; they'll keep well in the fridge for a day. The dagga  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/15g cilantro leaves,

can also be made up to a day in advance and kept in the fridge until serving.

finely chopped

2 tbsp/20g pistachios,

finely chopped

3 garlic cloves, crushed

To make the stuffing, place all the ingredients in a small bowl along with  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp 1 large green chile, finely chopped

of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Mix well to combine and set aside.

( $2\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp/25g)

Wash the sardines and pat dry, then lay 9 of the fillets flat on a large baking 3 tbsp lemon juice

sheet or chopping board, skin side down. Season lightly with salt, then divide  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground cumin

the stuffing equally among the fillets, spreading it all over the fish. Lightly  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp ground allspice

season the other 9 fillets and arrange them on top of the stuffed fillets, to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp sumac

sandwich them together.

Salt and black pepper



To make the tomato dagga, place all the ingredients in a medium bowl with Tomato dagga

½ tsp of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Mix to combine and set aside.

4 large tomatoes, cut into ¼-inch/

½cm dice (2½ cups/450g)

When ready to fry, spread the flour out on one plate or wide shallow bowl and 2 small green chiles, seeded and

put the eggs into another.

finely chopped (1 tbsp/10g)

1 cup/20g cilantro leaves,

Put the oil into a large frying pan and place over medium-high heat. Line a plate roughly chopped

with paper towels. Working with one fish “sandwich” at a time, carefully lift 2 tsp dill seeds or celery seeds

and dip it lightly into the flour, turning so that both sides get covered, then dip 1 tsp ground coriander

it into the egg. Put it into the pan and fry for about 5 minutes, turning once ¼ cup/60ml lemon juice

so that both sides are crisp. Transfer to the prepared plate while you continue (from 2 lemons)

with the remaining sardines. Serve warm or at room temperature, with the 5 tbsp/70ml olive oil

dagga spooned on top or served alongside.



Salt and black pepper

18 large sardines, cleaned and

butterflied (ask your fishmonger

to do this; about 1 $\frac{2}{3}$  lb/730g)

Salt

3 tbsp all-purpose flour

2 eggs, lightly beaten

3 tbsp olive oil

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conquered the Strip in 1967, withdrew unilaterally. In 2006, Hamas, a declared enemy of Israel, took control of Gaza, and cross-border attacks on Israel escalated.

In retaliation, Israel imposed restrictions on movement at the border, starting what is in effect a blockade of the Gaza Strip that still continues today. In the eyes of the United Nations and Britain, though, Israel's occupation and legal responsibility for Gaza and its people still continues.

Just some of the casualties of this political game are the fishermen, whose **Fishing in Gaza: the catch-22 of the sea**

fathers and fathers before them sourced the sea to support their families. As Laila El-Haddad and Maggie Schmitt detail in their book *The Gaza Kitchen: A Palestinian Culinary Journey*, Gaza was once famous for its fish. Just nine nautical miles off its Writing *Falastin*, we've tried to strike a balance between telling it like it is in Palestine shores there is a deep channel used by large schools of fish as they migrate between (which is not, clearly, always great) and conveying the upbeat spirit and ambition of The Nile Delta and the Aegean Sea. The channel supplied Palestinian fishermen the people we've met (which *is*, generally, always great). Looking at Gaza,



though, with more than they needed to make a wage. This was crucial to both the nutrition it's hard to be upbeat. We say "looking" but, actually, we haven't been able to of the 1.7 million people of the Gaza Strip and, of course, for the income brought look for ourselves. Getting in and out of the city is, for the vast majority, a process in through exporting much of the catch to Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan. The totally frustrated by barriers and bureaucracy. The barriers are concrete—the city income generated by these exports supported more than 30,000 people. Being in is surrounded by a large military wall—and the bureaucracy is complex. Apart a fishing boat was a good, prosperous, and safe place to be.

from journalists and those associated with certain international organizations, The big issue for fishermen today, by contrast, is the many restrictions placed the process of obtaining a travel permit to Gaza from either Israel or Egypt is on how far out to sea they are allowed to sail. Before any such restrictions were in frequently thwarted from beginning to end.

place, a fisherman was able to sail as far as he wanted to get a good catch. It was the If getting in and out of Gaza is hard, then life inside the wall is even harder.

Oslo Accords that, in 1993, set up a fishing zone of twenty nautical miles. This was Gaza is a very small strip of land on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It's under the guise of detailing Palestinian autonomy and was meant to be an interim about forty kilometers long, and between five and eleven kilometers wide. It borders agreement. Twenty miles was the line drawn, as this was the point where sardines Egypt in the southwest, and Israel for about forty-eight kilometers on its eastern and could be caught as they migrated from The Nile Delta up toward Turkey during the northern borders. With a population of around 2 million, about 80 percent of whom spring. The designated zone was deemed to be enough to support a fishing industry are refugees, the Gaza Strip is one of the world's most densely populated places.

of some 4,000 boat-owning families.

It's often described as the world's "largest open-air prison."



There had not previously, however, been any sort of zone or border, so the It's not just the people of Gaza who, since 2000 and the closing of borders very fact of one being imposed only set a precedent that could then be squeezed in during the second intifada, haven't been able to move freely to the West Bank or the years to follow. Since 1993, the border has shrunk from twenty to twelve to ten Israel for their daily work. It's the free movement of goods and produce that also to six to three miles. This is a result of Israeli naval ships imposing their own limits faces severe restrictions. Although Israel physically withdrew from Gaza in 2005, as part of the tightening pressure on Gaza that came after the election victory of its control over the Strip, border, and commerce has been maintained. The results the Hamas Islamist movement in early 2006. With so much of the fishing grounds of this—of people not being able to get in and out of the city to work, and barriers cut off, those sardines are now a good few miles out of reach.

to the movement of goods being so many—are dire.

Reducing the fishing space but sharing it among the same original number There are, in short, just not enough resources to go around the massively of boats means, furthermore, that the reserves of fish there continue to dwindle. In a overcrowded city. Jobs, money, electricity, food, effective sewage maintenance: horrible catch-22, today's fishermen are often forced to cull from the shallow waters these are just some of the crucial things in short supply. Long power outages are close to the shore. Here they catch the small and young fish that, if left alone as part of the Gazan people's every day, as are inflated prices for gasoline and food, a nature dictates they should be, would ensure future prosperity. A day on the sea, dependence on food rations, and high unemployment. Industries that were once then, can yield barely enough fish to feed a family, let alone take to market to sell.

thriving are now under threat. The economies of many families and businesses Once the pot is shared between all those on board, and the fuel to power the boat have collapsed, malnutrition has become widespread. What was once a fertile, in the first place has been factored in, many fishermen are barely breaking even.



productive, and sustainable territory has turned into one with no autonomy, a It's not even always about making a living, though, it can just be about dependence on aid, and, frankly, very little hope for the future.

staying safe. If fishermen from Gaza sail over the appointed border line, the From a culinary point of view, fishing is the main business caught up in the understanding is that they might be approached, targeted, arrested, or shot at by great big knotty net that has entangled Gaza since 2005, when Israel, which had patrolling Israeli military boats, coming from the Israeli city of Ashkelon, ten miles 196

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away. What is even less understood is how these approaches and attacks can still take place when a fisherman is clearly within the appointed zone. On board with very few things that would be needed to pass the most basic of health and safety tests—a VHF radio, life jackets, safety equipment—such goings-on make for a very uncertain livelihood.

There are other things, too, all challenging the sustainability of this once-thriving Gazan industry. The sewage system in the city—built to serve just 400,000 people and which collapsed because of war damage and lack of maintenance—has failed, and hundreds of thousands of gallons of only partially treated waste water go straight into the sea every day. This,



obviously, affects the quality of the fish being caught. Furthermore, export restrictions are firmly in place, dictating what can and cannot leave the city walls with a view to being sold.

It's all, in short, a great big mess. Israel is under constant threat from Hamas attack so it then retaliates in response. It's hard to see what good targeting the Gazan fisherman does, though. For a city dependent in large part on international aid organizations and donors, the situation is a cruel inversion of the Chinese proverb about teaching a man to fish. "Give a poor man a fish and you feed him for a day," so the proverb goes. "Teach him how to fish and you give him an occupation that will feed him for a lifetime." "Put that man under occupation and take away his means to fish," we might chip in for debate, "and for both a day and all his lifetime he will remain hungry."

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**Baked fish kubbah**

*Kubbet samak bil siniyeh*



Kubbeh in its traditional form—shaped like little torpedos, with the bulgur casing pressed around the filling (see page 71)—is wonderful to make but does take a bit of time. Here, the same ingredients are simply baked together in a dish before being cut into individual slices. Doing this allows for the benefits of Serves four generously

combining all the kubbeh ingredients with only a fraction of the work involved.

*Getting ahead:* This should be eaten the day it is baked, either warm or a ½ cup/120ml olive oil,

couple of hours later at room temperature.

plus more for brushing

1 cup plus 3 tbsp/190g fine bulgur

¾ cup plus 2 tbsp/200ml boiling

water

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Brush the base and sides of an 8-inch/20cm square 2 onions, finely chopped

pan lightly with oil.

(1¼ cups/320g)

4 garlic cloves, crushed

Place the bulgur in a large bowl and pour in the boiling water. Cover the bowl 1 lb/450g haddock fillets (or another

with a clean dish towel or a large plate and set aside for 15 minutes.

Remove sustainably sourced firm white

the towel or plate, fluff up the bulgur with a fork, and set aside to cool.



fish), skinless and boneless,

chopped into roughly ¾-inch/

Put 2 tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan and place over medium-high heat.  
Add 2cm chunks

the onions and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring a few times, until soft  
and 1 egg, lightly whisked

nicely browned. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Remove from the  
heat 1 tsp ground cumin

and set aside to cool. Once cool, add half of the onion to a food processor ½  
tsp ground coriander

along with 9oz/250g of fish, the egg, cooked bulgur, cumin, ground  
coriander, ½ tsp ground allspice

allspice, turmeric, ½ tsp of cinnamon, ½ cup/10g of each herb, ¼ cup/60ml  
¼ tsp ground turmeric

of olive oil, 1½ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Blend for  
about ¾ tsp ground cinnamon

1 minute, until the mix comes together in a sticky ball, and then set aside.

1 cup/20g cilantro leaves, roughly

chopped, plus a few leaves

Put the remaining onions in a bowl with the remaining fish, half of the  
chile, 1 cup/20g parsley leaves,

all the lemon zest, 1 tsp of sumac, ¼ tsp of cinnamon, the remaining ½ cup/  
roughly chopped



10g pf each herb, ¼ tsp of salt, 1 tbsp of oil, and a good grind of black pepper.

1 green chile, seeded and

Mix to combine, then set aside.

finely sliced

Put half the bulgur-fish mixture into the base of your pan and press down Salt and black pepper

firmly; it should rise about ¾-inch/2cm up the side of the pan. Top with 2 lemons: finely grate the zest

the sumac-fish mixture and press down firmly. Top this with the rest of the of 1 to get 1½ tsp, then juice

bulgur-fish mixture, using your hands to spread it out, pressing down as you to get 1 tbsp, and cut the other

go, so that it is even and smooth. Use a small sharp knife to score the top with 1 into wedges

a cross-hatch or “spider web” pattern, spaced about 1½ inches/4cm apart.

2 tsp sumac

Drizzle with the remaining 1 tbsp of oil and bake for 18 minutes, then increase 3 tbsp tahini

the oven temperature to 500°F and bake for 7 minutes, or until golden.

¼ cup/60g Greek yogurt

Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for 15 minutes before gently 2 tbsp cold water

transferring to a serving platter.



While the kubbeh is baking and cooling, put the tahini into a bowl with the yogurt, lemon juice, cold water, and  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp of salt. Whisk until smooth, then set aside.

Drizzle half of the tahini yogurt over the kubbeh and sprinkle with the remaining 1 tsp of sumac, the remaining chile, and the additional cilantro leaves. Cut into squares and serve, with the lemon wedges and remaining tahini yogurt in a bowl alongside for people to spoon over as they like.

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### **Spiced salmon skewers with parsley oil**

These are quick and easy to prepare and a winner with all when served. Allow one skewer as a starter, or one or two for a main, bulked out with some rice and a green salad.



*Getting ahead:* You can get the salmon marinating a day ahead, if you like,  
Makes 6 skewers; serves six as a

ready to go on the skewers and be cooked. The parsley oil is also fine made  
starter or four as a main

a day ahead.

*Equipment note:* You will need 6 metal or wooden skewers (about 10  
inches/

1¾ lb/800g salmon fillet, skinless

25cm long). If wooden, soak them in water for 1 hour before using.

and boneless, cut into roughly

1½-inch/4cm chunks (ideally, you

want 24 pieces of salmon)

6 metal or wooden skewers (about

Put the salmon into a large bowl along with the fish spice mix, sumac, 2  
tbsp 25cm long). If wooden, soak them

of olive oil, ¾ tsp of salt, and a generous grind of pepper. Mix well to  
combine, in water an hour before using

then set aside in the fridge for 1 hour.

1 tbsp Fish Spice Mix (page 190)

2 tsp sumac

Put the remaining 1½ tbsp of olive oil into a large sauté pan and place over  
3½ tbsp olive oil



medium-high heat. Add the onions and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring a Salt and black pepper

few times, until they are slightly softened but have not taken on any color; 2 onions, halved lengthwise, peeled,

don't worry if they fall apart a little bit and are no longer whole chunks.

then each half quartered into 4 big

Remove from the heat and set aside.

chunks (10½ oz/300g)

12 cherry tomatoes

To make the parsley oil, put the parsley, garlic, oil, ¼ tsp of salt, and a good (about 5¼ oz/150g)

grind of pepper into the small bowl of a food processor. Blitz for about a 1 lemon, quartered into wedges

minute, until smooth, then transfer to a small bowl. Use a small, sharp knife to trim off the top and tail of the lemon. Cut down along its round curves, Parsley oil

removing the skin and white pith. Release the segments by slicing between 2 cups/40g parsley

the membranes, then roughly chop the segments. Add these to the oil, stir 1 garlic clove, finely chopped

well, and set aside until needed.

6 tbsp/90ml olive oil

Salt and black pepper

Preheat the oven to 475°F.



1 lemon

To assemble the skewers, start with a tomato and then alternate the salmon chunks and onion pieces. If you have a thinner, end piece of salmon, fold it in half to form a sort of cube. Finish each skewer with a second tomato.

Place a well-greased grill pan over high heat. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Once the grill pan is smoking hot, add the skewers, in two batches, and grill for 3–4 minutes, turning throughout so that all sides are charred. Transfer to the prepared baking sheet and continue with the remaining skewers.

Transfer to the oven and bake for 6–7 minutes, or until the salmon is just cooked through.

Transfer the skewers to a large serving platter (or individual serving plates) and drizzle with the parsley oil. Serve at once, with a wedge of lemon alongside.

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### **Roasted cod with a cilantro crust Seared sea bass with lemon and**

*Samak mashew bil cozbara w al limon*

#### **tomato sauce**

The combination of fish and tahini is one we find hard to resist, but this works. This is our favorite sort of quick fish supper, particularly if you've made the just as well without the tahini sauce if you're looking for a shortcut or want to sauce in advance. Serve with some rice, crusty white bread, or just a spoon, if keep the focus on the lemon. Either way, this is as close to fast food as you can you prefer, to scoop up all the lovely juices.

get. It's a 15-minute meal to make, beginning to end. Possibly even less time to eat.



Starting with a can of plum tomatoes and blitzing it up (rather than starting  
Serves four

Serves four

with canned chopped tomatoes or uncooked tomato purée in the first instance) If you are using the tahini sauce, make the whole quantity of the master is well worth doing; the flavor of the blitzed up plum tomatoes is wonderfully 4 tbsp/60ml olive oil

7 tbsp/100ml olive oil

recipe. It keeps in the fridge for about 4 days and is lovely to have around to intense. With the emphasis of this dish as much on the rich sauce as it is on 4 garlic cloves, crushed

4 tsp Fish Spice Mix (page 190)

drizzle over all sorts of roasted vegetables, meat, fish, and salads.

the fish, it's worth taking this extra step here.

2½ cups/50g cilantro,

8 sea bass fillets, skin on and lightly

finely chopped

*Playing around:* Any other meaty white fish works just as well here; sea bass or scored, halved crosswise at a

*Getting ahead:* The tomato sauce keeps well in the fridge for up to 3 days or 2½ tsp Fish Spice Mix (page 190)

halibut, for example. Salmon also works well.

slight angle (1½ lb/680g)

can be frozen.



½ tsp chile flakes

Salt and black pepper

Salt and black pepper

1 onion, thinly sliced (1¼ cups/150g)

4 large cod fillets (or another

5 garlic cloves, crushed

sustainably sourced white fish),

Preheat the oven to 500°F. Line a roasting dish with parchment paper.

1-inch/2½cm piece ginger, peeled

Combine 2 tbsp of oil, 2½ tsp of fish spice mix, 1 tsp of salt, and a good grind skin on (about 1½ lb/700g)

and finely grated (2 tbsp/25g)

of pepper together in a shallow dish. Add the scored sea bass, turning to coat, Put 2 tbsp of oil into a small saucepan and place over medium-low heat.



4 large fresh bay leaves (optional)

1 green chile, seeds and all, finely

and set aside to marinate. You can do this up to 3 hours in advance, if you are Add the crushed garlic and cook for 10 seconds, then add the cilantro, fish 2 lemons: cut 1 into 8 very thin

chopped (1½ tbsp/15g)

getting ahead, but not for much longer than this, otherwise the fish will start spice mix, chile flakes, ¼ tsp of salt, and a grind of black pepper. Cook for slices, 1 quartered lengthwise,

1 tbsp tomato paste

to break down.

4–5 minutes, stirring frequently, for the garlic to really soften, then remove into wedges

1 x 14-oz/400g can peeled plum

from the heat.

About ¼ cup/65g tahini sauce

tomatoes, blitzed in a food

Put 2 tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan and place over medium-high heat. Once (see page 87; optional), to serve

processor until smooth (see

hot, add the onion and cook for about 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until Place the cod in the prepared roasting dish, skin side down, and brush with headnote)



softened and browned. Add the garlic, ginger, and chile and cook for another the remaining 2 tbsp of oil. Season lightly with salt and pepper then spoon 1½ tsp sugar

minute or two, until fragrant. Add the remaining 1½ tsp of fish spice mix along the cilantro mix on top of each fillet. Spread it out so that the whole top is 1 cup/20g dill, roughly chopped

with the tomato paste and cook for another 30 seconds. Add the canned covered, then top each one with a bay leaf (if using) along with 2 slices of 1¼ cups/25g cilantro, roughly

tomatoes, sugar, two-thirds of the dill and cilantro, the stock, 1 tsp of salt, and lemon. Roast for 7–8 minutes, or until the fish is cooked through. Serve at chopped, plus leaves to garnish

a good grind of pepper. Bring to a boil, then decrease the heat to medium and once, with about 1 tbsp of tahini sauce drizzled over, if desired, and a wedge 1⅔ cups/400ml chicken stock

cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until the sauce is thick and rich.

of lemon alongside.

5¼ oz/150g cherry tomatoes

Keep warm over low heat until needed.

½ lemon, very thinly sliced into

*Pictured on the next page*

rounds, seeds discarded

In a small bowl, toss the fresh tomatoes with 2 tsp of oil. Place a large frying pan over high heat and, once very hot, add the tomatoes. Cook for about 4 minutes, shaking the pan a few times, until charred all over. Add the



lemon slices and cook for another 2–3 minutes, shaking the pan a few more times.

Add this to the pan of tomato sauce along with the remaining herbs and keep warm until ready to serve.

Wipe the frying pan clean, place it over medium-high heat, and add 1½ tsp of oil. Once hot, add a quarter of the sea bass fillets, skin side down, pressing gently on the flesh so that the fish doesn't curl. Cook for 4 minutes, or until the skin is crisp and browned, then flip the fish over in the pan. Cook for another 30 seconds, then transfer to a plate. Continue with the remaining three batches, adding another 1½ tsp of oil to the pan before searing each batch.

Divide the sauce among four plates and top each with 4 pieces of sea bass.

Sprinkle with some cilantro leaves and serve at once.

*Pictured on the next page*

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Fish 205









## **Baked fish in tahini sauce**

*Siniyet samak bil t'heeni*

Preparing fish with dairy products is not common in Arabic cuisine, as it's not considered healthful. Tahini often steps in, therefore, to fulfil the role butter or cream might otherwise have played—to enrich the fish and make the dish one to comfort. We ate far too much of this for lunch in Akka one day, minutes before Tara decided to break the “boys only” rule when it comes to jumping Serves four to six

off the harbour wall (see pages 186–7 for photo). Joining the locals in a leap, Tara can confirm, is not recommended from a digestion point of view. Pair it, Tahini sauce

instead, with a crisp fresh green salad, or the spicy “dagga” salad on page 194.

Rounded ½ cup/150g tahini



2 garlic cloves, crushed

*Getting ahead:* Both the tahini sauce and the caramelized onions can be made 2-3 days in advance, if you want to get ahead. That way you're all set for a quick-to-make supper.

very thinly sliced (3½ cups/400g)

½ tsp salt

Caramelized onions

¼ cup/60ml olive oil

To make the tahini sauce, place all the ingredients in a medium bowl. Mix well to combine—you want the consistency to be that of thick cream—and set aside.

very thinly sliced (3½ cups/400g)

3 tbsp water

To caramelize the onions, put the oil into a large sauté pan and place over medium-low heat. Add the onions and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring from time to time. Add the water and cook for another 8 minutes, until the onions have completely softened but have not taken on any color. Remove from the heat and set aside.

from time to time. Add the water and cook for another 8 minutes, until the onions have completely softened but have not taken on any color. Remove from the heat and set aside.

onions have completely softened but have not taken on any color. Remove from the heat and set aside.

from the heat and set aside.

1 tbsp, then juice to get 2 tbsp



Preheat the oven to 425°F.

1½ tsp ground cumin

Salt and black pepper

Place the fish in a large shallow bowl and add the lemon zest, lemon juice, 3 tbsp olive oil

cumin, ½ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Mix well with your hands. Add about 3 tbsp all-purpose flour

and set aside to marinate for 10 minutes, at room temperature. Don't add 2 green chiles (seeded or not,

otherwise the fish will start to break down.

depending on whether you like

things spicy), thinly sliced

Put 1½ tbsp of oil into a medium frying pan and place over medium-high heat. Add 3 tbsp pine nuts

and cook for about 4 minutes, turning once halfway through so that both sides are golden. To serve

about 4 minutes, turning once halfway through so that both sides are golden.

½ cup/10g parsley leaves, roughly

Transfer to a baking dish, about 9 x 13 inches/23 x 33cm, skin side down, and chopped

set aside. Add the remaining 1½ tbsp of oil to the pan and repeat with the 1 tsp sumac



remaining fish.

1 lemon, cut into wedges

Stir the caramelized onions into the tahini, along with the chiles, then pour the sauce evenly over the fish. Sprinkle with the pine nuts and roast for 8 minutes, or until the fish is just cooked. If you want some extra color on top, switch the oven to the broiler setting for another 3 minutes.

Serve warm or at room temperature, sprinkled with the parsley and sumac and a wedge of lemon alongside.

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**Whole baked mackerel in vine leaves**

*Samak bil waraka*



As befits all sorts of things wrapped up in a package before being presented, this is a dish for a celebration! It's impressive to make, and mackerel is always rich so sides can be kept simple—some roast potatoes and a simple green salad are all that you need.

Serves four

*Getting ahead:* This is very dinner-party-friendly, as all the prep work can be done up to about 4 hours in advance. Take the fish to the point where it's 2 lemons, sliced into ¼-inch/

sitting on the baking sheet ready to go into the oven and it can wait around ½cm-thick rounds

from there.

2½ cups/50g cilantro leaves,

roughly chopped, plus ¼ cup/

5g leaves

1¼ cups/25g parsley leaves, roughly

Roughly chop half of the lemon slices, discarding any seeds as you find chopped

them, and place in a food processor along with the 2½ cups/50g cilantro, 1 onion, roughly chopped

the parsley, onion, garlic, chiles, fish spice mix, 5 tbsp/70ml of olive oil, 2 tsp (1 cup/150g)

of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Blitz for about 20 seconds, to form 6 garlic cloves, crushed

a coarse mix, and set aside. Set aside the remaining lemon slices; these are 2 red chiles, roughly chopped



added to the baking sheet when the fish is baked.

(2 tbsp/20g)

1 tbsp Fish Spice Mix (page 190)

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

7 tbsp/100ml olive oil

Salt and black pepper

Pat the fish dry and thinly score the outside about three times on each side.

4 whole mackerel (about 8 oz/225g

Sprinkle the inside and outside of the mackerel with salt—about ¼ tsp per each), cleaned and gutted, or

fish—then fill and cover the fish with the herb paste; about half in the cavities whole seabass, trout, sea bream,

and half rubbed over the outside.

or snapper

About 36 jarred vine leaves, drained

Working on a clean work surface, lay 3 vine leaves in a horizontal line—

of their liquid (about 6⅓ oz/180g)

don't worry about removing the stalks—shiny side down and one slightly 5¼ oz/150g cherry tomatoes

overlapping the next. Repeat with another 2 rows of vine leaves, again 3 per row, to form one large rectangle of vine leaves, about 11 x 10¼ inches/

28 x 26cm, with no gaps in between.



Place one mackerel in the center of the vine leaves, belly facing toward you and head and tail lying either side of the rectangle. Gently fold the vine leaves over the mackerel, rolling over and wrapping the body of the fish completely, with the head and tail exposed on either end. Transfer to the prepared baking sheet and repeat with the remaining vine leaves and mackerel. Once all the mackerel are on the sheet, space them about 1½ inches/4cm apart and scatter the tomatoes and reserved lemon slices over the top. Drizzle with the remaining 2 tbsp of olive oil and bake for 35 minutes, or until the fish is cooked through and the vine leaves have taken on some color.

Transfer the packages to a serving platter and pour on any juices. Garnish with the ¼ cup/5g cilantro leaves and serve at once. The paper-thin vine leaves will be charred and crisp, so eat this with your hands, if you are happy to be informal, sandwiching together a chunk of fish between two of the charred leaves.

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## **Prawn and tomato stew with**

### **cilantro pesto**

This is another fish dish where the holy trinity of Gazan cuisine—dill, garlic, and chile—makes it sing so boldly and loud. Big thanks to Noor Murad for this one. Serve this as it is, with some crusty white bread to mop up the juices, or dot some cubes of white feta or black olives (or both) on top. A crisp green salad with a lemony dressing on the side and you're all set.

Serves four

*Getting ahead:* Batch-make the base for the stew here, if you like; this freezes 9 oz/250g cherry tomatoes

well and keeps in the fridge for a good few days. That way you can just char 4 tbsp/60ml olive oil

your cherry tomatoes and pan-fry the prawns in minutes. The cilantro pesto 1 large onion, finely chopped

can also be made up to 3 days in advance and kept in the fridge.

(1¼ cups/ 180g)

4 garlic cloves, crushed

¾-inch/2cm piece ginger, peeled

and finely grated (1½ tbsp/15g)

Place a large sauté pan over high heat. Toss the cherry tomatoes with 1 tsp 1 green chile, finely chopped

of oil. Once the pan is very hot, add the tomatoes. Cook for about 5 minutes, 2 tsp coriander seeds, lightly



shaking the pan once or twice, until blistered and heavily charred on all sides.

crushed in a mortar and pestle

Remove from the pan and set aside.

1½ tsp cumin seeds, lightly crushed

in a mortar and pestle

Wipe the pan clean, add 2 tbsp of oil and place it on the stove over medium-8 cardamom pods, lightly bashed

high heat. Add the onion and cook for about 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, in a mortar and pestle

until softened and lightly browned. Add the garlic, ginger, chile, spices, dill, and 1 cup/20g dill, finely chopped

tomato paste and cook for 2 minutes, until fragrant. Add the plum tomatoes, 2 tsp tomato paste

water, 1½ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Bring to a simmer, then 6 plum tomatoes, roughly

decrease the heat to medium and cook for about 25 minutes, or until the sauce chopped (2½ cups/500g)

has thickened and the tomatoes have completely broken down.

Salt and black pepper

To make the cilantro pesto while the sauce is cooking, put the cilantro, chile 1 lb 5oz/600g raw king prawns,

and pine nuts into a food processor and pulse a few times until the pine nuts peeled



are roughly crumbled. Transfer to a bowl and add the lemon zest, oil,  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of salt, and a grind of black pepper. Mix to combine, then set aside.

### Cilantro pesto

$1\frac{1}{2}$  cups/30g cilantro, roughly

Pat the prawns dry and mix them in a bowl with  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of salt, 1 tbsp of oil, and chopped

a good grind of black pepper.

1 green chile, finely chopped

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup plus 1 tbsp/50g pine nuts,

Put 2 tsp of oil into a large frying pan and place over high heat. Once hot, lightly toasted (see page 339)

add the prawns in batches and fry for 1 minute on each side, until cooked 1 lemon: finely grate the zest to

through and nicely browned. Set each batch aside while you continue with the get  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp, then cut into wedges

remaining prawns. When the sauce is ready, stir in the prawns and charred  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup/80ml olive oil

tomatoes and cook over medium heat for about 3 minutes, to heat through.

Salt and black pepper

Serve either straight from the pan or spoon into wide shallow bowls. Scoop out the cardamom pods before serving, if you like, they are there to flavor the dish rather than to be eaten. Dot with about half of the pesto and serve at once, with the lemon and remaining pesto in a bowl alongside.





## **Fisherman's dish**

### *Sayyadiieh*

*Sayyadiieh* translates as “fisherman’s catch” or “fisherman’s dish.” The combination of spiced rice and pan-fried fish is a Palestinian favorite in the coastal towns of Jaffa, Haifa and Akka. The choice of fish depends, traditionally, on what’s been caught that day. Here, we’ve used a combination Serves six

of white fish and prawns, but other combinations—calamari and prawns or two kinds of white fish, for example—also work well.

3tbsp/40g unsalted butter, diced

*Getting ahead:* The nuts can be toasted and the onions can be caramelized  
¼ cup/30g pine nuts

with the cinnamon sticks a day ahead, if you like. Doing this will take 30

¼ cup/30g sliced almonds

minutes off your prep time when it comes to making the dish.



½ cup/120ml olive oil

4 large onions, thinly sliced

*Playing around:* Tahini sauce (see page 87) is lovely drizzled on top before (5¾ cups/700g)

serving, for a rich addition.

3 cinnamon sticks

1 green chile, finely chopped

(2 tbsp/20g)

4 garlic cloves, crushed

Place a small frying pan over medium heat and add 1½ tsp of butter. Line ¾ tsp ground allspice

two plates with paper towels. Once the butter melted, add all the nuts and Mounded 1⅓ cups/280g basmati

fry for about 7 minutes, stirring almost constantly, until golden. Transfer to rice, rinsed until the water runs

a prepared plate and set aside.

clear, then drained well

2¾ cups/650ml boiling water

Put 3 tbsp of oil and 2 tbsp of butter into a large, high-sided sauté pan with ¼ tsp saffron threads

a lid, and place over medium-high heat. Add the onions and cinnamon sticks Salt and black pepper



and cook for about 30 minutes, stirring often, or until sweet, softened, and 1 lb 5 oz/600g grey mullet (or another

deeply browned. Add the chile, garlic, and allspice and cook for 1 minute. Add sustainably sourced firm white

the rice, stir well, and cook for another 90 seconds, to toast. Add the water, fish such as halibut, cod, or

saffron, 1½ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Bring to a boil, then monkfish), skinless and boneless,

decrease the heat to low and cook, covered, for 12 minutes.

chopped into 1½-inch/4cm pieces

¼ tsp ground cinnamon

While the rice is cooking, put 1½ tsp of oil into a large frying pan and place ¾ tsp ground cumin

over high heat. Put the fish into a large bowl and add the ground cinnamon, 12 large raw tiger prawns,

¼ tsp of cumin, ¾ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Once hot, add head and tail intact but the

half the fish and fry for 2–3 minutes, turning halfway through, or until golden shell and back vein discarded

on both sides but not cooked through. Transfer to the second prepared plate, (about 1 lb 2 oz/500g)

then add another 1½ tsp of oil to the pan and continue with the remaining 2 lemons: juice 1 to get 1½ tbsp,

fish. Wipe out the pan, you'll be using this again for the prawns.

and cut the other 1 into 6 wedges



Once the rice is ready, uncover the pan and add the fish, gently pushing the rice  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g parsley leaves,

around to tuck half the fish into the rice—the rest can sit on top. Increase the roughly chopped

heat to medium, cover, and cook for another 5 minutes. Remove from the heat, add the remaining  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of butter, and set aside, covered, for 10 minutes.

In a large bowl, mix the prawns with 1 tbsp of oil, the remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of cumin,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of salt and a good grind of pepper. Place your frying pan over high heat, add the remaining 2 tbsp of oil, and fry the prawns, in two batches, for 2–3 minutes, until golden and cooked through. Transfer to a medium bowl, mix in the lemon juice and half the parsley, and set aside.

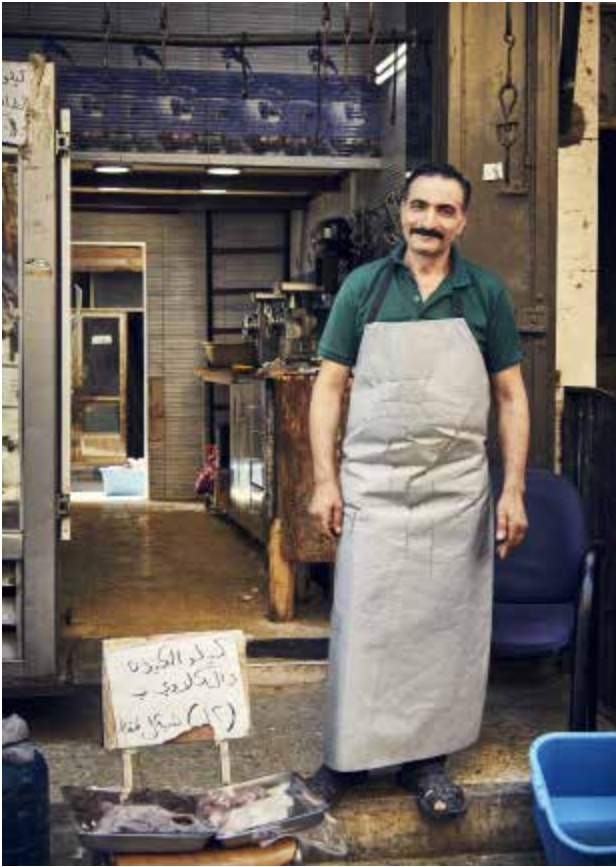
Transfer half the rice to a large serving platter along with the white fish. Top with half the nuts, and half the prawns and follow this with the remaining rice, nuts and prawns. Sprinkle with the remaining parsley and serve, with the wedges of lemon alongside.

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## MEAT



As a kid, Sami used to be sent to the neighborhood butcher by his mother, Na'ama, with a bag full of meat chunks, a peeled onion, a bunch of parsley, and some mixed spices. Sami's job was to take the meat, all wrapped up in a paper package, to their butcher, who'd then grind it up in his shiny electric machine. Na'ama had her own manual meat grinder at home but it wasn't big enough to grind the amount needed to feed everyone sitting around the large family table. Such was the quality of the raw meat that Sami could never resist sneaking a few mouthfuls of the mix as he strolled back. Once it was home, the meat would be shaped into kofta or meatballs, spooned into dumplings or cored-out vegetables, piled into pitas or onto open pies, or spread out in an easy sheet-pan dish.

Well over half our recipes in this chapter start with ground meat. This is a tribute, in part, to the memory of Sami's strolls and the food he ate growing up. More generally, though, it's a testament to how convenient ground meat is for the home cook. It's a good way to stretch meat out, it cooks easily and



quickly and lends itself to all sorts of family-friendly dishes. Pasta and other sheet-pan dishes (see pages 254

and 256), chicken arayes (see page 228), shish barak (see page 220), meatballs (see pages 239 and 243), kofta (see pages 230 and 234); these are just some of the dishes in *Falastin* that can be eaten with simply a fork or a spoon. And there's something about this—about the lack of need for a knife to cut with, and all the “formal table manners” a double set of cutlery suggests—that just makes these things so inherently comforting and nurturing.

If ground meat recipes are often those to fall back on for everyday cooking, starting with a whole chicken, lamb shoulder, lamb neck, or oxtail is, generally speaking, associated more with celebratory meals. These are very often the signature dishes of Palestine; the upside-down dish maqlubeh (page 264) or Gaza's sumaqkiyeh (page 273). Maftoul (see page 267) is another dish whose appearance at the table so often marks a celebration, signaling to those around the table that the cook has been in the kitchen for a good while.

It doesn't all need to be too epic on the part of the cook, though. As with so much cooking, it's so often just about getting a bit organized and planning in advance. Open the freezer of all home cooks in Palestine and it will be full of sealed bags of dumplings, for example, ready to be cooked in yogurt, or sfiha (see page 226), the open pies topped with various things, ready to go straight into the oven when needed. If not the freezer, then there are all those dishes that are happy to sit in the fridge for 2–3 days, ready to be eaten over several meals. The stews and slow-cooked chicken thighs (see page 260), the meatballs and kofta; these are so often the dishes whose flavor actually improves when all the ingredients have had time to sit around together overnight.

As with all ingredients, but particularly with meat, start with the best-quality you can.

218 Meat



**Meat dumplings in yogurt sauce** Once all the dumplings are shaped, broil them for 8 minutes—placing them in *Shish barak*

the middle of the oven rather than directly under the broiler, to prevent them burning—or until slightly golden.

To make the yogurt sauce, meanwhile, put the yogurt, egg yolk, cornstarch These ravioli-like dumplings, cooked in a rich yogurt sauce, go by a couple and stock into a countertop blender. Blend on medium speed for about of other names: taqiyet elyahoodi, which means “Jew’s hat,” or dinein qtat, 1 minute, until the mixture is smooth and runny, then transfer to a large which means “cat’s ears.” Whichever their shape resembles more—hats or saucepan, along with 1½ tsp of salt, and place over medium-low heat. Cook cats—few dishes take Sami so quickly back home. They’re his real madeleine for about 5 minutes, stirring often, until the yogurt comes to a gentle boil.

moment. They’re a labor of love, but, as is often the case with the food that Serves four

Add the dumplings to the sauce and continue cooking for about 18 minutes, reminds us of home, the result is pure comfort and nurture.

stirring gently a few times and keeping an eye on the sauce to make sure Filling

*Getting ahead:* You can make these in advance, as they freeze well. Put them it does not split, until the dumplings have cooked through and the sauce 1 tbsp olive oil

straight into the yogurt from frozen; they’ll just need a couple more minutes resembles a thin béchamel.

½ onion, finely chopped

in the pan.

(½ cup/70g)



To make the adha, put the oil and garlic into a small frying pan and place over 7 oz/200g ground beef (or lamb,

medium-high heat. Cook for about 4 minutes, stirring often, until the garlic is or a combination of both)

lightly golden. Remove from the heat, transfer to a bowl, and stir in the cilantro.

½ tsp baharat (see page 190)

To make the filling, put the olive oil into a medium frying pan and place over ¼ tsp ground turmeric

Divide the dumplings and sauce among four bowls and drizzle the adha on medium heat. Add the onion and cook for about 6 minutes, stirring a few times, Salt and black pepper

top. Sprinkle with the chile flakes and serve at once.

until slightly golden. Add the meat, baharat, turmeric, ¼ tsp of salt, and a grind ¼ cup/5g cilantro leaves,

of black pepper and continue cooking for about 5 minutes, stirring and breaking finely chopped

up the meat with a wooden spoon so that it does not form into clumps, until the meat is cooked through and any liquid released has evaporated. Stir in the Dough

cilantro and set aside until completely cool.

1¼ cups/150g all-purpose flour,

plus more for dusting

To make the dough, put the flour, sunflower oil, water, and salt into a medium 1 tbsp sunflower oil



mixing bowl. Using your hands, gather the dough together into a shaggy ball. Add about ¼ cup/60ml lukewarm water

to form a somewhat sticky ball. Transfer to a lightly floured work surface and knead for ¼ tsp salt

about 4 minutes, until the dough is elastic and smooth. Shape into a ball, cover, and let rest for about 10 minutes, at room temperature.

Yogurt sauce

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

4 cups plus 3 tbsp/1kg Greek yogurt

1 egg yolk

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough to form a 14 x 18-inch/35 x 45cm rectangle. Add 1 tbsp cornstarch

to the dough. Using a 3-inch/7cm rolling pin, roll out the dough into a

rectangle; it should be quite thin, about ⅛ inch/3mm. Using a 3-inch/7cm rolling pin, roll out the dough into a

rectangle; it should be quite thin, about ⅛ inch/3mm. Using a 3-inch/7cm rolling pin, roll out the dough into a rectangle; it should be quite thin, about ⅛ inch/3mm. Using a 3-inch/7cm rolling pin, roll out the dough into a

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to form a half-moon shape. Next, pinch together the edges so that they overlap roughly chopped

slightly, resembling tortellini. To help you with this, either keep a bowl of water beside you, dipping your fingers once or twice as you go along, to prevent them 1 tsp Aleppo chile flakes

from becoming sticky, or use a clean brush on the rim, dipped in water, to help (or ½ tsp regular chile flakes)

with the seal. Arrange the dumplings on the prepared baking sheet while you continue with the remaining batch.

Preheat the broiler to 400°F.

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Meat 221





## **Cooking in Aida refugee camp, Bethlehem**

Islam Abu Aouda lives in a refugee camp in Bethlehem. Her firstborn is severely disabled, and her home is humble. The needs of her husband and six children come before her own. Frankly, it would be easy to feel sorry for Islam. Spending time with her, though, you don't feel sorry. You feel inspired, energized, and happy. This is a lady with the best hug in town who sure knows how to giggle.

To make ends meet, Islam, along with five other ladies in Aida Camp, gives cooking lessons and hosts home-stays once or twice a month to interested visitors.

Their group, formed in 2010, is called the Noor Women's Empowerment Group.

The money they make from these lessons and home-stays goes toward making life better for the disabled kids in the camp. They might buy some equipment a child needs to get around, or use the money to give a group of kids an experience they've never had. The visitors, in return, get a slice of Palestinian kitchen life and a good meal to boot. Women rule the roost, stockpots are enormous and, regardless of how many guests are expected, enough food is made to feed a small wedding. In time-honored fashion, the world is set right over a chopping board.

Going to Aida Camp for the first time, a visitor can be struck by how normal it all feels. The very foundations of the camp are abnormal, clearly—refugee camps only exist for those who've been uprooted from their home—but, with everyone going about their business, it all feels strangely everyday. Socio-economic conditions are poor, population density is high, basic infrastructure is insufficient, and the smell of tear gas is familiar but, still, kids go to school, parents do what work they can, babies are born, the elderly are cared for, plays are put on, pictures are painted, meals are cooked. Just like every other teenager in the world, the older kids hang around on street corners, hankering after cool sneakers and mobile phones.

It is this apparent ordinariness that results in the incredulity frequently voiced by visitors when they see a refugee doing something as “everyday”



as pulling out their mobile phone. “Yes, I’m a refugee,” they find themselves having to explain, “and yes, I have a mobile. Yes, I am on Instagram.” Their circumstances may be irregular and not normal but refugee camps are full of regular people doing normal things. To an outsider, it’s what makes people such as Islam seem so extraordinary.

When we spent the morning with Islam, we prepared shish barak, little lamb-filled dumplings that Sami had been craving. Dough was made, rolled, shaped, filled, and then cooked in a yogurt sauce made from kishek (see page 337), a sharp-tasting fermented yogurt. It’s a Marmite ingredient—people either love 222



it or hate it. For Tara, the jury is still out. For Sami, it’s the Proustian “madeleine moment” that takes him straight back home.

Islam’s husband, Ahmed, was with us in the kitchen, not necessarily getting his hands covered in flour but obviously supportive of his wife. He gave Sami a semi-jovial hard time, undermining Sami’s great success as a chef and traveler by saying that none of it meant anything unless a man had “a wife and lots of kids.”

As Sami and Ahmed discussed the respective paths of “tradition” versus “passion,”



Tara and Islam watched on smiling, as they rolled and shaped and filled their dumplings, entertained by two grown men having the conversation about whether one can truly “have it all”—a conversation women are themselves so well versed in.

In terms of having it all—or just getting to dream a little—a visitor might expect Islam to voice the dream of all refugees: “the right to return” to the place they call home. For today, though, Islam’s bucket list is more the kind you take to the beach. Her dream is to make a trip to the sea, to watch the sun set over the horizon. She may live just a two- or three-hour drive from the coastal town of Haifa but, in her mid-thirties, an ocean is still something Islam has never actually seen with her own eyes. Freedom to travel from A to B (quite literally, in the case of the region’s division into areas A, B, and C—see the Tent of Nations profile on page 130, which goes into more detail on this) is limited for people such as Islam. Getting in the way is the paperwork needed, the visa often denied, the checkpoint lines so long and humiliating, the regular and real demands of her family. For now, then, the horizon that Islam is focused on are closer to home: feeding visitors to make money to provide for her extended family in the camp.

This is just a snapshot of Islam’s story. Islam is just one of about 3,000 refugees living in Aida Camp. Aida is just one of the three camps in Bethlehem. These camps are themselves just three of the fifty-eight recognized refugee camps throughout the region of Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These camps are home to about 5 million refugees, and 5 million different life stories.

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## **Open meat or cauliflower pies**

parchment paper.

### *Sfiha*

Arrange the dough balls on the prepared baking sheets, spaced well apart.

Using your fingers, flatten each ball into a round disc, about 4 inches/10cm wide and  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch/3mm thick. Spoon a heaped 2 tbsp (about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  oz/50g) of These easy-to-make “open” pies are loved by kids and grown-ups alike. They whichever topping you are using into the center of each disc and spread it are perfect party food: great to snack on and also really practical, as they can out evenly, leaving a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch/1cm border clear around the edge. Sprinkle with be batch-made and then baked from frozen. They’re also lovely for a light the pine nuts, if you are doing the meat topping, and set aside for another meal, served with a fattoush (see page 99), or any other, salad.



10 minutes. Bake for 17–18 minutes, rotating the sheets halfway through (or even switching the position of the sheets if it looks like the pies on the top sheet are taking on too much color), or until the pies are cooked and the edges are golden brown. Remove from the oven and serve warm or at room temperature, with lemon wedges alongside.

Makes 12 pies; serves four

### Veggie topping

Thanks to Sami's sister, Sawsan, for creating the recipe for the dough here.

It turned out so well that it's revised for the za'atar bread (see page 285) and edges are golden brown. Remove from the oven and serve warm or at room temperature, with lemon wedges alongside.

1 medium cauliflower, cut into

roughly 2 inch/5cm florets and any

sambousek (see page 294).

temperature, with lemon wedges alongside.

### Dough

stalk cut into roughly 1cm pieces

1½ tsp fast-acting dried yeast

*Playing around:* There are two toppings to choose from here—one meat and (5 cups/500g)

1 tsp sugar

one veggie. Make either one or the other, or a mixture of the two. If you want 1 large onion, thinly sliced

¾ cup/170ml lukewarm water

to serve both, you'll need to either double the quantity of dough or halve the (1½ cups/180g)



2½ cups/320g all-purpose flour

quantities for the toppings.

2 red bell peppers, halved, core and

1 tbsp milk powder (also known

seeds removed and then thinly

*Getting ahead:* The dough can be made up to 2 days in advance and kept in the as dried skimmed milk)

sliced (1⅓ cups/200g)

fridge after rinsing. Just bring it back to room temperature the day you are

⅛ tsp ground turmeric (optional)

¼ cup/60ml olive oil

rolling it out. You can also make the pies up in full, topping and all, and freeze 3 tbsp sunflower oil

Salt

them before baking. They can go into the oven straight from the freezer.

4 tbsp olive oil

¾ tsp Aleppo chile flakes

¾ tsp salt

(or ⅓ tsp regular chile flakes)

¾ tsp baharat (see page 190)

Meat topping



¼ tsp ground turmeric

To make the dough, put the yeast, sugar, and water into a small bowl and 9 oz/250g ground lamb

2 tbsp tahini

whisk to combine. Set aside for 5 minutes, until it starts to bubble.

1 small onion, chopped

2 tbsp lemon juice

(¾ cup/100g)

¼ cup/5g parsley, finely chopped

Put the flour, milk powder, turmeric, if using, and ¾ tsp salt into the bowl of a 1 medium tomato, finely chopped

stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. Mix for 1 minute, just to incorporate, (⅔ cup/120g)

To serve

then add the yeast mixture, sunflower oil, and 3 tbsp of olive oil. Mix on low speed 3 tbsp tahini

¼ cup/25g pine nuts

for about 2 minutes, to bring everything together, then increase the speed to ½ tsp ground cinnamon

2 lemons, cut into wedges

medium. Continue to mix for 5–6 minutes, until the dough is soft and elastic. It ¾ tsp ground allspice



will feel very soft and almost sticky, but this is how it should be. Tip the dough  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or

onto a clean work surface and bring together to form a ball. Grease the mixing  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp regular chile flakes)

bowl with the remaining 1 tbsp of olive oil and return the dough to the bowl.

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup/15g parsley, finely chopped

Turn it a couple of times so that it's completely coated in oil, then cover and 1 tbsp lemon juice

set somewhere warm for 1 hour, until it's doubled in size.

1 tbsp sumac

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp salt

Roll the dough out into the shape of a sausage, about 12 inches/30cm long, and cut into 12 even pieces, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  oz/45g each. Roll each piece into a ball, place on a large plate, cover, set aside for 20 minutes, to rest.

If making the meat topping, put all the ingredients into a large bowl and mix well to combine; doing this with your hands is the best way. Set aside.

If making the veggie topping, preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Put the cauliflower, onion, bell peppers, oil, and spices into a large bowl with  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp of salt. Mix well, then spread out on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for 25 minutes, or until the vegetables are golden brown and tender. Remove from the oven and allow to cool slightly, then chop the cauliflower into  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch/ $\frac{1}{2}$ cm chunks. Finely chop the bell peppers—there is no need to peel them—and place all the vegetables in a medium mixing bowl along with the tahini, lemon juice, parsley, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of salt. Mix to combine, and set aside.



Preheat the oven temperature to 425°F. Line two baking sheets with 226  
Meat

Meat 227



### **Spiced chicken arayaes**

*Arayaes* is the plural of the word for “bride,” in Arabic, which is *aroos*. There are various tales as to why this particular name is given to this snack; one is that the white bread represents the white dress of the bride wrapped around a dark tuxedo (typically a lamb filling) of the groom in a deep embrace. Thinking slightly more practically, for those with an appetite arayaes are essentially pan-fried pita bread sandwiches. They’re great either for snacking on before a meal or as a meal in themselves, served with a fresh chopped salad (see Serves four as a snack

page 92) and some sumac yogurt (see page 259).

4 tbsp/60ml olive oil



*Getting ahead:* The filling can be made ahead of time—up to 3 days if you just 2 onions, finely chopped

make the tomato sauce and up to a day if you've added the chicken—ready for (2 cups/300g)

the arayas to be filled and fried to serve.

Salt

6 garlic cloves, crushed

1½ tsp caraway seeds, roughly

crushed in a mortar and pestle

Put 2 tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan and place over medium-high heat. Add 1½ tsp cumin seeds, roughly

the onions and ½ tsp of salt and cook for about 8 minutes, stirring often, until crushed in a mortar and pestle

soft and golden. Add the garlic, spices, and tomato paste and cook for 1 minute, ¾ tsp ground cinnamon

until fragrant. Stir in the plum tomatoes and cook for about 8 minutes, stirring ½ tsp chile flakes

often, until they have completely broken down and the mixture is quite thick.

2 tsp tomato paste

Remove from the heat and set aside to cool. Once cool, transfer the mix to a 2–3 plum tomatoes (9 oz/250g),

medium bowl along with the chicken, cilantro, 1 tsp of salt, and a good grind of coarsely grated and skins



black pepper. Mix well to combine and set aside.

discarded (see page 129; mounded

1 cup/200g)

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

12¼ oz/350g ground chicken thighs

(either ask your butcher to grind

Using a serrated knife, slice the pitas open to create two separate rounds.

these, or put skinless, boneless

Place them on a clean work surface, cut side up. Spread one of the rounds  
thighs in a food processor and

with 5–5¼ oz/140–150g of the chicken mix—it should be about ¼-inch/  
¾cm blitz a few times)

thick—then place an unfilled pita on top, pressing down gently to make a  
1¼ cups/25g cilantro leaves,

sandwich. Continue with the remaining chicken mixture and pita slices to  
roughly chopped

make four sandwiches in total.

Black pepper

Put 1½ tsp of butter and 1 tbsp of oil into a large frying pan and place over  
4 pitas (see page 278)

medium-high heat. Add two of the sandwiches to the pan and cook for 3  
tsp/20g unsalted butter



2–3 minutes, turning after 1 minute or so, until both sides have taken on some 1 lemon, cut into wedges

color. Transfer to the prepared baking sheet and blot gently with some paper Tahini sauce (see page 87);

towels to soak up any excess oil. Continue with the remaining sandwiches, optional to serve

adding another 1½ tsp of butter and 1 tbsp of oil to the pan with each batch.

Once they are all pan-fried, transfer the baking sheet to the oven and bake for 7 minutes, or until cooked through. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for about 5 minutes before slicing each pita into four.

Serve warm, with a wedge of lemon and some tahini sauce alongside to dip into, if desired.

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Arrange the slices of eggplant in a single layer in the bottom of a large, deep **Baked kofta with eggplant and tomato**

baking dish, about 9 x 13 inches/23 x 33cm. Place one kofta patty on top of each slice and place a slice of tomato on top of this, to create a kind of sandwich.

### *Kofta bil batinjan*

Spoon a generous 1 tbsp of the thick tomato sauce on top of each sandwich, spreading it out slightly so that it drizzles down the sides. Sprinkle with the Kofta—meat patties—are something of an obsession throughout the Middle green chile, cover the dish tightly with aluminum foil, and bake for 20 minutes.

East. Baked, fried, grilled, braised; stuffed into pita and drizzled with tahini, Then increase the oven temperature to 475°F, remove the foil, and bake for a for example, or baked in a tomato sauce and served with rice. We offer two final 18 minutes.



versions: this one baked with tomato and another, richer version, baked in a Remove the dish from the oven and, using a spatula, lift the kofta out of the tahini sauce (see page 234). They are both simple meals to comfort—  
perfect Makes 12 kofta; serves

3 large tomatoes, cut crosswise into

liquid (don't discard the liquid, though), trying to keep the eggplant slices for a midweek supper served with some bread or rice to mop up the juices  
—

six as a main, or eight as a side

12 slices, about ½ inch/1cm thick

intact. Place on a large platter or individual serving plates, then pour the rather than to wow with their elegant looks.

(1 lb 2 oz/500g)

cooking juices from the pan into a medium sauté pan. Bring to a boil over high 2 very large (or 3 large) eggplants,

1 large green chile, thinly sliced

*Getting ahead:* The tomato sauce (which can be easily doubled or tripled, if you heat and cook for 7 minutes, stirring frequently, until the liquid has thickened as wide as possible (1 lb 14 oz/

(2 tbsp/20g)

want to freeze a batch) keeps well in the fridge for up to 4 days. The meat mix and reduced by half. Spoon this sauce over the kofta and sprinkle with the 850g), peeled in alternate long

¼ cup/5g cilantro leaves,

can also be made a day ahead, kept in the fridge and waiting to be cooked.



cilantro, basil, and pine nuts. Serve warm or at room temperature.

strips (to look like a zebra),

roughly chopped

Once baked, these are also lovely (or even better, as is often the case with then cut crosswise into 12 slices,

12 small basil leaves, whole

*Pictured on the next page*

meatballs) the next day. Either warm them through or just bring back to about 1-inch/2½cm thick

(or larger leaves, shredded)

room temperature.

Salt and black pepper

¼ cup/25g pine nuts, toasted

¼ cup/60ml olive oil

(see page 339)

Tomato sauce

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

2 tbsp olive oil

1 onion, finely chopped (1 cup/150g)

Place the eggplant slices in a large bowl. Sprinkle with ½ tsp of salt and a 6 garlic cloves, crushed



good grind of black pepper and pour in the oil. Mix well to combine, then 2  
tsp tomato paste

spread out on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for 25 minutes, or until  
golden 1 x 14-oz/400g can chopped

brown and cooked through. Remove from the oven and set aside.

tomatoes

Decrease the oven temperature to 425°F.

¼ tsp sugar

1 tsp dried mint

To make the tomato sauce, while the eggplants are roasting, put the oil into  
a ½ tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or

medium saucepan and place over medium-high heat. Add the onion and  
cook ¼ tsp regular chile flakes)

for about 6 minutes, stirring occasionally, until it has softened and lightly ¼  
cup/60 ml water

browned. Add the garlic and tomato paste and cook for another 30 seconds.

Salt and black pepper

Stir in the canned tomatoes, sugar, mint, chile flakes, water, ½ tsp of salt,  
and a good grind of black pepper. Bring to a boil, then decrease the heat to  
Kofta

medium-low. Cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is  
12¼ oz/350g ground beef

thick and rich. Remove from the heat and set aside until ready to use.

(15–20% fat)



12¼ oz/350g ground lamb

To make the kofta, put all the ingredients into a large bowl, along with 1¾ tsp (15–20% fat)

of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Mix well, then divide the mixture into 30g parsley, very finely chopped

12 large balls. Shape into patties—about 3 inches/7cm wide—and set aside.

1 onion, coarsely grated

(¾ cup/120g)

*Pictured on the next page*

2 garlic cloves, crushed

3–4 plum tomatoes, coarsely grated

and skins discarded (mounded

1 cup/200g)

1 tsp tomato paste

2 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tbsp ground allspice

¼ tsp grated nutmeg

½ tsp Aleppo chile flakes

(or ¼ tsp regular chile flakes)

1 tbsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper



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## **Kofta with tahini, potato, and onion**

*Playing around:* This is a rich dish, thanks to the tahini. If you want to lighten things up, the potatoes can be replaced with florets of cauliflower. Other vegetables also work, including cubes of butternut squash or pumpkin, for example. If you do this, the cauliflower will need 5 minutes less in the oven than the potatoes and the squash or pumpkin will need about 5 minutes more.

Serves four

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

3 russet potatoes (1 lb 2oz/500g),

peeled and cut into roughly

In a medium bowl, toss the potatoes with 2 tbsp of oil,  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp of salt, and, a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch/1½cm dice (2 cups/470g)

good grind of black pepper. Transfer to the prepared baking sheet and bake 3 tbsp olive oil

for 25 minutes, tossing halfway through, until golden and cooked through.

Salt and black pepper

Remove from the oven and set aside.

Kofta

Increase the oven temperature to 475°F.

9 oz/250g ground lamb

(at least 20% fat)

To make the koftas, meanwhile, put all the ingredients into another medium 9 oz/250g ground beef



bowl with 1 tsp of salt and a generous grind of black pepper. Shape into (at least 20% fat)

12 little torpedo-shaped pieces, each weighing about 2 oz/55g. Set aside.

½ onion, coarsely grated

Put the tahini, yogurt, lemon juice, vinegar, and garlic, and water into a (½ cup/75g)

medium bowl with ¾ tsp of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Whisk 1 large plum tomato, coarsely

together well, until smooth and slightly runny, and set aside until needed.

grated and skin discarded

(½ cup/90g)

Put the remaining 1 tbsp of oil into a large ovenproof sauté pan and place over 1 tsp tomato paste

medium-high heat. Add the kofta and the sliced onion and cook for about 2 tsp olive oil

5 minutes, or until the kofta are lightly colored and the onion has softened.

¾ tsp allspice

Transfer the pan to the oven and bake for 4 minutes, or until the kofta are ¾ tsp ground cinnamon

cooked through and the onion has lightly browned. Remove from the oven, stir 1 tsp Aleppo chile flakes

in the potatoes, and pour on the tahini sauce. Swirl the pan, so that the sauce (or ½ tsp regular chile flakes)



gets distributed, and return to the oven for a final 4 minutes, or until the sauce  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g parsley, roughly chopped

is bubbling. Remove from the oven and let to cool for 5 minutes before topping 2 garlic cloves, crushed

with the parsley, pine nuts, and chile flakes. Serve directly from the pan.

7 tbsp/125g tahini

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup/80g Greek yogurt

1 $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp lemon juice

$\frac{3}{4}$  tbsp cider vinegar

2 garlic cloves, crushed

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup/120ml water

1 onion, thinly sliced (1 $\frac{1}{4}$  cups/150g)

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup/5g parsley leaves

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup/25g pine nuts, lightly toasted

(see page 339)

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp Aleppo chile flakes

(or  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp regular chile flakes)

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## **Lamb bolognese with okra**

*Sinniyat bamia bil lahmeh*

This is essentially a ground lamb bolognese baked with okra. It's simple, comforting, and completely delicious. Eat it as it is, with a salad alongside, or with some plain rice or spaghetti.

*Getting ahead:* This is a lovely one to bake ahead and have in the fridge for  
Serves four to six

the work week. It keeps well in the fridge, for 2–3 days, ready to be warmed through before serving.

5 tbsp/70ml olive oil

1¾ oz/50g okra, lightly trimmed



*Ingredients note:* As always with okra (if you don't want a dish to become (see headnote)

“slimy”), don't trim the pods so much that you end up seeing the seeds. If you 1 onion, sliced in half, then

can see them, they'll be able to seep out. If you can't, then they won't, and each half cut into 4 wedges

anyone accusing okra of being “gloopy” can be called out as just plain wrong.

(1½ cups/160g)

10 garlic cloves: 5 crushed,

5 very thinly sliced

½ tsp chile flakes

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

1½ tsp coriander seeds, roughly

Put 1 tsp of oil into a large frying pan and place over high heat. Once smoking crushed in a mortar and pestle

hot, add half the okra and cook for 3 minutes, shaking the pan once or twice, 1½ tsp cumin seeds, roughly

until nicely colored on all sides. Transfer to a plate, then repeat with another crushed in a mortar and pestle

1 tsp of oil and the remaining okra. Set aside until needed.

½ tsp ground allspice

10½ oz/300g ground lamb



Put 2 tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan and place over medium-high heat.  
Add (at least 20% fat)

the onion and cook for 5 minutes, stirring a few times, until soft and lightly  
1¼ cups/300g uncooked

colored. Add the crushed garlic, chile flakes, coriander seeds, cumin seeds,  
tomato purée

and allspice and cook for another 1 minute, until fragrant. Add the ground 6  
plum tomatoes (1 lb 3 oz/550g):

lamb and cook for 2–3 minutes, using a spoon to break up any chunks, or  
until 2 roughly chopped, 4 sliced into

no longer pink. Add the tomato purée, chopped plum tomatoes, sugar,  
water, ½-inch/1cm thick rounds

1¼ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Decrease the heat to  
medium 2 tsp sugar

and cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is thick and  
rich.

½ cup plus 2 tbsp/150ml water

Salt and black pepper

Stir ¾ cup/15g of the fresh cilantro, half the sliced tomatoes and half the  
okra 1 cup/20g cilantro leaves,

into the sauce, then spread out in a large baking dish, about 11 x 8 inches/  
roughly chopped

28 x 20cm. Top with the remaining okra and tomatoes, scattered roughly  
over, cover with aluminum foil, and bake for 30 minutes. Increase the oven  
temperature to 450°F, remove and discard the foil, and continue cooking for  
another 20 minutes, or until the okra and tomatoes have taken on some



color and the sauce is bubbling. Remove from the oven and set aside to rest for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, put the sliced garlic and remaining 2 tbsp of oil into a small frying pan. Set over medium heat and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring from time to time, until the garlic is golden and crispy. Drain into a sieve set over a bowl and set aside; you don't need the oil for this dish, so either discard it or save it to add to your next salad dressing.

When ready to serve, sprinkle with the fried garlic, along with the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/5g chopped cilantro.

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**Chicken meatballs with molokhieh, garlic,  
and cilantro**



This is somewhere between a stew and a soup. A “stoup,” maybe. Comforting and hearty, certainly, served with some rice or crusty white bread. For more on molokhieh see pages 150 and page 339.

*Playing around:* If you want to make this dish gluten-free, replace the Serves four

breadcrumbs in the meatballs with grated zucchini. The resulting meatballs aren’t quite as firm as those made with bread, but this, arguably, makes them Meatballs

even more comforting.

1¾ oz/50g crustless sourdough

bread, finely blitzed into crumbs,

*Getting ahead:* The meatballs can be made up two days in advance and kept or 1 large zucchini (½ lb/220g),

in the fridge, ready to sear. The molokhieh can also be made a day or two in coarsely grated (2 cups/200g)

advance. You can make up the whole thing well before serving; it keeps in the 1 lb 2 oz/500g ground chicken

fridge for 2 days.

or turkey thighs

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1½ tsp ground cumin

1 tsp ground cinnamon

To make the meatballs, place the breadcrumbs in a small bowl and cover ½ tsp ground allspice



with water. Stir, then drain through a colander, squeezing out most of the  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp chile flakes

moisture from the bread (if using grated zucchini, toss it with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of salt  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g cilantro leaves,

and place in a sieve set over a bowl. Let to sit for 20 minutes, then use your roughly chopped

hands to squeeze out as much liquid as possible).

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g parsley leaves,

roughly chopped

Transfer the crumbs to a large bowl with the chicken, garlic, spices, herbs,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g mint leaves,

lemon zest,  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp salt, and plenty of pepper. Using well-oiled hands, shape roughly chopped

into about 30 small balls, roughly scant 1 oz/25g each.

1 lemon: finely grated to get

$1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp zest and, then quartered

Put 1 tbsp of oil into a large nonstick sauté pan with a lid, and place over lengthwise

high heat. Once hot, add half the meatballs and cook for 2–3 minutes, 2 tbsp olive oil

turning throughout until golden brown all over. Transfer the meatballs to Salt and black pepper

a baking sheet and set aside. Keep the pan on the heat and continue with 2 garlic cloves, crushed



the remaining 1 tbsp of oil and remaining meatballs in the same way.

1 lemon: shave the rind to get

Return the same pan to medium-high heat. Add the 2 garlic cloves, lemon 4 strips, then juice to get 1½ tbsp

rind, and stock and bring to a boil—this should take about 3 minutes. Add 1¾ cups/450ml chicken stock

the molokhieh (or the spinach and okra combination), cinnamon, 2 tsp of 1¾ lb/800g frozen molokhieh (or

salt, and plenty of black pepper, then decrease the heat to medium and 1¾ cups/800g frozen chopped

cook, covered, for about 20 minutes, or until the molokhieh is bubbling and spinach plus 7 oz/200g okra, thinly

completely defrosted. Add the meatballs, parsley, and ½ cup/10g of cilantro sliced—see pages 150 and 339)

and cook, covered, for another 10 minutes, or until completely cooked ½ tsp ground cinnamon

through. Stir in the lemon juice.

Salt and black pepper

½ cup/10g parsley leaves,

To make the fried garlic, meanwhile, put the 60ml of olive oil into a small frying roughly chopped

pan over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and cook for about 3 minutes, 1 cup/20g cilantro leaves,

stirring occasionally, or until golden and crispy. Add the chile flakes, then roughly chopped



remove from the heat and pour into a bowl. Stir in the cilantro and set aside.

Fried garlic

Divide the soup among four bowls and top with the fried garlic and remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml olive oil

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g cilantro. Serve at once, with a lemon wedge, alongside.

6 garlic cloves, crushed

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp chile flakes

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup/10g cilantro leaves,

roughly chopped

Meat 239



**Stuffed turnips with turkey, freekeh, and  
spicy tamarind sauce**

*Mahshi lift*



Stuffing vegetables is commonplace in Palestinian cooking. As well as being delicious, celebratory, and comforting, the resulting dishes are often a practical way of making meat stretch further than it would otherwise do.

Serves six

Stuffing vegetables is, however, time-consuming—sauces and fillings need to be made, vegetables need to be hollowed out, the cooking time required Salt and black pepper

is often relatively long. This is not to dissuade you from making a recipe like 4½ lb/2kg turnips

this—the results are wonderful—but to explain why there are not lots more 6 tbsp/90ml sunflower oil

recipes for stuffed vegetables in *Falastin*. Traditionally, coring and stuffing vegetables is done as a group activity, with the time spent divided between Stuffing

(equally important) coring and chatting duties.

½ cup/80g cracked freekeh (also

known as greenwheat; see

*Getting ahead:* The turnips can be cored up to a day in advance; just keep page 336), rinsed well, drained

them in plenty of cold water with some lemon juice squeezed in (to prevent and picked of any stones

discoloration). The whole dish can also be cooked a day ahead of serving, 9 oz/250g ground turkey thighs

if you like, then just warmed through to serve—the flavors actually improve ¾ tsp baharat (see page 190)

the next day.



¾ tsp ground cumin

¾ tsp ground cinnamon

½ cup/10g dill leaves, roughly

chopped, plus 1 tbsp to serve

To make the stuffing, bring a medium pan with plenty of water to a boil.  
Add ½ cup/10g parsley leaves, roughly

the freekeh and cook for about 15 minutes, or until just cooked through.  
Drain chopped, plus 1 tbsp extra to serve

through a sieve, rinse under cold water, then set aside for about 15 minutes,  
½ cup/10g tarragon leaves, roughly

to completely drain.

chopped, plus 1 tbsp extra to serve

1½ tbsp olive oil

While the freekeh is cooking, put the remaining stuffing ingredients into a 1  
lemon: finely grate the zest

bowl along with 1 tsp of salt and good grind of black pepper. The freekeh  
can to get 1½ tsp

be added once it is drained and dried. Mix well to combine and set aside.

1½ tsp tomato purée

Peel the turnips, trim the top end so that it sits flat, then, using a manakra  
(see page 338) or a swivel peeler (as opposed to a y-shaped peeler), core  
them Tamarind sauce

out. Pierce through one end of the turnip with your manakra or peeler, then  
3 oz/80g dried tamarind pulp (see



twist to increase the cavity's circumference as you go along. Stop short before page 341), soaked in 1 cup/240ml

you get to the base, though, you don't want to pierce it all the way through.

boiling water for 30 minutes

You should end up with a cavity about 1¼ inches/3cm wide, with edges about 1 onion, finely diced (1 cup/150g)

¼ inches/¾cm thick. Don't worry too much if you do pierce through the 6 garlic cloves, crushed

bottom, though; the trimmings can be used to seal the ends if needed. Any 1 large green chile, seeded and

trimmings beyond this can be used to make turnip mash (see page 138).

finely chopped (2 tbsp/20g)

2 tbsp olive oil

Line a baking sheet with paper towels.

½ tsp ground cumin

½ tsp ground coriander

Pour the sunflower oil into a large sauté pan. Place over medium-high heat

½ tsp ground cinnamon

and, once hot, carefully add the turnips, in batches of two or three, to the pan.

1 tsp baharat (see page 190)

Fry for 7–10 minutes, turning occasionally to brown on all sides. Transfer to 6 plum tomatoes, coarsely



the prepared baking sheet and continue with the remaining batches. Once the grated (2¼ cups/400g)

turnips are cool enough to handle, use your hands or a small spoon to fill the 1½ tsp tomato paste

cavities with the freekeh mixture, pushing it down gently as you go.

Salt and black pepper

1 tbsp sugar

*Continued on the next page*

2 cups plus 2 tbsp/500 ml water

½ cup/60g pomegranate seeds

(from ½ pomegranate)

1½ tbsp olive oil

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½ cup/150g Greek yogurt,

(optional)

To make the sauce, use your hands to break apart the tamarind pulp as much

### **Meatballs and peas in tomato sauce**

as possible. Strain the mixture through a sieve, pushing gently with a spoon, to get out as much tamarind liquid as you can; you should have about 1 cup plus 1 tbsp/260ml. The pulp and seeds can be discarded. Put the onion, garlic, and This is a dish to both comfort and surprise. Comfort in a way that only baked chile into a food processor and pulse a couple of times—you want the mixture meatballs can, and a surprise at the amount of flavor packed into both the to be finely ground but not to become a complete paste.



balls and the sauce. Serve with some plain rice, mashed potato, or crusty white bread, to mop up the juices, along with a crisp green salad.

Put the oil into a large sauté pan with a lid, and place over medium-high heat. Add the onion mixture and cook for about 7 minutes, stirring from time to time, until softened and lightly colored. Stir in the spices and cook for a few seconds, then add the tomatoes, tomato paste, 2 tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Cook for another 5 minutes, for the mixture to thicken, to be warmed through. You can also just make the whole dish up to a day in advance and either kept in the fridge overnight or pan-fried, ready to warm through before serving.

*Getting ahead:* The sauce can be made in advance—it keeps well in the fridge for up to 3 days or can be frozen for longer—and the meatballs can be served four

few seconds, then add the tomatoes, tomato paste, 2 tsp of salt, and a good shaped in advance and either kept in the fridge overnight or pan-fried, ready grind of black pepper. Cook for another 5 minutes, for the mixture to thicken, to be warmed through. You can also just make the whole dish up to a day in advance, ready to warm through before serving.

1 onion, finely chopped (1 cup/140g)

stirring occasionally.

4 garlic cloves, crushed

*Playing around:* Meatballs often call for a bit of bread, to keep them spongy. Remove the pan from the heat and gently lower in the turnips, filling side 1 tsp cumin seeds, roughly crushed

and light. If you want to, the bread can be replaced with an equal weight up. Return to medium-low heat and let simmer gently, covered, for about in a mortar and pestle

of coarsely grated zucchini. Once grated, place the zucchini in a sieve or 70 minutes, or until the turnips are easily pierced with a knife. Remove from 6 cardamom pods, lightly crushed



colander and give it a good squeeze to extract some of the liquid. If you use the heat and set aside, uncovered, for about 10 minutes, to slightly cool.

in a mortar and pestle

the zucchini, you won't need the milk.

1 cinnamon stick

While the turnips are cooking, combine the pomegranate seeds, 1½ tbsp olive ½ tsp chile flakes

oil, and remaining 1 tbsp of dill, parsley, and tarragon in a bowl. Spoon this 2 tsp tomato paste

over the turnips before serving them, straight from the pan, with a spoonful of 8 plum tomatoes (1¾ lb/800g),

To make the meatballs, put the bread and milk into a large bowl, mash yogurt if desired.

coarsely grated and skins

together with your hands until the bread has completely disintegrated, then discarded (3⅓ cups/600g)

set aside. (If starting with grated zucchini, you don't need the milk and don't 1 cup/240ml chicken stock

need to soak.)

1½ tsp sugar

Salt and black pepper

Put the onion into the bowl of a food processor and pulse a few times until 2½ cups/300g frozen peas, defrosted



very finely chopped but not liquidized. Tip the onion into the bowl of bread  
5¼ oz/150g feta, roughly broken

and add the garlic, beef, spices, herbs, lemon zest, olives, 1¼ tsp of salt, and  
into 1½- or 2-inch/4–5cm chunks

a good grind of black pepper. With lightly oiled hands, shape the mixture  
into 2 green onions, thinly sliced

golfball-size balls, about 1½ oz/40g in weight: you should be able to make  
(¼ cup/25g), to serve

about 22 balls.

## Meatballs

Put 2 tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan and place over high heat. Add the 2  
slices of white bread, crusts

meatballs in batches—you don't want to overcrowd the pan—and cook for  
removed, torn into roughly

about 3 minutes, turning so that all sides get nicely browned. Transfer the  
½-inch/1cm chunks (1¾ cups/

balls to a separate plate and set aside while you continue with the remaining  
60g, or 1 small zucchini,

batches.

coarsely grated (for a gluten-free

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

alternative—see headnote)

3 tbsp/50ml whole milk



Return the same pan to medium-high heat and add 1 tbsp of oil. Add the 1 onion, roughly chopped

onion and cook for about 6 minutes, scraping the pan for any flavor gathered (1 cup/140g)

at the bottom, until softened and nicely browned. Add the garlic, cumin 2 garlic cloves, crushed

seeds, cardamom pods, cinnamon, chile flakes, and tomato paste and cook 1 lb 2 oz/500g ground beef

for 1 minute, or until fragrant. Add the plum tomatoes, stock, sugar, 1¼ tsp (at least 15% fat)

salt, and a good grind of black pepper and cook for about 20 minutes, until 2 tsp ground cinnamon

reduced by a third. Remove from the heat, stir in the peas, then transfer the 1 tsp ground allspice

mixture to a large ovenproof dish, about 11 x 8 inches/28 x 20cm. Top with ¾ cup/15g parsley, roughly chopped,

the meatballs, scatter on the feta, and drizzle with the remaining 1 tsp of oil.

plus a few leaves to serve

Bake for 20 minutes, or until the meatballs are cooked though, the sauce is ½ cup/10g mint leaves,

bubbling, and the feta has taken on some color. Let sit for about 10 minutes, roughly chopped

then sprinkle with the green onions and additional parsley leaves and serve.

1 large lemon: finely grate the zest

to get 1½ tsp



Mounded  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup/70g pitted green

olives, roughly chopped

Salt and black pepper

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**Stuffed eggplants and zucchini in a** Using your hands, so that you can push in a bit of stuffing at a time, fill all **rich tomato sauce**

the eggplant and zucchini cavities. Stop filling them about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch/1cm from the top of each vegetable; the stuffing needs some space to expand

*Baatingan w kusaa bil banadoura*

inside the vegetables when they are cooking.

Gently lower the stuffed vegetables into the sauce. They won't fit in a single layer, but try to avoid too much overlap and submerge them in the sauce as Stuffing vegetables is such an everyday event in the Palestinian kitchen much as you can. Return the sauce to medium heat and, once simmering, that most cooks have a special knife to help them with the task. It's called a decrease the heat to low. Cover the pan and simmer very gently for 90 minutes, manakra, with a thin blade curved into a semicircle and both sides serrated.

or until the rice is completely cooked through and soft—test if it is ready by Serves six as a main, or

You can get them online or in specialty shops but, for a good alternative, a sticking a knife into the middle of one of the vegetables; it should go in very twelve as a side

Adha

swivel peeler (the straight ones, as opposed to the y-shaped ones) or a corer easily. Don't worry if some of the rice/stuffing spills into the tomato sauce,



7 tbsp/100ml olive oil

both work very well. Sami and Tara were also shown how to use a power drill, this can happen and it will be fine when served.

Sauce

6 garlic cloves, finely chopped

by some ladies serving lunch out of a garage in a parking lot in Jerusalem, to 2½ tbsp olive oil

1 tbsp coriander seeds, lightly

core carrots and zucchini, but such a recommendation comes with obvious To prepare the adha, meanwhile, put the oil into a small frying pan and place 2 onions, finely diced

crushed in a mortar and pestle

health and safety warnings!

over medium heat. After about a minute, add the garlic and decrease the heat (2½ cups/350g)

1 red chile, seeded and finely diced

to medium-low. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring very often, until the garlic is 4 cups/1kg uncooked tomato puree

Serve these either as a side or as a main, with a salad or some other cooked (1 tbsp/10g)

golden and crispy. Keep a close eye on the pan here; you don't want the oil to 12¼ oz/350g ripe tomatoes

vegetables alongside. Some bread is also good, to mop up the juices.



get too hot and for the garlic to burn. Reserving the oil as you pour, strain the (2 large), coarsely grated

¼ cup/5g parsley leaves,

garlic through a sieve. Set the garlic aside—it will crisp up as it cools down  
—

*Getting ahead:* The stuffing mixture can be made up to a day ahead. The 3¼ cups/750ml chicken stock

roughly chopped

and return the oil to the pan. Add the coriander seeds and chile and cook for tomato sauce keeps well in the fridge for up to 3 days, and also freezes well.

or water

¼ cup/5g mint leaves, roughly torn

about 1 minute, stirring a few times, until fragrant. Remove from the heat, Double the recipe for the sauce, if you can, so that you have a batch ready 1  
tbsp sugar

¼ cup/5g dill leaves

transfer to a separate bowl, and set aside until needed.

to go when you next need it.

1 green onion, thinly sliced

Stuffing

(2 tbsp/10g)

When the vegetables are cooked and the sauce is thick and rich (but still ¾ cup plus 1 tbsp/175g Egyptian rice



1 cup/250g Greek yogurt

pourable), use a slotted spoon to carefully lift the vegetables out of the pan.

(see page 336)

Pour the sauce onto a large serving platter (or individual serving plates) To make the sauce, put the oil into a saucepan or casserole pan with a lid—

9 oz/250g ground lamb (or ground

with a rim and top with the stuffed vegetables. Spoon on the adha: the about 10 inches/25cm wide—and place over medium heat. Add the onions and beef or a mixture of both)

coriander and chile oil first, followed by the fried garlic slices, fresh herbs, cook for about 10 minutes, stirring frequently, until soft and caramelized. Add ¼ cup/60ml olive oil

and green onion. Serve warm or at room temperature, with the yogurt the rest of the sauce ingredients, along with 2½ tsp of salt and a good grind of ½ tsp ground cinnamon

spooned alongside.

black pepper. Simmer over medium heat for about 10 minutes, stirring from ¾ tsp ground allspice

time to time, then remove from the heat and set aside.

½ tsp ground cumin

About 3 green onions, finely

To make the stuffing, while the sauce is cooking, place all the ingredients in a sliced (⅓ cup/35g)

large bowl with 1½ tsp of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Mix well, using ¾ cup/15g mint leaves,



your hands to make sure that everything is well incorporated. If making in roughly chopped

advance, keep in the fridge until ready to use.

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup/15g parsley leaves,

roughly chopped

Trim the stalks from the eggplants, then insert a manakra (or peeler or 1 cup/20g dill, roughly chopped

corer—see headnote) into the eggplant; you want it to be very close to the 1 red chile, seeded and finely diced

skin—about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch/3mm away—but not so close that it tears and won't hold (1 tbsp/10g)

its shape when it's stuffed. Scoop out the flesh to create a generous cavity.

1 lemon: finely grate the zest

You don't need the flesh any more, but keep it for another recipe; it can be cut to get 1 tsp

into cubes and steamed, for example, or added to your next omelette. If your 3 tbsp water

eggplants are particularly large, slice them in half, crosswise, and scoop out Salt and black pepper

the flesh using a regular small serrated knife—be sure to keep one end of each half intact, so that the stuffing does not fall out!

1½ lb/700g eggplants (between

3 and 6, depending on size)



Use the manakra or a swivel peeler to scoop out the zucchini flesh. Keep 1½ lb/700g zucchini (between

about ⅛-inch/3mm of flesh attached to the skin inside the zucchini and about 3 and 6, depending on size)

½ inch/1cm from the end intact—they need to be robust enough to keep the stuffing inside. Again, keep the scooped-out flesh to use elsewhere.

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### **Chicken musakhan**

Musakhan is the hugely popular national dish of Palestine. Growing up, Sami ate it once a week, pulling a piece of chicken and sandwiching it between a piece of pita or flatbread. It's a dish to eat with your hands and



with your friends, served from one pot or plate, for everyone to then tear at some of the bread and spoon on the chicken and topping for themselves.

Serves four

Traditionally, musakhan was made around the olive oil pressing season in October or November to celebrate (and gauge the quality of) the freshly 1 chicken (about 3¾ lb/1.7kg),

pressed oil. The taboon bread would be cooked in a hot taboon oven (see cut into 4 pieces (3 lb/1.4kg) or

page 341) lined with smooth round stones, to create small craters in the bread 2 lb 2 oz/1kg chicken breasts with

in which the meat juices, onion, and olive oil all happily pool. It's cooked year-the wing-tips left on (between

round, nowadays, layered with store-bought taboon or pita bread, and is a dish 4 and 6, depending on size), skin

to suit all occasions—easy and comforting enough to be the perfect week-on, if you prefer

night supper as it is, but also special enough to stand alongside other dishes ½ cup/120ml olive oil,plus

at a feast.

2 or 3 tbsp

*Playing around:* The chicken can be replaced with thick slices of roasted 1 tbsp ground cumin

eggplant or chunky cauliflower florets, if you like (or a mixture of both), for 3 tbsp sumac

a vegetarian alternative. If you do this, toss the slices or florets in the oil and ½ tsp ground cinnamon



spices, as you do the chicken, and roast at 425°F for about 25 minutes for the ½ tsp ground allspice

cauliflower and about 35 minutes for the eggplant.

Salt and black pepper

¼ cup/30g pine nuts

3 large red onions, thinly sliced

⅛ inch/3mm thick (mounded

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper, and line 4 cups/500g)

a bowl with paper towels.

4 taboon breads (see headnote),

or any flatbread (such as Arabic

Place the chicken in a large mixing bowl with 2 tbsp of oil, 1 tsp of cumin, flatbread or naan bread; ¾ lb/330g)

1½ tsp of sumac, the cinnamon, allspice, 1 tsp of salt, and a good grind of ¼ cup/5g parsley leaves, roughly

black pepper. Mix well to combine, then spread out on the prepared rimmed chopped

baking sheet. Roast until the chicken is cooked through. This will take about 1¼ cups/300g Greek yogurt

30 minutes if starting with breasts and up to 45 minutes if starting with the 1 lemon, quartered

whole chicken, quartered. Remove from the oven and set aside. Don't discard any juices that have collected in the pan.



Meanwhile, put 2 tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan, about 10 inches/25cm, and place over medium heat. Add the pine nuts and cook for 2–3 minutes, stirring constantly, until the nuts are golden brown. Transfer to the prepared bowl (leaving the oil behind in the pan) and set aside. Add the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml of oil to the pan, along with the onions and  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp of salt. Return to medium heat for about 15 minutes, stirring from time to time, until the onions are completely soft and pale golden but not caramelized. Add 2 tbsp of sumac, the remaining 2 tsp of cumin, and a grind of black pepper and mix well, until the onions are completely coated. Remove from the heat and set aside.

When ready to assemble the dish, set the oven to the broil setting and slice or tear the bread into fourths or sixths. Place them under the broiler for 2–3 minutes, to crisp up, then arrange them on a large platter. Top the bread with half the onions, followed by all the chicken and any chicken juices left in the pan. Either keep each piece of chicken as it is or roughly shred it as you plate up, into two or three large chunks. Spoon the remaining onions over the top and sprinkle with the pine nuts, parsley, remaining  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tsp of sumac, and a final drizzle of olive oil. Serve at once, with the yogurt and lemon wedge, alongside.

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**Olive trees and olive oil**



Palestinian olive oil is delicious. It's rich, it's green, it's grassy, it's all sorts of words one normally associates with the tasting of fine wines. So why does no one, really, know about it outside Palestine? Why is the terrain of extra-virgin olive oil generally held to be Italy, or Greece, or Spain?

The answer lies in logistics—more particularly, the logistics of getting to be a well-known product in an export market. It's about marketing, selling, pricing, and all sorts of other practical factors. But if out-and-out quality were the judge in a simple blind taste test of “which olive oil really knocks your socks off,” a lot more people would know a lot more about Palestinian olive oil.

It is there, though, and it is available outside Palestine, so that's the good news. The less good news is that challenges are also there: challenges to the trees themselves, to the farmers who pick the olives, and to the producers who make, distribute, and export the oil. As always, there are as many stories and challenges as there are trees. Just a snapshot, then, here, telling the story from the points of view of an olive oil producer and distributor, an olive tree guardian, an olive farmer and finally a small social enterprise company in the UK which imports and sells Palestinian olive oil.

To start with: the tree. Half of the farmed land in Palestine is planted with olive trees. Some of them are very old—around 1,000 years—so they play a huge part in the link between the people, their history, and their land. With the olives up for sale to the highest Israeli or international bidder, who then replants them generating nearly a quarter of Palestine's agricultural output, they also play a huge in, say, their front garden. The irony of the situation—that olive trees are being dug part in the country's productivity and economy.

up from the land they've been part of and nurturing for so many years in order to The olive harvest, from mid-October to early November, is a crucial time, showcase, precisely, an ancient connection with the land—is intense.

and every year all the farmers, along with their families and visitors, head to the Another reason olive trees are being destroyed is to make way for the continued groves for long days of picking. Everyone gets involved, kids



too, pulling at the low-building of the separation wall. A tree said to be one of the oldest olive trees sits hanging olives or climbing up little ladders leaning on the trees to reach for the in the village of al-Walajeh, located near the Green Line (see page 337), south of higher branches. A big net stretches out on the ground, collecting and protecting Jerusalem. At about 12 meters high and 25 meters wide, it's ten times the size those olives that have fallen down by themselves. It's an event that goes on for of an average olive tree. It's believed to be over 4,000 years old. Salah Abu-Ali's about three weeks, with everyone stopping all together for a big lunch under the family has been farming the land since the 1960s. Since observing the threat to the shade of one of the trees.

existence of the tree by the building of the wall, Salah has taken it upon himself to It all sounds rather idyllic. Indeed, it *would* be idyllic were it not for the sit guard as the tree's protector. Now known locally as "the guardian of the olive extent to which these trees (and therefore this way of life) are threatened. The tree," his post under the shade of its wide branches is near permanent. It's clear, main threats come in the form of bulldozers or intentional fires, both of which doing the math, that Salah spends more time in the company of his tree than that are employed to make way for the building of Israeli settlements or as a means to of his wife. His wife's presence (and presumably, if plates of food could speak, destroy Palestinian income. Furthermore, particularly ancient trees are being dug support) makes itself known only in the form of a large dish of stuffed vine leaves,

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rolled long and thin, which appear to accompany our time spent with Salah in the shade of his tree. As well as protecting the tree, and making oil from the large olives he harvests in the autumn, he also hosts visitors who make a pilgrimage to his shrine, to hear his story and, in so doing, spread the word far beyond the reach of the branches. “Post my story on Facebook,” Salah calls out, as we go on our way.

Notwithstanding these threats and challenges, the story is not all doom and gloom. As always, the vision, commitment, and enthusiasm of just one individual can be enough to transform the status quo. In the world of olives, in the world of Palestine, Nasser Abufarha—olive oil producer and distributor—is one such man (pictured opposite).

Trained as an anthropologist and working in the United States for many years, Nasser returned to Palestine around the beginning of the year 2000, to set up Canaan Fair Trade. Canaan is, as the name suggests, a fair trade organization and social enterprise project that works with local farmers to produce some of the best olive oil, almonds, maftoul, and freekeh the country has to offer. It started in 2004 and began exporting in 2008. Today,



Canaan has a network that, collectively, works with fifty village-based cooperatives of farmers and women across Palestine.

Very much wearing two hats at once, Nasser manages to bring together the needs of the farmers to have productive conditions to work in and, at the same time, the needs of a business to make a profit in order to grow and market itself to the outside world. Walking around Canaan, there's a real buzz. The factory is there, of course, doing its work to press olives and sort almonds, but there's also an impressive shop selling olive oil, tapenade, almonds, and grains to visitors. A big café space is being developed to host workshops and provide a venue for functions. Working alongside this profit-generating and thoroughly

“modern” buzz, though, sits the large and very traditional working taboon oven (see page 341), all lit up inside and on the go. Stopping by to whip up some open pies for a mid-morning snack, Nasser brings *baladi* (“from the land”) eggs, wild asparagus, zalabeed (the tender and sweet shoots of the middle of the onion), and fresh za’atar from his bag. Munching on the pies fresh from the taboon oven, watching the building work for the new café going on, the possibility of combining the best of all worlds—the traditional and the future-looking—feels very real.

It's all about olives, yes, but it's also about so much more. “Olive oil is important for our food security and our cultural representation,” says Nasser. “It is [also] a symbol of our identity. The trees connect us to our land, to the place, to the history, and to past generations. [ . . . ] They represent the continuity of a nation and our rootedness in the land.”

Just one of the farmers producing olives (among other things) for Canaan is Khadir Khadir (Pictured on the next page), living and working in the village of Nus Ijbail. Khadir came to farming initially as a means to get out of working in (and sleeping on the floor of) an Israeli plastics factory. Conditions were tough and life was not good, so Khadir had to find a plan B. After an uncle asked him to help him out with the harvest, Khadir quickly got the farming bug and now has, while still being one of the youngest members of the village, something of the 250





“unelected mayor” feel about him. The village population is only about 350 and, also, is ageing, as most young people have left. Khadir sees it as his mission to stay and help, though. Making the village productive and viable is not just about keeping alive the old ways of cooperative farming. It’s about keeping alive the old ways of people looking out for each other and caring and holding on to a sense of identity and pride.

The logistical challenges to productivity and morale for farmers such as Khadir, working the land under the conditions of occupation, are very real. The three main challenges Khadir faces day-to-day are demolition orders, insufficient access to water, and the lack of freedom of movement. He remains, though, upbeat and resilient. “I consider myself a very lucky man,” he says. Again, the symbolism of the olive tree—a tree so resilient and independent that it is able to both self-pollinate and live off little or no water—is hard not to note. The trees play as big a part in the Palestinian sense of identity and spirit—which has resilience at its core—as they do in the agricultural output of the country.

After people such as Khadir have picked the olives, and people at Canaan have produced and packaged the oil, the challenge is then to get over and around all the logistics that get in the way of selling it to the export market. One importer of Palestinian Fair Trade products is a social enterprise



company called Zaytoun (which translates from Arabic as, appropriately, “olive”).

Zaytoun was set up in 2004 by Manal White and Heather Masoud. It started off as a grass-roots volunteer initiative with a focused task to import products such as olive oil, almonds, za’atar, freekeh, and dates from Canaan and sell these to the UK market. For all the challenges of getting it to market, Manal is enthusiastic about the continued and expanding demand for Palestinian oil (among other products) in markets outside Palestine.

The market is there, then, as are the olives, the farmers, the producers, distributors, and importers. The product is incredibly good and the passion is very real. With barriers to export and other logistical, political factors looking like they are not going to change any time soon, it’s up to the customer to use their purchasing power to seek it out. It is there—online, in specialty stores, in well-stocked produce markets—and, if it’s not, ask for it. Create the market, which the supplier will then want and need to supply. Buy Palestinian olive oil not just because it is deliciously rich, green, and grassy. Buy it because it’s a way to keep oiling the logistical cogs that could be turning a lot more smoothly to get this product to market.

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### **Lemon chicken with za'atar**

As anyone who has cooked the chicken sheet-pan recipes from Sami's previous cookbooks— *Ottolenghi: The Cookbook* and *Jerusalem*—knows, the secret weapon behind so many (seemingly) effortless dinners is a make-ahead chicken dish that can just be put into the oven when needed. All the work is done in advance, which means that on the night there is little fuss, and happy feasting. It's a complete winner every time.

Serves four

*Ingredients note:* We tend to start with a whole chicken (so that chicken stock can be made from the carcass), but it's absolutely fine, of course, to start with 3 lemons

chicken breasts with the wing-tips left on or legs if you prefer.

1 whole chicken (2¾ lb/1.3kg), cut



into legs, thighs, and breasts with

the wing-tips left on (or about 2 lb

2 oz/1kg of chicken legs or breasts

Slice 2 of the lemons into ¼-inch/½cm-thick slices and place in a large mixing bowl with the wing-tips left on, skin on,

bowl. Finely grate the zest of the remaining lemon (to get 1½ tsp of zest) and if you prefer)

set this aside for later. Squeeze the same lemon to get about 1½ tbsp of juice 2 onions, peeled, sliced in half,

and add this to the mixing bowl along with the chicken, onions, garlic, sumac, then each half cut into 3 wedges

allspice, 2 tbsp of za'atar, 2 tbsp of oil, the stock, 1½ tsp of salt, and a good (2¾ cups/260g)

grind of black pepper. Mix well to combine, then cover with a large plate and let 2 heads of garlic, skin on, sliced in

to marinate in the fridge for at least 2 hours (or overnight, if you have time).

half, crosswise

2 tsp sumac

Half an hour or an hour before baking, take the chicken out of the fridge; it ¾ tsp ground allspice

should be at room temperature before going into the oven.

4 tbsp/25g za'atar

6 tbsp/90ml olive oil



Preheat the oven to 425°F.

¾ cup plus 2 tbsp/200ml chicken

Transfer the chicken to a large rimmed baking sheet, skin side up, and pour stock or water

on all the marinade and lemon slices. Drizzle the chicken with 1 tbsp of oil and Salt and black pepper

bake for about 45 minutes, giving everything a bit of a stir halfway through, ¼ cup/5g parsley, finely chopped

until the chicken is golden and cooked through and the onions have taken ¼ cup/30g sliced almonds, toasted

on some color. Transfer to a serving platter along with the lemon slices and (see page 339)

any juices that have collected at the bottom of the pan. Some people will love to eat the lemon slices and others won't. Either way, serve them up with the chicken—they look great.

Toward the end of the cooking time for the chicken, combine the parsley, lemon zest, remaining 2 tbsp of za'atar, and remaining 3 tbsp of olive oil in a bowl. Spoon this on the chicken, finish with the almonds, and serve.

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## Spicy pasta bake

Sami, like so many kids—Middle Eastern or otherwise—did a lot of his growing up at home on pasta bakes. There's quite a kick in our version, but the chile flakes can be decreased or left out if you prefer. Don't skimp on the time the bolognese sauce sits on the stove, though. It's what gives the dish such depth and makes the house smell like home.

*Getting ahead:* The bolognese sauce can be made up to 2 days before  
Serves six generously

assembling the dish, and it also freezes well. Bring it back to room temperature or gently warm through before adding the cooked macaroni and assembling Bolognese sauce

the dish—it will be too firm to mix if you don't. The whole dish can be assembled 1 onion, roughly chopped (1 cup/150g)

a day in advance as well, ready to go into the oven, and, again, also freezes well.

3 stalks of celery, roughly chopped



If you are baking from frozen it will need 5 or 10 minutes longer in the oven.

(1¼ cups/150g)

2 green bell peppers, stalk, core

and seeds removed, flesh roughly

chopped (1 cup/150g)

To make the bolognese, put the onion, celery, and green bell peppers into a 1½ tbsp/25g unsalted butter

food processor and pulse a couple of times, until finely chopped. Put the butter 2 tbsp olive oil

and oil into a large cast-iron saucepan with a lid, and place over medium-high 5 garlic cloves, crushed

heat. Tip in the onion mixture and cook for about 7 minutes, stirring from 1 tbsp tomato paste

time to time, until softened. Add the garlic, tomato paste, oregano, spices, 2 tbsp oregano leaves, finely chopped

and bay leaves and cook for 1 minute, until fragrant. Add the beef and cook for 1 tbsp ground cumin

3 minutes or so, using a spoon to break the meat apart into fine crumbles, until 1 tbsp ground cinnamon

no longer pink. Add the canned and plum tomatoes, red bell peppers, sugar, 2 tsp ground allspice

water, 2¼ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Bring to a simmer, then 1¼ tsp chile flakes



cover the pan, decrease the heat to medium-low, and simmer very gently for 2 bay leaves

2½ hours, stirring every half hour or so, until the sauce is thick and rich.  
Lift 1 lb 2 oz/500g ground beef

out and discard the bay leaves, stir in the parsley, and set aside until needed.

(15–20% fat)

1 x 14-oz/400g can chopped tomatoes

To make the béchamel, put the butter into a medium saucepan and place over 5–6 plum tomatoes (1 lb 2 oz/500g),

medium-high heat. Once melted, whisk in the flour and cook for 1 minute or coarsely grated and skins discarded

so, until pale golden and beginning to smell like popcorn. Gradually pour in (2¼ cups/400g)

the milk, whisking continuously as you do so to avoid any lumps. Decrease the 2 red bell peppers, stalk, core and

heat to medium, add the nutmeg and salt, and cook for 5 minutes, whisking seeds removed, flesh cut into roughly

continuously, until the flour has cooked out and the sauce is completely 1¼-inch/3cm dice (1¾ cups/260g)

smooth. Remove from the heat and set aside for about 10 minutes, then stir 1 tsp sugar

in the yogurt and egg yolks until fully incorporated.

7 tbsp/100ml water

Preheat the oven to 425°F.



Salt and black pepper

1 cup/20g parsley, roughly chopped,

Bring a large pan of salted water to a boil and add the macaroni. Cook for about plus more to serve

7 minutes, or according to the package instructions, until al dente.

Reserving  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml of the cooking water, drain the macaroni through a sieve and Béchamel sauce

then add it to the bolognese sauce along with the reserved cooking water. Mix 3 tbsp unsalted butter

well to combine, then transfer to a baking dish, about 9 x 13 inches/23 x 33cm 6 tbsp/60g all-purpose flour

and 3½ inches/9cm deep, then pour in the béchamel and spread it out evenly.

2 cups plus 2 tbsp/500ml whole milk

Sprinkle with the feta and bake for 25 minutes, or until golden and bubbling.

A pinch of ground nutmeg

Let cool for 10–15 minutes, then serve, with a final sprinkle of parsley and chile 1 tsp salt

flakes and a drizzle of oil.

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup/130g Greek yogurt

2 egg yolks

12¼ oz/ 350g macaroni pasta

6⅓ oz/180g feta, roughly crumbled



$\frac{3}{4}$  tsp Aleppo chile flakes (or  $\frac{1}{3}$  tsp  
regular chile flakes)

Olive oil, to serve

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### **Pulled lamb shawarma sandwich**

Slow-cooked lamb, piled into a warm pita with all the condiments you care for—this is the ultimate shawarma sandwich. Once cooked, the lamb keeps in the fridge so don't worry if there are fewer than eight of you for that first sandwich. The lamb is also great as a proper meal, rather than a sandwich, served as it is with a selection of sides; fattoush (see page 99), butternut squash (see page 86), and a crisp green salad makes just one Serves eight great combination.



3 onions: 1 roughly chopped,

*Getting ahead:* The lamb can be cooked a day or two ahead, ready to be 2 quartered (and peeled, as

warmed through when serving.

always) into wedges

2 heads of garlic: 1 cut in half,

horizontally, 8 cloves from the

second head roughly chopped

Put the chopped onion into a food processor along with the chopped garlic 1-inch/2½cm piece of ginger,

and ginger. Pulse until finely minced, then add the parsley and spices. Pulse peeled and roughly chopped

for about 10 seconds, until just combined. Scrape down the sides, then add (2 tbsp/25g)

the vinegar, oil, 2¼ tsp of salt, and a generous grind of black pepper. Pulse to 1 cup/20g parsley, roughly chopped

form a coarse paste, then transfer to a non-metallic container large enough to 1½ tbsp ground cumin

hold the lamb.

1½ tbsp ground coriander

Pat the lamb dry and pierce liberally all over with a small, sharp knife. Add it to 2 tsp smoked paprika

the spice paste and coat generously, so that all sides are covered. Cover with 2 tsp ground turmeric



aluminum foil and let to marinate, refrigerated, overnight.

2 tsp ground cinnamon

¼ tsp ground cloves

Take the lamb out of the fridge about 1 hour before going into the oven; you  
3 tbsp cider vinegar

want it to be closer to room temperature than fridge-cold.

¼ cup/60ml olive oil

Salt and black pepper

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

4½–5½ lb/2–2.5kg lamb shoulder,

bone in

Put the quartered onions and halved garlic into the center of a large roasting  
3 cups/700ml chicken stock

pan and pour in the chicken stock. Sit the lamb on top of the vegetables,  
cover ½ lemon

tightly with foil and bake for 4 hours. Remove from the oven, discard the  
foil, and bake for 90 minutes more, increasing the oven temperature to  
350°F

Sumac yogurt

toward the last 30 minutes of cooking time. The lamb is ready when it is  
fork-

⅔ cup/200g Greek yogurt



tender and easily pulls away from the bone. Set aside to cool slightly, about  
¼ cup/60g tahini

15 minutes, before using two forks to roughly shred the lamb directly in the  
1½ tbsp lemon juice

pan, gathering as much of its juices as possible. Transfer the shredded lamb,  
2 tbsp water

onions, garlic cloves, and any of the pan juices to a serving bowl. Squeeze 2  
tsp sumac

the lemon juice over the top and set aside.

½ tsp salt

To prepare the sumac yogurt, while the lamb is in the oven, put the yogurt,  
2 plum tomatoes, thinly sliced

tahini, lemon juice, water, the sumac, and salt into a bowl and whisk well  
(mounded 1 cup/200g)

to combine.

1 red onion, thinly sliced into

rounds (1 cup/120g)

When ready to serve, lay out the tomatoes, red onion, parsley leaves, mint,  
½ cup/10g parsley leaves, whole

and shatta, along with the pita, to let everyone make up their own shawarma  
¼ cup/5g mint leaves, whole

sandwich.

7 tbsp/100g shatta (see page 73)

8 pita breads (see page 278)



## Chicken shawarma pie

To make the tahini sauce, put the tahini, yogurt, garlic, lemon juice, water, and  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp of salt into a bowl. Whisk together until smooth, then set aside.

Melt the remaining 2 tbsp of butter and combine with the remaining 2 tbsp Spiced, marinated chicken thighs, slow-cooked until meltingly tender, layered of oil. Line the base of a 9-inch/23cm springform cake pan with parchment with baked potato slices and rich tahini sauce, all wrapped up in thin-as-a-paper and lightly grease the sides with some of the butter mixture. Lay a sheet feather butter-brushed filo. This is a wow of a pie. Serve it either warm or at of filo out on a clean work surface and brush with butter. Transfer this to the room temperature, with a crisp green salad and some pickles alongside.

pan so that the base is covered and the filo rises up and over the pan's sides.

*Playing around:* The layer of potatoes at the base makes this pie comforting Repeat with the next sheet of filo, brushing it first with butter, then arranging and hearty, but, for a slightly lighter version, you can leave them out. You can it in the pan, rotating it slightly so that the excess hangs at a different angle.

Serves six

also just make the chicken part of the dish. As it is, it makes a delicious stew, Continue in this fashion, brushing each piece generously as you go, until you served with steamed rice or piled into a pita or wrap. If you do this, keep the have used up 6 pieces of filo in total and the base and sides are all covered.

1 lb 10 oz/750g chicken thighs,

tahini sauce—it's always a welcome addition.

skinless and boneless



Next, add the potato slices, overlapping slightly, so that the base of the pie is completely covered. Top with the chicken mixture and gently push down  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch/2cm piece ginger, peeled

*Getting ahead:* The chicken can be made a day or two ahead of assembling the pie. Keep it in the fridge and just bring it back to room temperature before to even out. Last, spoon in the tahini sauce, spreading it gently to coat the and finely grated ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp/15g)

putting the dish together.

chicken layer. Brush a piece of filo with butter and fold it in half horizontally, 2 tsp ground cumin

like a book. Place this over the tahini layer, tucking in the filo around the 2 tsp ground coriander

filling. Brush the top with the butter mixture, then repeat with the last piece  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp smoked paprika

of filo, angling it to cover any exposed areas. Now fold over the overhang,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground turmeric

Put the chicken into a large bowl with the garlic, ginger, ground spices, 1 tbsp crinkling up the filo to create a nice “crumpled” effect on the top. Brush the  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp ground cinnamon

of oil, the vinegar, 1 tsp of salt, and a generous grind of black pepper. Mix to top with the remaining butter, sprinkle with the sesame seeds, place on a  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp ground cloves

combine, then let marinate for at least 30 minutes (or overnight in the fridge).

baking sheet, bake at 400°F for 1 hour, or until deeply golden.

6 tbsp/90ml olive oil



2 tbsp cider vinegar

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Let cool for about 15 minutes before removing from the pan. Sprinkle with the Salt and black pepper

chile flakes and serve.

Mix the potatoes with 1½ tbsp of oil, ¾ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black 2 russet potatoes (1 lb/450g),

pepper. Transfer to the prepared baking sheet and spread out so that they are unpeeled and cut into ¼-inch/

*Pictured on the next page*

not overlapping. Bake for 20 minutes, then increase the oven temperature to ½cm-thick rounds

450°F. Remove the sheet from the oven, carefully flip over each potato slice, 3 tbsp unsalted butter

then return to the oven for another 10 minutes, or until golden. Remove from 1 onion, thinly sliced

the oven and set aside until needed.

(1¼ cups/150g)

¾ cup plus 2 tbsp/200ml

Decrease the oven temperature to 400°F again (or turn the oven off for now chicken stock

and preheat to 400°F before baking).

¼ cup/5g parsley leaves,



roughly chopped

Put 1 tbsp of butter and 1½ tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan and place over ¼ cup/5g cilantro leaves,

medium-high heat. Once hot, add the onion and cook for 5 minutes, stirring roughly chopped

occasionally, until softened. Add the chicken and cook for about 10 minutes, until lightly brown, then add the stock, ¼ tsp of salt, and a good grind of black Tahini sauce

pepper. Bring to a boil, then decrease the heat to medium. Simmer gently for 3 tbsp tahini

25 minutes, or until the chicken is just cooked through. Increase the heat to ⅓ cup/80g Greek yogurt

medium-high and continue to cook for about 8 minutes, or until the liquid has 2 garlic cloves, crushed

thickened and reduced to about ¼ cup. Remove from the heat and let cool for 1 tbsp lemon juice

about 10 minutes, then use two forks to shred the chicken into large chunks.

2 tbsp water

Stir in the herbs and set aside.

8 (12 x 15-inch/30 x 38cm) sheets of

good-quality filo (6 oz/170g)

1 tsp black sesame seeds

¾ tsp Aleppo chile flakes

(or ⅓ tsp regular chile flakes)



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Wipe out your saucepan, then coat the bottom and sides with 1 tbsp of oil  
**Upside-down spiced rice with lamb and**

and 1 tbsp of the butter. Spread the lemon slices out over the base of the pan, followed by the squash, onion, chunks of meat, butter beans and green bell **fava beans**

pepper, and, finally, the peas and fava beans. Sprinkle with  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp of salt and *Maqlubet el foul el akdhar*

a grind of black pepper, then give everything a good press, pushing down to compact the vegetables. Top with the rice and push down again to compress.

Use the skinny handle of a wooden spoon to make four or five small holes  
Maqlubeh is one of Palestine's key national dishes. This "upside down" dish, through the rice, then pour in the reserved stock. Cover the pan tightly made in one pot before being inverted on to a plate to serve, carries with it a with aluminum foil, followed by the lid, and place over medium-high heat,



real “ta da!” thrill. However many times you’ve made it (or if you’re making cooking for about 7 minutes before decreasing the heat to low and cooking, Serves eight

1 tbsp olive oil

it for the first time), there’s always a moment of “eeek” before the pot gets undisturbed, for 40 minutes. Uncover, dot with the remaining 2 tbsp of butter, ¼ cup/30g whole blanched almonds

flipped. Tap the base, count to three, and be quick and confident that all will then replace the lid and let to cook for 10 minutes more. Remove from the 1¾ cups/350g basmati rice

3 tbsp pine nuts

be well! Serve with a chopped salad (see page 92), some pickles, if you like, heat and let sit for about 20 minutes to cool slightly.

Salt

1 red chile, finely chopped

and a spoonful of thick yogurt.

7 tbsp/100 ml olive oil

½ cup/10g cilantro, roughly

Meanwhile, put the remaining 1 tbsp oil into a small frying pan placed over 1 lb 10 oz/750g lamb neck

chopped

*Getting ahead:* You can make the stock and cook the lamb a day ahead. Keep medium-high heat. Once hot, add the almonds and cook for 3–4 minutes, (4–5 pieces), bone in

1¼ cups/300g Greek yogurt



it in the fridge overnight, and just warm through before proceeding.

stirring continuously, until golden. Add the pine nuts and cook for another  
Black pepper

30–60 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, remove the nuts from the pan and set  
1 onion, sliced ½ inch/1cm thick

aside to cool. The oil can be discarded.

(1 cup/150g)

Begin by rinsing the rice until the water runs clear, then allow it to soak in 8  
garlic cloves, peeled

Remove the pan's lid and place a large flat serving dish over the open pan.

plenty of cold water with 2 tsp of salt for at least 2 hours (or overnight).

10 cardamom pods, roughly bashed

Quickly invert the pan, so that the plate is now at the base. Tap the bottom  
in a mortar and pestle

of the pan (which is now at the top!) to gently help the maqlubeh slide out.

Put 2½ tbsp of oil for the lamb into a large saucepan, about 10 inches/25cm  
20 black peppercorns, roughly

Garnish with the nuts, red chile, and cilantro and serve, with a spoonful of  
wide and 4 inches/10cm high with a lid, and place over medium-high heat.

crushed in a mortar and pestle

yogurt alongside.

Toss the lamb pieces with ½ tsp of salt and a good grind of black pepper 3  
bay leaves



and, once the saucepan is hot, add along with the onion, garlic, cardamom, 2 dried Iranian limes (if you can

*Pictured on previous page*

peppercorns, bay leaves, and limes, if using. Cook for about 8 minutes, find them, or else leave them out),

stirring occasionally, or until the lamb has taken on some color and the onion roughly stabbed with a small knife

is soft and golden. Add the tomatoes, tomato paste, chiles, and ground spices 5 plum tomatoes (1 lb/450g),

and cook for about 4 minutes, until slightly thickened and fragrant. Add roughly chopped

6 cups/1.4 liters of water and 2 tsp of salt, bring to a boil, then cover with the 2 tsp tomato paste

lid, decrease the heat to medium-low and cook for 1 hour and 40 minutes, 2 green chiles, halved lengthwise

or until the lamb is tender and practically falling off the bone. Remove from 2½ tsp ground allspice

the heat and use a pair of tongs to pick out the lamb, transferring it to a bowl 2½ tsp ground cinnamon

and letting it cool slightly before pulling the meat apart into large chunks, ¾ tsp ground turmeric

discarding the bones. There is a fair amount of fat here, but don't discard it; Salt and black pepper

it can be added to the meat. Leave the stock and aromatics in the pan.

10½ oz/300g butternut squash,



unpeeled and cut into

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

½-inch/1cm-thick half-moons

14 oz/400g butter beans, trimmed,

While the meat is cooking, put 1½ tbsp of oil into a large sauté pan over then cut at an angle into 1½-inch/

medium-high heat. Add the squash, ⅛ tsp of salt, and a grind of black pepper, 4cm pieces

and cook for about 10 minutes, turning as needed, until golden and softened.

1 green bell pepper, seeded and cut

Transfer to the prepared baking sheet. Add another 1½ tsp of oil to the same into roughly 1¼-inch/3cm cubes

pan, followed by the runner beans, green pepper, ¼ tsp of salt, and a good (1 cup/150g)

grind of black pepper. Cook for 8–9 minutes, stirring often, until the vegetables 1 large onion, cut into ½-inch/

have charred and softened. Transfer to the same baking sheet, keeping them 1cm-thick rings (1½ cups/180g)

separate from the squash. Add another 1½ tsp of oil to the pan, along with the 3 tbsp unsalted butter, cut into

onion. Cook for about 3 minutes, until browned and slightly softened, before 1cm dice

transferring to the same baking sheet, separate from the rest.



1 large lemon, cut into  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch/

Drain the rice through a sieve. Return the stock and aromatics to the stove  
2mm-thick slices, seeds discarded

and place over medium heat. Bring to a simmer, add the rice, and cook for  
( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup/100g)

6 minutes, or until al dente, draining it through a sieve set over a bowl.  
Measure Mounded 1 cup/150g green peas

out  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup plus 2 tbsp/150ml of stock, saving the rest for another use.

(fresh or frozen), defrosted

7 oz/200g fava beans (podded but

still in their shells), fresh or

frozen and defrosted

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## **Fragrant Palestinian couscous**

### *Maftoul*

Maftoul is one of the key players in Palestinian cuisine. It's the centerpiece of whatever table it arrives at, turning a family meal into a feast. It's big on flavor, great on looks and wonderfully satisfying to eat.

*Getting ahead:* The chicken can be marinated a day ahead (but does not  
Serves four generously

need to be).

4 chicken legs (or breasts with the

wing-tips left on, if you prefer),

skin on (2 lb 2 oz/1kg)

Preheat the oven to 425°F.



2 tbsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

Place the chicken in a large bowl and add the olive oil, 1 tsp of salt, and a good 1½ tsp ground cumin

grind of black pepper. Toss to coat, then transfer to an oven dish (or baking 1 tsp ground coriander

sheet lined with parchment paper), skin side up. Put the cumin, coriander, 1 tsp ground cinnamon

cinnamon, turmeric, and fennel seeds into a small bowl and mix to combine.

¾ tsp ground turmeric

Sprinkle just a fourth of this over all the chicken, then roast for 45 minutes, 2 tsp fennel seeds, slightly crushed

or until nicely browned and cooked through.

Maftoul

To make the maftoul, while the chicken is in the oven, put the oil into a large 3 tbsp olive oil

pot (about 10 x5 inches/25 x 12cm), with a lid, and place over medium-high 2 medium onions, each cut

heat. Add the onions and salt and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring from into 8 wedges (3½ cups/350g)

time to time. Add the tomato paste and sugar and cook for 1 minute. Add the 2½ tsp salt

carrots and squash and cook for 3 minutes, stirring a few times, then add 1 tbsp tomato paste



the chickpeas, the remaining three-quarters spice mix, the garlic, and stock.

½ tsp sugar

Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 15 minutes, 2 large carrots, peeled and cut

covered, or until the vegetables are just cooked. Making sure you reserve the into ¾-inch/2cm-thick slices



stock, strain the vegetables and keep them somewhere warm. Return the (2¼ cups/320g)

broth to the same pot—you should have about 2½ cups/600ml—then add ½ butternut squash (14 oz/400g),

the maftoul and bring to a boil. Decrease the heat to low, then cover and cook peeled, seeded, and cut into

over low heat for 10 minutes, or until the maftoul is just cooked. Turn off the 1¼-inch/3cm chunks

heat and set aside for 10 minutes, with the pot still covered. After 10 minutes, 1 x 14-oz/400g can of cooked

fluff up the maftoul with a fork and add the vegetables to the pot, along with chickpeas, drained and washed

the lemon juice and half the parsley.

(1¾ cups/240g)

8 large garlic cloves, sliced in

Spoon the maftoul into a large deep serving dish. Top with the chicken, half lengthwise (1 oz/30g)

sprinkle the remaining parsley, and serve.

¾ cups/750ml chicken stock

1⅔ cups/250g maftoul or

mograbiah or fregola

2 tbsp lemon juice

¼ cup/5g parsley leaves,



roughly chopped

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to subsidize the plan and, after a bit of persuasion, they agreed. Other cooperatives are now taking Baseema's lead and seeking to roll out similar programs in their own districts.

At its biggest, the cooperative had 100 members, all between forty and sixty years old. As government funding for it decreases year after year, though, so too do the number of women. When we met, there were just twenty-five. The women of Anza village are well educated, so most of those under forty are choosing jobs in government, for example, rather than working with their hands. It's not just about the work, though, it's about the community and women coming together. "And laughing," says Baseema. "We arrange ourselves into groups of four and make sure that each group has both an organized person and a funny person who tells all the stories. It's this balance that ensures productivity!"



The problem with dwindling numbers for the cooperative is not just the loss of camaraderie and productivity in the short term. It's about a loss of traditional skills in the long term. Hand-rolling maftoul is a skilled art. There's no better way to feel foolish, in fact, than trying your hand at rolling maftoul with someone who's been doing it all their life. Maftoul is made by adding flour and water to tiny balls of bulgur and rolling it in the palms of your hands until it becomes slightly less tiny.

It seems simple enough. Predictably, it's not. In the time that it took Tara to fail to make a tablespoon of maftoul, Baseema had pretty much made lunch for twenty.

Even by Palestinian standards, though, Baseema sets the bar high. There are only twelve women in the cooperative, in fact, who are able to make maftoul properly, and even within those twelve there are some whose job it is to just steam rather than roll the grain.

The Palestinians' reputation for hospitality, and for showing this hospitality through food, is well known. The quantity of food offered by Baseema, however, **Baseema Barahmeh and**

along with her son and daughter-in-law, was frankly intimidating. There were just three of us at the table eating. There was enough food for twenty. Small bowls of **the Anza PFTA Cooperative**

molokhieh, large trays piled high with manakeesh, pasta, pastries, stuffed vine leaves, steamed rice, warm pita, one large bottle of Coke, another one of Fanta, Baseema Barahmeh lives in a village called Anza, southwest of Jenin. She is a and a large thermos of strong Arabic coffee squeezed in between. Hard as we tried wife and a mother of four. She's also a farmer, a board member of the Palestinian to make a dent, our efforts literally didn't register.

Fair Trade Association (PFTA), a village council member, an expert in hand-rolled We talked, among other things, about Fair Trade. Having been a member maftoul, and coordinator of the Anza women's cooperative. *Anza* means "the of the PFTA since 2008, Baseema is a proud advocate. The model provides financial hard rock," a description that could as well apply



to Baseema, in fact, a serene but security and sustainable work for farmers, cooks, and producers such as herself.

independent force of nature who is making good things happen in her village.

Fair Trade premiums enable members to buy tools and materials for harvesting, How on earth does she fit it all in, we wondered aloud. She starts her day at 4 a.m., which they wouldn't otherwise be able to do. It also enables women to become we're told.

independent, to provide for their families. "I don't have to ask my husband's Established in 1992, the Anza cooperative rolls maftoul, sundries tomatoes, permission," Baseema says. "I can just go ahead and do things for myself." It's shells and cracks almonds, blends za'atar, and supplies olive oil to Canaan Fair unusual for a family to be represented on the village council by a woman, but, says Trade (see page 250), who then sell it to the local and international market. More Baseema, "I wanted the independence, and to see the results of my work. I am locally, they bake savory manakeesh (see page 278) and other pastries to sell to proud of my work; I want it to be in my name." Her son agrees, leaning back on his schools. It was Baseema's idea to do this, seeing it as a way to give the kids access chair and lighting another cigarette. He is proud, clearly, but also worries that his to healthful food and, also, for the cooperative to have year-round work rather than mother takes on too much and does not look after herself. "And she wakes up at be tied to the olive or za'atar harvesting season. She needed government funding 3 a.m., not 4," he says.

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## **Meaty vine leaf pie**

Rolling individual vine leaves stuffed with meat and rice is wonderful—the leaves melt in the mouth and their making often signals a celebration—but it's a time-consuming business. Here, we've taken a fair bit of the work out of the equation by making one big pie. Serve with any (or all) of the following: a spoonful of yogurt, a squeeze of lemon or some flatbread.

*Getting ahead:* This can be served warm or at room temperature, the day it is made or for up to 2 days after.

Serves eight

16-oz/450g jar vine leaves in brine,

*Ingredients note:* Brining vine leaves—we don't always boil our leaves before drained (9 oz/250g)



using them, but here we do. This is because the leaves and stalks remain 4½  
tbsp/65 ml olive oil

intact (rather than the stalks being discarded) and we want everything to be  
⅓ cup/50g blanched whole

super soft and tender when eaten.

almonds, roughly chopped

⅓ cup plus 1 tbsp/50g pine nuts

4 plum tomatoes, sliced into

½-inch/1cm-thick rounds

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a plate with paper towels. Line a baking  
sheet (14 oz/400g)

with parchment paper. Line the base of a high-sided 9 x 13-inch/23 x 33cm  
1 onion, finely chopped (1 cup/150g)

baking dish (or 10-inch/25cm round baking dish) with parchment paper and  
3 large garlic cloves, crushed

set aside.

12¼ oz/350g ground beef

Fill a medium saucepan three-fourths full of water and bring to a boil over  
5¼ oz/150g ground lamb

medium-high heat. Loosely unravel the clumps of vine leaves—it's fine that  
2 tbsp tomato paste

they're stuck together—and add them to the pan. Decrease the heat to 2½  
tsp baharat (see page 190)



medium and simmer for 15 minutes. Drain leaves through a sieve and run 1¾ cups/350g Egyptian rice or

under cold water for about 2 minutes, until the leaves are no longer warm to arborio rice

the touch. Set aside to drain completely.

Salt and black pepper

1½ cups/30g mint leaves,

Put 1 tbsp of oil into a small frying pan and place over medium heat. Add the finely shredded

almonds and cook for 2 minutes, stirring often. Add the pine nuts and cook for 2½ cups/50g parsley, finely

another 4–5 minutes, stirring frequently, until golden. Tip the nuts out onto chopped, plus whole leaves

the prepared plate and set aside.

to garnish

Mix the tomatoes with 1½ tbsp of olive oil and spread out on the prepared Sauce

baking sheet. Roast for 12 minutes, until softened but still retaining their 3¾ cups/900ml boiling water

shape. Remove from the oven and set aside until needed.

1⅓ cup/80ml lemon juice (from

about 2 lemons)

Put the remaining 2 tbsp oil into a large sauté pan and place over medium-1 tbsp olive oil



high heat. Add the onion and cook for 5 minutes, stirring from time to time, Salt and black pepper

until it is golden brown. Add the garlic and cook for another 30 seconds, then add the beef and lamb. Continue to cook for another 6 minutes or so, 1 cup/250g Greek yogurt (optional)

stirring and breaking up any lumps of the meat so that it is browned all over.

Add three-fourths of the nuts, the tomato paste, baharat, rice, 2 tsp of salt and a good grind of black pepper. Continue to cook for 2–3 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool for 10 minutes before stirring in the mint and parsley.

*Continued on the next page*

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Transfer the cooked tomatoes from the baking sheet to the prepared baking **Oxtail stew with chard, sumac, and tahini**

dish. Place them side by side, so that the base of the dish is covered. Next, line the base and sides of the baking dish with just fewer than half the vine leaves, *Sumaqqiyeh*

shiny side down, overlapping the leaves so that there are no gaps or holes in between. Spoon in a third of the meat and spread it out in an even layer. Add another layer of leaves, overlapping them slightly to just cover the filling, The green chile, the dill seeds, the tahini sauce—the roll-call of typical Gazan then repeat the process so that you have three layers of filling in total. Finish ingredients makes this a classic Gazan dish. In Gaza, the tahini would be red with the vine leaves, this time letting them drape over the sides of the dish.

tahini, which is nuttier and richer than regular tahini. The difference between Tuck them into the dish, like you're wrapping them around the pie,



so that the the two is the sort of heat the sesame seeds are roasted with; steam heating in filling is totally sealed.

Serves four generously

the case of regular tahini, and roasting with direct heat in the case of the red tahini. As long as you are starting with what we call “proper tahini,” though To make the sauce, whisk together all the ingredients with 1 tsp of salt and 2 onions, roughly chopped (300g)

(see page 288 for the sermon), any regular creamy Arabic tahini is just fine.

a good grind of black pepper.

6 garlic cloves, roughly chopped

*Getting ahead:* The oxtail needs a long time cooking—4 hours—to ensure that Pour the sauce very gently over the bake—it will almost cover the top—and 2 green chiles, deseeded and thinly

it falls off the bone as much as you want it to. You can make it a day or two in seal the dish tightly with aluminum foil. Put the dish on a rimmed baking sliced (40g)

advance, though, taking it up to the point before the chard leaves and fresh sheet (in case there is any leakage) and bake for 80 minutes, until the liquid is 1 tbsp sunflower oil

dill get added. These should always go in at the last stage, so that they retain mostly absorbed and the rice is completely cooked through. Remove from the 1.5kg oxtail

their color and freshness.

oven—don’t remove the foil yet—and set aside for 20 minutes. Remove and 2 tbsp olive oil

discard the foil, then invert the dish onto a large platter or board. The best way 2–3 plum tomatoes, finely



to do this is to place a chopping board or large platter on top of the pie, then chopped (300g)

boldly flip it over so that the board or platter is at the bottom. The pie should 1 tbsp tomato purée

Put the onions, garlic, and two-thirds of the chiles together into a food detach itself easily from the parchment paper—don't worry if any tomatoes 1 tbsp ground cumin

processor. Pulse a few times, until finely minced but not so much that it turns have stuck to the parchment, just remove these by hand and place on top of 1 tbsp ground cinnamon

to a purée. Set aside until ready to use.

the pie. Sprinkle with the remaining nuts and a handful of parsley leaves and 1 tbsp baharat (see page 190)

set aside for 15 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature, with a spoonful 1½ tsp caster sugar

Put the sunflower oil into a large heavy-bottomed saucepan with a lid, and of yogurt, if desired.

1 x 400g tin of chickpeas, drained

place over medium-high heat. Pat the oxtail dry and sprinkle with ½ tsp and rinsed (240g)

of salt and a good grind of black pepper. In two batches, sear the oxtail for 500g Swiss chard, stalks removed

5–6 minutes, turning so that all sides get nicely browned. Once all the meat and roughly chopped into 2½cm

is browned, transfer it to a separate plate, pour off the excess oil, wipe the pieces, leaves roughly shredded



pan clean, and add the olive oil. Add the onion, garlic, and chile mix and cook 1 tbsp dill seeds (or celery seeds, as

for about 4 minutes, stirring often, or until softened. Add the tomatoes and an alternative)

tomato paste and cook for another 4 minutes, or until the tomatoes have 15g parsley, roughly chopped

broken down. Stir in the spices, then add the oxtail, sugar,  $6\frac{1}{3}$  cups/ $1\frac{1}{2}$  liters 2 tbsp sumac

of water,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of salt, and a generous grind of black pepper. Bring to a boil, 20g dill, roughly chopped

then decrease the heat to medium-low, cover the pan, and let simmer gently Salt and black pepper

for 4 hours, stirring every so often, or until the meat is tender and almost falling off the bone.

Tahini sauce

75g tahini

To make the tahini sauce, put all the ingredients into a bowl. Whisk until  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp lemon juice

smooth and set aside.

After about 4 hours, use a pair of tongs to remove the oxtail from the pan. Set it aside to cool slightly, and add the chickpeas and chard stalks to the pan.

Increase the heat to medium-high and cook for 20–25 minutes, stirring often, until the sauce has thickened and reduced by half.

Meanwhile, once the oxtail is cool enough to handle, tear off the meat and fat in large chunks, discarding the bones; you should be left with about 1 lb



7 oz/

650g. Return this to the pan, along with the chard leaves, dill seeds, parsley, 1½ tbsp of sumac, and all but a handful of chopped dill. Cook for about 5 minutes, or until the leaves have wilted and the meat has heated through.

Transfer the stew to a large serving platter and drizzle with a third of the tahini sauce. The remaining sauce can be served in a bowl alongside. Top with the remaining chopped dill, chiles, and 1½ tsp of sumac, and serve at once.

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**BREADS**

**AND**

**PASTRIES**





The idea of bread piled high doesn't really mean anything until you spend time in Palestine. Not a meal goes by without platters of flatbread in attendance, ready to be pulled apart and handed around to signal the start of a meal. There's often no need for cutlery once a piece of flatbread has been shaped into a scoop in one hand, ready for the other hand to pile food directly onto it. For those who like eating with their hands, it's a legitimized form of hands-on heaven. If the bread is not being used as a scoop, it's turned into a mini shovel plowed into bowls of warm, creamy hummus.

Just as bread is there on every table—ice breaker, utensil, scoop, and shovel—it's also there on every street corner. The sounds of ka'ak carts on the cobbled streets of East Jerusalem are near-permanent, accompanied by the cries of vendors selling their freshly baked goods from sunrise to sunset. Jerusalem sesame bread in the morning, pita bread and manakeesh as the day goes on. For Palestinians everywhere, bread is the sight, sound, smell, and taste of home. The Arabic word for this is “taghmees.” Bread is not just something to eat or something to help scoop up other food to eat. For Palestinians, it's a way of life.

Traditionally, flatbread is cooked in an outdoor oven called a taboon oven (see page 341). Lining the base of the conical or dome-shaped taboon oven are lots of little stones or pebbles, which get very, very hot. Once the flatbread is placed on top of the stones, the dough bakes very quickly and, also, takes on the shape made by the stones. It looks almost moon-like when it's pulled out from the oven with a long-handled paddle, indentations like



mini craters all over. These then become little pools for olive oil or tahini to drizzle into and wallow in. Taboon bread is divine in a dish such as chicken musakhan (see page 247), for example. Try as we might, though, taboon is not something we found easy to create without said outdoor oven and a sack full of stones. We tried the stones in a regular oven—Sami was a sight walking back from the garden center with his shopping bag spilling over with little rocks!—and also using our fingers to make indentations in the dough, but the results weren't good enough to showcase the bread. You'll just have to go to Palestine to try proper taboon bread for yourself! The dough is the same dough used to make pita, though (which in turn can lead you on to the manakeesh—see page 278), so there's more than enough to get going with and share around in the meantime.

Rolls filled with tahini and cinnamon (see page 287), Jerusalem sesame bread (see page 282), pies to snack on or take on a picnic (see page 296), little buns filled with fresh oregano and za'atar (see page 285), big rolls filled with sumac onions (see page 292). For everyone, everywhere—the smell of fresh bread baking is what makes a house a home.

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## Breads and Pastries

### **Pita bread**

Transfer the dough to a lightly oiled bowl, cover, and place somewhere warm *Khubez*

(close to a stove with a pilot light, for example) for about 1 hour, until the dough has risen by a third.

Transfer the dough to a lightly floured work surface, cut into 12 pieces, and Who put the pocket in the pita? Pita is the Arab bread khubez adi (“ordinary shape into round balls, each weighing about 3½ oz/100g. Cover with a bread”) or khubez kimaaj (taken from the Turkish and translating as “bread clean, slightly damp dish towel and let rest for 10 minutes; you won't see cooked in the ashes”). Before indoor ovens became the norm, this “ordinary”



any change in size or shape after 10 minutes but it's still important for the dough would be quickly rolled into an oval shape and then either thrown dough to have this rest.

against the very hot inside walls of the outdoor oven or into the ashes of the  
Makes twelve pitas

After 10 minutes, flatten the balls of dough one at a time, first with your direct flame itself. The intense heat of the flame, and its rapidly vaporizing fingers and then using a rolling pin to shape them into 6–7-inch/15–18cm-steam, then does the job that a leavener would otherwise do, creating lots 2 tsp fast-acting dried yeast

wide circles. Use more flour to dust the work surface, if you need, to prevent of little air bubbles that cause the dough to rise quickly. It rises quickly and 1 tbsp sugar

them from sticking as you roll. Take care not to have any tears in the dough, as it also cooks really quickly, but, once out of the oven, deflates just as quickly!

About 1¾ cups/420ml lukewarm

this will allow steam to escape in the oven and prevent the pitas from puffing The speed with which all this rising and deflating happens is what causes the water

up. Continue until all the balls of dough are rolled out, covering them with a split between the two layers of dough and the empty “pocket” to form. It's this 6 cups/750g all-purpose flour (or a

damp dish towel once rolled, to prevent them from drying out. Set aside to pocket that distinguishes pita from other flatbread and that, happily, makes mix of 4¾ cups/600g all-purpose

rise for a final 20 minutes.



it such a welcome home to all sorts of fillings: falafel (see page 62), shawarma flour and  $1\frac{1}{3}$  cups/150g whole

(see page 259), ljeḥ (see page 24), and so on.

wheat flour), plus more for dusting

While the dough is rising, preheat the oven to 500°F. Line two baking sheets  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/35g milk powder (also known

with parchment paper and place them in the oven to heat up.

*Playing around:* Pita dough is the same dough used to make manakeesh, as dried skimmed milk)

when the dough is rolled out as if making pita but is then brushed or topped 2 tsp salt

When ready to bake, remove the hot sheets from the oven and place two or with various things before being baked, as if making a pizza. For manakeesh 2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra

three pita rounds on each (depending on how many you can fit without any za'atar, mix  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/120ml of olive oil with 1 cup/100g of za'atar and brush for greasing

dough overlapping), top side down; flipping them over at this stage allows for about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp of this on top of each pita. Sprinkle with some finely chopped the baked pitas to be equally “pillowy” on both sides. Bake for 4–5 minutes, or tomato, if you like, then carefully transfer to two or three preheated baking until they puff up and their tops are slightly golden. You don't want them to sheets. Bake at 500°F for 8–10 minutes, rotating the sheets halfway through, take on too much color, as this will lead to the bread being hard.

until slightly golden, and serve at once.



Arrange the baked pitas in a large shallow bowl and cover them with a clean *Getting ahead:* Fresh pita is pillowy and soft and likes to be eaten the day it is baked. Covering them with the towel is important for keeping the bread moist. Anything older than a day, though, can be pulled apart to use in moist and pillowy while you continue with the remaining batch of dough.

fattoush (see page 99), or pan-fried in a mix of olive oil and butter to add to the salad. Serve warm.

any soup or leafy salad as you would a crouton. Make the full quantity here even if you are not going to eat all twelve at once. Pitas can be frozen once baked. *Pictured on the next page*

baked, then warmed through in the oven or toasted to serve.

*Ingredients note:* We've used 100 percent all-purpose flour, but you can use a mix of all-purpose and whole wheat, if you prefer. The result won't be as pillowy and soft but has a toothsome, wholesome bite that can be appealing.

Put the yeast, sugar, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup plus 2 tbsp/200ml of water into a small bowl.

Mix to combine, then set aside for about 4 minutes, or until it starts to bubble.

Place the flour, milk powder, and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook attachment. Mix on low speed for just 1 minute, for the ingredients to combine. Increase the speed to medium, then, slowly, pour in the warm yeast mixture, followed by the oil; it will start to form a shaggy mess at first, but keep the machine running for about 7 minutes, slowly adding the remaining water, for the dough to come together as a ball. You want it to be smooth and elastic and for the dough not to stick to your fingers when pinched.











## Jerusalem sesame bread

### *Ka'ak Al Quds*

Ka'ak Al Quds are stacked high on street corners all over Jerusalem, sold by men young and old, from sunrise to sunset. Pomegranates or oranges often sit on a table alongside, ready to be freshly squeezed. This is breakfast on the go, Jerusalem-style. They are great for breakfast, eaten as they are, but just as good made into a sandwich for lunch or, as Sami used to, to snack on while Makes six ovals

walking home from school.

Heaped 1 tbsp fast-acting

These breads are oval and thin (rather than round and thick) so, when shaping dried yeast

the dough, you'll need to pull a bit more than feels natural. It might want to 2½ tbsp sugar

spring back into a round shape, but be assertive and the dough will do what 1 cup plus 2 tbsp/270ml

you want. Don't skip out on any of the resting stages, either; there are quite a lukewarm water

few, so these are a good thing to make when you have something else to do at 2 cups/250g all-purpose flour,

home or in the kitchen.

plus extra for dusting

*keeping notes:* In an ideal world these are eaten freshly made and warm from 2 cups/250g bread flour

the oven. It doesn't always work like that, though, with all the rising and 2 tbsp milk powder (also known



resting and so forth. Warmed through in the oven or lightly toasted the next as dried skimmed milk)

day, they are also delicious. These are very happy to be frozen, once shaped  
1 tsp baking powder

into their oval rings. Baked straight from frozen, they'll just need a minute  
or Salt

two extra in the oven.

3 tbsp sunflower oil, plus more

for rubbing

Topping

Put the yeast, sugar, and ½ cup/120ml of lukewarm water into a small bowl.

6 tbsp/60g white sesame seeds

Mix to combine, then set aside for 5 minutes, or until it starts to bubble.

(untoasted)

1 egg

Place both flours, the milk powder, baking powder, and 2½ tsp of salt in 2  
tbsp whole milk (or water)

the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. (If you don't have one  
you can knead by hand; it will just take a bit longer to work the dough.)

Mix on medium-low speed for 1 minute, to incorporate, then add the oil,  
yeast mixture, and remaining ½ cup plus 2 tbsp/150ml of water. Mix on  
medium speed for 3 minutes, until the dough has come together and formed  
a smooth ball. Remove the dough from the bowl, gently form into a ball and  
rub all over lightly with oil. Return it to the mixing bowl, cover with, and  
set aside in a warm place for 1 hour or so, or until doubled in size.



When the dough has risen, punch it back down and turn it out onto a lightly floured work surface. Divide the dough into 6 pieces; each one should weigh just under 5¼ oz/150g. Shape one piece of dough at a time gently into a ball, tucking the dough under at the base to form the ball rather than rolling it between your palms, trying not to overwork it. Repeat with the remaining pieces of dough, then cover and set aside for 10 minutes, to rest.

Dig your finger into the center of one of the balls, to create a hole, then stretch the dough outward to create an oval ring. Use your fingers to pull and shape the dough into a large ring; it should be about 7 inches/18cm long on the outside (5 inches/12cm on the inside) and 3½ inches/9cm wide. The dough will want to spring back into a smaller shape, but be assertive here—you want it to be nice and long.

*Continued on the next page*

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Transfer the ring to a piece of parchment paper as large as your baking sheet and continue forming the rest of the dough in the same way; you should be **Za'atar bread**

able to get 2 rings on each sheet of paper, spaced 1½–2 inches/4–5cm apart.

*Aqras za'atar*

Cover and set aside to rest for 15 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

Za'atar bread is also known as “fatayer fallahi,” which means “villagers’ pie.”

Traditionally, it’s made in spring, when the season for collecting fresh wild Place two large baking sheets in the oven to warm up.



za'atar begins. We've used fresh oregano and dried za'atar, though, freeing up the option to make this year-round. The bread can be shaped all sorts of ways—into a flatbread, a loaf, or individual buns, as here. Either way, it should about 9 x 13 inches/23 x 33cm, and set aside. In a small bowl, whisk together

Makes twelve rolls

always be super soft—almost moist—in the middle, with a really crunchy the egg and milk and set aside.

crust. A mixture of black and white sesame seeds is preferable, but it's fine

1½ tsp fast-acting dried yeast

Brush the tops of each ring with the egg mixture, then dip them into the to use just white.

1 tsp sugar

sesame seeds, egg-wash side down, so that the top is well coated. Return ¾ cup/170ml lukewarm water

Serve this either warm, fresh from the oven, or at room temperature the same to the parchment, cover, and set aside to rest for another 10 minutes.

2½ cups/320g all-purpose flour,

day, with some labneh (or feta), fresh chopped salad (see page 92), olives, or plus extra for dusting

Remove the hot baking sheets from the oven, then drag the parchment, with Hassan's easy eggs (see page 22).

1 tbsp milk powder (also known

the rings on top, carefully onto the sheets. Bake for about 15 minutes, rotating as dried skimmed milk)

*Getting ahead:* The dough can be made up to 2 days ahead and kept in the the sheets once during baking to ensure an even cook, until the rings are a



1⅛ tsp ground turmeric

fridge, ready to be rolled and baked. Once baked the buns also freeze well, deep golden brown.

1¼ tsp salt

ready to be toasted or warmed through in the oven straight from frozen.

3 tbsp sunflower oil

Remove the rings from the oven and set aside for 10 minutes to serve warm,  
4 tbsp olive oil

or longer, if serving at room temperature.

3 tbsp sesame seeds, plus 1½ tsp

for sprinkling

Put the yeast, sugar, and water into a small bowl. Mix to combine, then set  
¾ cup/15g oregano leaves

aside for 5 minutes, or until it starts to bubble.

4½ oz/120g feta, crumbled

2 tbsp Greek yogurt

Put the flour, milk powder, turmeric, and salt into the bowl of a stand mixer  
1 tbsp za'atar

fitted with the dough hook. Mix for 1 minute, just to incorporate, then add the yeast mixture, followed by the sunflower oil and 3 tbsp of olive oil. Mix on low speed for about 2 minutes, to bring everything together, then increase the speed to medium. Continue to mix for 3 minutes. Add the 3 tbsp sesame seeds and oregano leaves and mix for another 4 minutes, until the dough is soft and elastic and the oregano leaves have been incorporated in the dough. It will feel very soft and almost sticky, but this is how it



should be. Tip the dough onto a clean work surface and bring together to form a ball. Grease the mixing bowl with the remaining 1 tbsp of olive oil, then return the dough to the bowl.

Turn it a couple of times so that it's completely coated in oil, then cover the bowl. Set aside somewhere warm for 1 hour, until the dough is doubled in size.

Roll the dough out into the shape of a sausage, about 12 inches/30cm long, and cut into 12 even pieces, about 1¾ oz/50g each. Roll each piece into a ball, place on a large plate, cover, and set aside for 20 minutes, to rest.

Preheat the oven to 425°F.

On a clean, lightly floured work surface, use your fingers to flatten each ball into a round disc, about 4 inches/10cm wide and ⅛ inch/3mm thick. Spoon a heaped 2 tsp (about ⅓ oz/10g) of the crumbled feta cheese into the center of each disc. Draw all the sides upward and press together to form a ball.

Arrange the buns on a baking sheet, pinched side down and spaced well apart. Brush the balls all over with yogurt and sprinkle with the za'atar and the 1½ tsp sesame seeds and the za'atar. Set aside to rest for 5 minutes, then bake for about 20 minutes, or until the buns are cooked and the bottoms are golden brown. Remove from the oven and serve either warm, at once, or at room temperature.

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## **Sweet tahini rolls**

### *Kubez el tahini*

The journey of these rolls can be traced through Lebanon to Armenia, where these kubez el tahini come from. They are simple to make, impressive to look at, and loved by all. They're a particular favorite with kids. Eat them as they are, or sliced and spread with dibs w tahini, the Palestinian equivalent of peanut butter and jam, where creamy tahini is mixed with a little bit of grape or date Molasses Makes ten rolls

molasses (see page 336).

### Dough

*Keeping notes:* These are best eaten fresh on the day of baking but are also  
1½ tsp fast-acting dried yeast



fine for two to three days once baked, warmed through in the oven. They also 1 tsp sugar

freeze well, after they've been baked and left to cool; you can pop them into 7 tbsp/110ml whole milk, lukewarm

the oven straight from the freezer until warmed through.

2 cups plus 6 tbsp/300g all-purpose

flour

Salt

5 tbsp/75g unsalted butter, melted

To make the dough, put the yeast, sugar, and milk into a small bowl. Mix to Olive oil, for greasing

combine, then set aside for 5 minutes, or until it starts to bubble.

1 egg, lightly beaten

½ cup/100g sugar

Put the flour and ½ tsp of salt into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the 1 tsp ground cinnamon

dough hook. Mix on low speed, then slowly pour in the yeast mixture. Add the 7 tbsp/120g tahini

melted butter and continue to mix for about 1 minute.

1 egg yolk, beaten

1 tbsp white sesame seeds

Lightly grease a bowl with olive oil.



Add the egg to the bowl, then increase the speed to medium and mix for 5 minutes, for the dough to get well kneaded. Using your hands, scrape the dough into a ball; it will be slightly sticky and elastic. Place it in the oiled bowl, turning it a couple of times so that the dough gets well greased. Cover the bowl and let rest in a warm place for about 1 hour, or until the dough is almost doubled in size.

Put the  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup/100g sugar and cinnamon into a small bowl. Mix well to combine, then set aside.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough into a large rectangle, about 14 x 20 inches/35 x 50cm. Drizzle the tahini over the dough, then, using the back of a spoon or a spatula, spread it out evenly, leaving  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch/1cm clear of tahini at both the shorter ends. Sprinkle the sugar mixture evenly over the tahini and let rest for 10 minutes, until the sugar looks all wet.

Starting from one of the long sides, roll the dough inward to form a long, thin sausage. Trim away about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch/2cm from each end, then slice the dough into 10 equal pieces; they should each be just over  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches/4 $\frac{1}{2}$ cm long. Sit each piece upright, so that a cut side is facing upward, then, using your hands, gently flatten out to form an  $3\frac{1}{4}$ -inch/8cm-wide circle. Cover with a damp dish towel and let rest for 15 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Transfer each roll of dough to the prepared baking sheet, spaced 1 inch/

2.5cm apart. Brush the top and sides with the egg yolk, sprinkle with the sesame seeds, and bake on the middle rack of the oven for 18 minutes, or until cooked through and golden. Remove from the oven and set aside for about 20 minutes—you don't want them to be piping hot—then serve.





## **The art of tahini: one man's quest to get it just right**

Behind every great Palestinian dish lies a swirl of tahini. Maybe not every *single* dish and maybe more or less than a swirl, but, still, it's the absolute golden stuff, very often there in the foreground, background, or alongside a dish.

In the foreground you'll see it drizzled over anything to come near it without an umbrella: baked kofta, grilled meat or fish, roasted vegetables, shakshuka. In the background, meanwhile, you won't see it but you'll be wondering how it is that a chilled cucumber soup, for example, can be so rich and nutty until you have that

"ta-da! ta-ha-ini!" moment. All manner of dressings and sauces or spreads and stews will have a tablespoon or two of tahini in them, there to make the dish rich and creamy and utterly craveable. Sometimes it can just be sitting



there alongside, providing the silky and luxurious element to a freshly fried fritter or falafel. It doesn't look like much, certainly, but—once loosened up with a bit of lemon juice and water, crushed garlic and salt—it becomes the thoroughly addictive secret behind so much of the country's cooking.

The challenge, with all this evangelical talk, is to make those who've never started with "proper" Middle Eastern tahini understand what on earth is being talked about. "Tahini, isn't that just what you add to chickpeas to make hummus?"

Yes! And also to have around to drizzle on your toast and on your yogurt and ice cream and salad and salmon and lentils and, and, and. . . .

For us, the difference between the tahini made inside the Middle East and the tahini made outside the Middle East is enormous. Much of the tahini made outside the Middle East has, for us, both a "claggy" texture and a bitter taste that don't encourage very wide use in the kitchen. Even though the ingredients are the same—sesame seeds ground to form a thick paste—there are so many factors which lead one version of the product to be smooth, creamy, and rich, and another product to be, well, not.

Someone who knows the difference between one tahini and the next is Kamel Hashlamon. Kamel is a man on a mission. After a decade or so making his name and reputation in various hotel and restaurant kitchens in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, he decided to step back, hone his craft, and become very, very good at one thing. Luckily, for those who love tahini, that one thing was the grinding of sesame seeds.

Becoming very good at grinding sesames requires several things. Using the best sesame seeds, for starters, commissioning the best millstone that can

then 288





grind them, and, of course, providing the perfect conditions for the seeds to be ground as finely, smoothly, and gently as possible. The seeds are the Humera variety, from Ethiopia. The millstone would come from Syria, via Turkey, and the perfect conditions would include a temperature of 140°F, cold-pressing techniques, and a rate of production not much faster than a trickle. These are the steps that Kamel would perfect in pursuit of his mission—to make the best tahini around.

Kamel's first stop was Nablus, where he spent nine months learning the trade from one of the several old families in the city making tahini. Second stop was Turkey, to meet Mohammed Halabi, the Syrian stonemason who could make him the exact bespoke traditional millstone he was after. It had to be wider than the stonemason had ever made before and, using black granite, smoother than any baby's bum. Third stop: West Jerusalem, to find the right site. Not the obvious location for a Palestinian who grew up in Shuafat in East Jerusalem, of course. A very canny choice, however, for someone who wants to make the best possible tahini and wants to make enough of a buck to stay in business and be able to build on his dreams to



grow. And in 2017, Kamel realized his dream and set up shop in Abu Ghosh, West Jerusalem.

The excellent tahini that he produces on site and sells in his shop is somewhere between a paste and a liquid and truly good enough to drink. He makes 30–40 liters a day (as opposed to the 2 metric tons a large factory would produce), and it is made so slowly and with such care that does not “split” in the jar like most mass-produced tahini, where the oil separates and sits on top of the thick sesame paste.

“Tahini splits when it’s nervous,” Kamel says gently. Alongside the tahini he makes on site, Kamel also sells an intoxicating range of halva, made off-site but using his tahini.

It’s beautifully displayed inside a glass counter, luring customers in off the street to try and buy.

Appealing to a primarily Israeli (but also Palestinian) market is enough to make some think he has “sold out,” but Kamel is happy to take the observation on the chin and bat it right away: “We are all living in *the result* of the game,” he says, “we are not in the game.” It’s a point of view many who still see their day-today as a struggle or even a battle would take issue with, certainly. Talking about the situation for Palestinians as a “game” is not an expression you often hear. For a chef who has had a lot of challenges and barriers to the growth of his career, though, as a result of the politics of being Palestinian, Kamel’s response to the situation is the equivalent of a massive cheffy charm offensive. Rather than bemoaning his lot or wringing his hands, Kamel has chosen to make the most irresistible product, package it beautifully, display it in a small, stunning shop, and now be the artisanal producer selling it with a smile.

Israelis and Palestinians stand side by side at the counter, looking through the glass, debating little more than which halva to buy.





### **Sumac onion and herb oil buns**

The inspiration for this recipe is less tradition itself than sumac onions: one of the sweet, sharp and heavenly flavors of the very traditional chicken musakhan (see page 247).

*Getting ahead:* Get going the day before you want to eat these, so that the dough can rest in the fridge overnight. Once baked, they can be eaten warm or at room temperature for up to 2 days.

Makes twelve buns

Dough

Sunflower oil, for brushing

To make the dough, brush a large bowl with sunflower oil. Put the flour, sugar,  $5\frac{1}{3}$  cups/665g all-purpose flour,



and yeast into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. Mix on plus more for dusting

low speed for 1 minute. Whisk together the eggs and 120ml of water and add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/50g sugar

to the bowl. Mix on low speed for just a few seconds, then increase the speed  $2\frac{1}{4}$  tsp fast-acting dried yeast (7g)

to medium. Continue to mix for 2 minutes, until the dough comes together.

4 large eggs

Next, add salt and start adding the butter, a few cubes at a time, until it all  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup plus 2 tbsp/150ml water

melts together into the dough. Continue kneading for about 10 minutes, on  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt

medium speed, until the dough is completely smooth, elastic, and shiny.

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup plus 1 tbsp/190g unsalted

Place the dough in the prepared bowl, cover, and place in the fridge for at least butter, at room temperature, cut

half a day or, preferably, overnight. The dough will increase in volume by just into  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch/2cm dice

under 50 percent.

Salt

To make the filling, put  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml of olive oil into a large sauté pan and place Sumac onion filling

over medium-low heat. Add the onions and cook for about 18 minutes, stirring  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup plus 2 tbsp/150ml olive oil



frequently, until the onions are completely soft and golden. Add the cinnamon 4 onions, finely chopped (750g)

and cook for 1 minute. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool before 2½ tsp ground cinnamon

adding the remaining 6 tbsp/90ml of olive oil, 2 tsp of sumac, the oregano, 3 tbsp sumac

thyme, sugar, and salt.

2 cups/40g oregano leaves,

Brush and line a 9 x 13 inches/23 x 33cm baking pan. On a lightly floured surface, roughly chopped

roll the dough out into a rectangle, about 22 x 14 inches/55 x 35cm. Spread the 1 cup/20g thyme leaves,

sumac onion filling all over the dough, taking it right up to the edges.

roughly chopped

1¼ tsp sugar

With the long end facing toward you, gently roll up the dough as you would 1 tsp salt

a jelly roll, using both hands to gently press the roll as you go along. Trim about ¾ inch/2cm off both ends so that it becomes a perfect sausage. Then Herb oil

cut crosswise into 12 even slices, each about 1½-inches/4cm wide. Carefully 1 cup/20g parsley leaves,

arrange the slices in the prepared baking pan, evenly spaced apart and cut finely chopped



side facing up so that the filling is showing. Cover with a slightly damp dish  
1 red chile, seeded and finely

towel and let rise in a warm place (near a stove with a pilot light, for  
example) chopped (2 tbsp/20g)

for 1½ hours. The rolls will rise by 20–30 percent.

1¼ tsp finely grated lemon zest

½ cup plus 2 tbsp/150ml olive oil

About 30 minutes before the buns have finished rising, preheat the oven to  
400°F.

Salt

Remove the dish towel and place the pan of buns on the middle rack of the  
oven. Bake for 30 minutes, until the buns are golden brown. Remove from  
the oven, cover loosely with foil, and return the buns to the oven for about  
20 minutes more, or until the dough is cooked through.

Remove the buns from the oven and set aside to cool for 30 minutes.

To make the herb oil, combine all the ingredients in a bowl with a small  
pinch of salt.

Once the buns have cooled, evenly pour the herb oil over the top of them.

Sprinkle lightly with the remaining 1 tsp sumac and serve.

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## **Arabic samosas**

### *Sambousek*

Indian samosas, Hispanic empanadas, Cornish pasties, Bosnian burek: there are so many ways to encase various fillings with pastry before the whole thing gets baked or fried. Sambousek is the Palestinian way. Traditionally they're fried but we've baked ours here.

Makes twelve samosas

*Getting ahead:* These can be made in full in advance and kept in the freezer.

You'll need to defrost them overnight (just transfer them to the fridge the  
Dough

night before baking) and bake them as normal.

1½ tsp fast-acting dried yeast



1 tsp sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup/170ml lukewarm water

2½ cups/320g all-purpose flour,

To make the dough, put the yeast, sugar, and water into a small bowl. Mix, to plus extra for dusting

combine, then set aside for 5–10 minutes or until it starts to bubble.

1 tbsp milk powder (also known

Put the flour, milk powder, turmeric, and salt into the bowl of a stand mixer as dried skimmed milk)

fitted with the dough hook . Mix for 1 minute, just to incorporate, then add the  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp ground turmeric

yeast mixture, followed by the sunflower oil and 3 tbsp of olive oil.  
Increase  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp salt

the speed to medium and mix for 6 minutes, until the dough is soft, sticky and 3 tbsp sunflower oil

elastic. Tip the dough onto a clean work surface and bring together to form a 4 tbsp olive oil

ball. Grease the mixing bowl with the remaining 1 tbsp of olive oil and return the dough to the bowl. Turn it a couple of times so that it's completely coated Filling

in oil, then cover the bowl. Set aside somewhere warm for 1 hour, until doubled 1 x 14-oz/400g can of chickpeas,

in size.

drained and rinsed ( $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups/240g)



3 tbsp olive oil

To make the filling, roughly crush the chickpeas with the back of a fork, 1 onion, finely chopped (1 cup/150g)

leaving about half of them whole. Put the oil into a medium saucepan 4 garlic cloves, crushed

and place over medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook for 1 sirloin steak (9 oz/250g), trimmed

8 minutes, stirring a few times, or until softened and browned. Add the of most of the fat and finely

meat, spices, and salt and cook for 90 seconds, stirring constantly. Add the chopped (6 $\frac{1}{3}$  oz/180g)

chickpeas and cook for another 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, 1 tsp ground cumin

stir in the parsley, and set aside to cool.

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground ginger

$\frac{3}{4}$  tsp baharat (see page 000)

To make the mint yogurt, place all the ingredients in a bowl. Mix to combine,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground cinnamon

and keep in the fridge until ready to serve.

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp Aleppo chile flakes

(or regular chile flakes)

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp ground turmeric



Cut the dough into 12 even pieces, about 1½ oz/45g each. Roll each piece into ¾ tsp salt

a ball, cover with a clean dish towel, and set aside for 20 minutes, to rest.

½ cup/10g parsley, finely chopped

1 egg, whisked together with

Taking one ball at a time, roll it into a circle, about 5 inches/12cm wide. Spoon 1 tbsp water, to make an egg wash

2 tbsp of the filling—1¼–1½ oz/35–40g—into the middle of the dough and 1 tbsp black or white sesame seeds

fold the dough over itself to form a half-moon shape. Press down the edges (or a mix)

with your fingers and seal with a fork. Arrange spaced well apart on the prepared baking sheets and continue with the remaining batch.

Mint yogurt (optional)

¾ cup/180g Greek yogurt

Brush the top of the sambousek with the egg wash and sprinkle evenly with 1 tsp dried mint

the nigella and sesame seeds. Bake for about 20 minutes, until they are 1 tbsp olive oil

cooked through and golden brown. Rotate the position of the baking sheets 1 tbsp lemon juice

halfway through for even browning. Let cool for about 10 minutes and then ¼ cup/5g mint leaves,

serve with the yogurt alongside.



roughly chopped

¼ tsp salt

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## Breads and Pastries



### Spinach pies

#### *Fatayer sabanekh*

These take Sami straight back home. He used to have them, once or twice a week, eaten fresh from the oven when he got home from school. The filling would vary—cheese, ground meat, mashed root vegetables—but spinach was always the firm favorite. If you want to make a meal of them, serve them with a simple chopped salad (see page 92) and a spoonful of plain yogurt.



Makes twelve pies; serves four

to six as a light lunch or snack

*Getting ahead:* Both the dough and the filling can be made up to three days ahead and kept, separately, in the fridge. Once assembled, the pies freeze

1½ tsp fast-acting dried yeast

well and can be cooked from frozen; you'll just need to add an extra minute

1½ tsp sugar

or more to the cooking time.

7 tbsp/100ml lukewarm water

3 cups/375g all-purpose flour, plus

*Batch cooking:* The dough here is the same dough used to make the sfiha pies more for dusting

(see page 226) and also the za'atar bread (see page 285), so make more than

4½ tsp baking powder

you need for this recipe and freeze what you don't use to have at the ready.

2 eggs, lightly whisked separately

5 tbsp/75ml olive oil, plus more

for brushing

¾ tsp salt

Put the yeast, sugar, and water into a small bowl. Mix to combine, then set aside for 5–10 minutes, until it starts to bubble.

Filling



Put the flour, baking powder, 1 egg, the oil, yeast mixture, and salt into the 3 tbsp olive oil

bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. Mix on low speed for about 2 onions, finely chopped

2 minutes, to bring everything together, then increase the speed to medium-  
(2½ cups/350g)

high. Continue to mix for 5–6 minutes, until the dough is soft and elastic.  
(If 1 lb 1⅓ oz/500g frozen spinach,

you are freezing the dough, now is the time to do it.) Cover the bowl and set defrosted and squeezed well

aside somewhere warm for 30 minutes, until slightly risen. Roll the dough out to get rid of any water (about

into the shape of a sausage, about 12 inches/30cm long, and cut into 12 even 10½oz/300g)

pieces. Roll each piece into a ball and place on a large plate. Cover and set 2½ tbsp sumac

aside for 1 hour, to rest.

2 tbsp lemon juice

¼ tsp chile flakes

To make the filling, put the oil into a medium sauté pan and place over 4 tsp pomegranate molasses

medium-high heat. Once hot, add the onions and cook for 4–5 minutes, (optional)

stirring frequently, until the onions are soft but have not taken on any color.



1 tsp salt

Remove from the heat and set aside for 10 minutes, then mix in the spinach, sumac, lemon juice, chile flakes, pomegranate molasses (if using), and salt.

Preheat the oven to 425°F and brush two large baking sheets (12 x 16 inches/

30 x 40cm) lightly with oil.

Taking one ball of dough at a time, flatten and then roll into a disc about 5½ inches/14cm wide and ⅛ inch/3mm thick. Dust with a little flour needed to prevent the dough from sticking to your work surface.

Spoon 3 tbsp of the spinach mixture into the center of the disc and spread it into a 4½-inch/11cm-wide triangle. Draw the pastry in over the filling to form a triangle, press the middle to seal, then pinch the three points together firmly to form a triangle. Place on the prepared baking sheets and repeat with the remaining dough and filling, spacing the pies well apart on the sheets.

Brush them with the remaining whisked egg and bake for 12 minutes, until golden brown. Switch the position of the baking sheets halfway through for even browning. Don't worry if a few of the pies split open while cooking—

rustic is a good look here!

Remove the sheets from the oven and set aside for about 15 minutes—you want to eat them warm rather than piping hot.

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Breads and Pastries





## SWEETS



Palestinians, by and large, have a very sweet tooth. No get-together is complete Bahrain-made, New York-trained, and now London-based, Noor has brought her without the offer of something sweet. A plate of fine-crumb cookies, for example, endlessly inspired twists and turns to so many of the recipes in this book. In just or squares of flaky filo, or slices of sugar-syrup-drenched semolina cake, all served this chapter alone, the labneh cheesecake (see page 322), chocolate and qahwa with a short black coffee.



It's a chicken-and-egg question of which came first: the torte (see page 317), baklava semifreddo (see page 314), and sticky date and halva ubiquity of the sweet treat or the near-permanence of Arabic coffee on tap. Either puddings with tahini caramel (see page 320) are Noor through and through: sweet way, the combination is heady and heavenly.

of course, but at the same time punchy and totally distinct.

As always, our offering is a mix of traditional recipes and those upon which we shine a new light. Leading the way on the traditional is knafeh (see page 302), popular throughout Palestine but a positive rock star in the city of Nablus, where it's eat-me-now fragrance wafts around every street corner and down every alley (see page 78 for more on this). Ma'amoul (see page 310) and ghraybeh (see page 325) are also quintessential, for both mid-morning coffee and at every family gathering or big get-together, romanticized with tales of why they're served at one particular religious or celebratory occasion or another. The joy of the simplicity of these cookies is that, on one hand, they can be quickly made to have around whenever needed, and on the other, they can also be scaled up in number for big occasions, so that batch after batch can be made and often frozen in advance of eating. Let it never be said that there will be a shortage of cookies whose name translates as "swoon" (see page 325) at a family wedding! Our no-churn strawberry ice cream (see page 312) is also very typical, with its distinctly Arabic—almost chewy!—texture, thanks to addition of mastic to the mix.

We have changed the angle on other recipes to make them more accessible to a non-Arabic audience. This can be done with specific ingredients, such as using a hibiscus tea bag to make a hibiscus syrup (see page 327), rather than the dried hibiscus flowers many Palestinians would take for granted as an ingredient. Or the creamy, silky ishta, so common in Palestinian desserts, is replaced by a cream cheese alternative in our flaky warbat (see page 306).

Fun and rewarding though making sweet treats is, there's a real culture of guests arriving at a house with boxes full of store-bought sweets as well. During Ramadan, for example, lots of shops close and are replaced by pop-



up bakeries for the month, producing everything everyone wants to serve after the iftar, the

“breaking of the fast” meal. So much so that it’s actually more usual, for many, to buy rather than make certain things. As we discovered with atayef, the lace-like delicate pancakes rolled up and stuffed with ricotta. After our fourth or fifth attempt to get these perfect for *Falastin*, Sami put out an SOS phone call to his sister Sawsan in East Jerusalem. “Oh, no one makes these any more!” she breezily assured her brother. “Everyone just buys them ready-made from the shops and then fills them up with whatever they want at home.” Job done, then; available at all good Middle Eastern shops near you! Ditto mutabbaq khalili, the sugar and nut or grated cheese and spice-filled pastries particularly popular in Hebron and the southern West Bank.

Then there are the recipes where we’ve taken ingredients from the Palestinian pantry and created new dishes from them. These are the recipes with the distinct paw-prints of Noor Murad all over them. Noor has been with us every step and every stir of the way on the recipe development for *Falastin*.

300 Sweets

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## **Knafeh Nabulsi**

Knafeh is a national institution, made and served all over the Middle East, and no celebration is complete without it. It's particularly associated with Nablus, where the shredded filo pastry is filled with the city's trademark firm, white, salty Nabulsi cheese. A filling of just nuts and cinnamon is called knafeh Arabiyeh—Arabic knafeh. Nabulsi cheese is not widely available, though, so we've used a combination of firm mozzarella and ricotta.

Makes fifteen pieces,

*Getting ahead:* These are best eaten the day they are drizzled with the sugar serving six to eight

syrup. They can be made up to two days in advance, though, if you want to get ahead. If you do this, just skip the step where the syrup is poured on and Sugar syrup

then, when ready to serve, reheat the knafeh in the oven at 400°F. Once they  
1 cup/240ml water



are warmed through, pour on the syrup and serve while still warm. The  
sugar 2 cups/400g sugar

syrup can be made well ahead of using; it keeps in the fridge for weeks.  
You'll 2 tbsp lemon juice

have a bit more syrup than you need here (you'll make  $1\frac{2}{3}$  cups/400ml and  
 $1\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp orange blossom water

use 1 cup/240ml), but it's always good to have around, for when a touch of  
sweetness is needed.

13oz/375g kataifi pastry

(see page 337), defrosted

and roughly pulled apart

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup plus 2 tbsp/200g unsalted

To make the syrup, put 245ml of water and the sugar into a medium  
saucepan butter, melted

and place over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil and add the lemon juice, 1  
x 7 oz/200g block of mozzarella

swirling the pan frequently until the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat,  
(the firm kind), coarsely grated

stir in the orange blossom water, and set aside until completely cool.

6 tbsp/100g ricotta

$5\frac{1}{4}$  oz/150g feta, finely crumbled

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Liberally butter the base and sides of a baking  
dish, 2 tbsp sugar

about 9 x 13 inches/30 x 20cm and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches/4cm high.



1 lemon: finely grate the zest to

Place the pastry in a food processor, in three or four batches, and blitz a few get 1 tsp

times until the strands are about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch/2cm long. Transfer to a bowl, pour in  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp flaky sea salt

the butter, and toss evenly so that all the kataifi is coated.

1 tsp orange blossom water

3 tbsp pistachios, roughly blitzed in

Put the mozzarella, ricotta, feta, sugar, lemon zest, salt, and orange blossom the small bowl of a food processor

water into a separate bowl. Mix to combine and set aside.

(or finely chopped)

Press about two-thirds of the kataifi mixture into the base of the prepared baking dish. Press down quite firmly; you want it to be as compact as possible.

It should rise about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch/2cm up the sides of the pan. Evenly top with the cheese mixture, spreading very gently so that the kataifi layer is covered but doesn't get moved about. Finally, top with the remaining kataifi, pressing down firmly to cover any exposed cheese. Even out the top, then cover with a piece of parchment paper about the size of the sheet. Top with a separate baking dish, about the same size, so that it is compressed down. Bake for 30 minutes, then remove the dish and parchment and bake for another 25 minutes, or until deeply golden around the edges and browned on top.

Slide a knife around the edges of the tray and let cool for about 5 minutes before flipping over onto a platter or cutting board. Slowly drizzle with 1 cup/240ml of the sugar syrup, then set aside for 5 minutes, for the syrup to be absorbed. Sprinkle with the pistachios and serve warm, preferably, or at room temperature later on.





**Filo triangles with cream cheese,**



## **pistachio, and rose**

### *Warbat*

Warbat is a popular snack during the month of Ramadan. Sami's childhood was spent crowding around the vendor selling these at the corner of their street. He'd barely make it home before the flaky pastry—dripping with thick Makes twelve pastries

and sticky syrup and always sprinkled with vivid green crushed pistachios  
—

was finished. The filling is traditionally made with ishta—a kind of thick, Rose syrup

milky, silky cream—which is then drizzled with rose water or rose water syrup.

¼ cup/60 ml water

Ishta is not always easy to find, though, so we've created a cream cheese ½ cup/100g sugar

filling instead.

1½ tsp lemon juice

¾ tsp rose water

*Keeping notes:* Once assembled, these should be served on the same day—as close to the syrup being drizzled over them as possible, ideally.

### Filling

1 lb/450g full-fat cream cheese

2 tsp cornstarch

¼ cup/50g sugar



To make the rose syrup, put water and the sugar into a small saucepan and ½ tsp flaky sea salt

place over medium-high heat. Mix well, using a wooden spoon, and then, ¼ tsp powdered Arabic mastic gum

once it starts boiling, add the lemon juice. Simmer gently for 2 minutes, then (see page 338) or ½ tsp vanilla

stir in the rose water and remove straight away from the heat. Set aside.

bean paste

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

10 sheets good-quality filo pastry

To make the filling, put the cream cheese, cornstarch, sugar, salt, and mastic (we use feuilles de filo), each

(or vanilla bean paste) into a medium bowl and whisk well to combine.

sheet 12 x 15 inches/31 x 38cm

Set aside.

(8½ oz/240g)

8½/120g unsalted butter, melted

Spread out one filo sheet on a work surface and brush evenly with some of the 2 tbsp pistachios, finely crushed in a

melted butter. Top with another sheet and brush with butter again. Repeat food processor or by hand

the process until you have 5 layers evenly brushed with butter. As is always the About 1½ tbsp dried rose petals



case when working with filo, you'll need to work fast when you start brushing (optional)

and folding; the pastry will dry out if you don't. You should have used about one-fourth of the melted butter at this stage.

Now, using sharp scissors, cut the large layered sheet of pastry into 6 even squares, all 5 x5 inches/12 x 12cm—you'll need to trim the sheets to get even squares. Taking one of these smaller squares at a time, spoon about 1¼ oz/35g (or 2 tbsp) of the thick filling into the center of each square, leaving a 1-inch/2.5cm border clear around the edge. Fold the pastry diagonally in half to form a triangle, press on the edges without reaching the filling (so that it stays well sealed within the pastry), then brush all over with more butter.

Place all 6 triangle pastries on the prepared baking sheet and repeat the whole process (brushing one large filo sheet with butter, layering it five times, cutting it into 6 squares, filling and folding, and sealing each square) with the remaining pastry, butter, and filling.

Once all 12 pastries are made, bake for 22 minutes or until golden and crisp —

some of them will pop open, but that's okay. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for 10 minutes. Drizzle with the syrup, sprinkle the crushed pistachios and rose petals, if desired, and serve.

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## **Pistachio harisa**

Harisa (not to be confused with harissa, the spicy North African chile paste!) also goes by the names basbousa or namoura, depending on where in the Levant it is being made. Either way, it's a sugar-syrup-soaked semolina cake, popular all over the Middle East. Traditionally, the dominant flavors are rose or orange blossom water, but we've replaced these flavorings with the less traditional combination of coconut and lemon zest.

You only need a small Serves eight to ten

piece, as you would baklava, with a strong black coffee.

Sugar syrup

*Keeping notes:* This keeps well for up to 3 days, stored in an airtight container.

1¼ cups/300ml water



It also freezes well.

2½ cups/500g sugar

2½ tbsp lemon juice

2 tbsp rose water

To make the sugar syrup, put 245ml of water and the sugar into a small 1⅓ cups/190g pistachios

saucepan and place over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, then decrease the ½ cup plus 2 tbsp/125g sugar

heat to medium and simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in the lemon juice and rose 7 tbsp/95g unsalted butter,

water and remove from the heat. Set aside to cool.

at room temperature

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Butter a 9 x 13 inch/23 x 33cm baking dish and ½ cup/120ml sunflower oil

set aside.

⅔ cup/200g Greek yogurt

3 eggs

Put ½ cup plus ⅓ cup/120g of pistachios into the bowl of a food processor and 2¾ cups/440g fine semolina

blitz for 1 minute, until very fine. Transfer to a separate bowl and set aside.

¾ cup/65g unsweetened

shredded coconut



Place the remaining ½ cup/70g of pistachios in the same food processor ¾ tsp baking powder

(there's no need to clean it) and pulse-blitz just a few times; you just want ¾ tsp flaky sea salt

these pistachios to be coarsely chopped. Transfer to a separate bowl and 2 large lemons: finely grate the zest

set aside.

to get 1 tbsp

Put the sugar, butter, oil, and yogurt into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and beat on high speed for about 3 minutes, until well combined and smooth. Decrease the speed to medium and add the eggs, one at a time. Mix for another 1 minute, then add the finely ground pistachios, semolina, coconut, baking powder, flaky salt, and lemon zest. Continue to mix until just combined—you don't want to overwork it—then tip the batter into the prepared baking dish. Even out with a spatula and sprinkle the coarsely chopped pistachios on top. Using your fingers, gently press the pistachios into the batter, without completely submerging them. Set aside for 10 minutes, to rest, then bake in the middle of the oven for 15 minutes, until the cake is almost set and the sides have taken on some color.

Remove the cake from the oven and, using a small sharp knife, make a diagonal cross-hatch pattern across the top. Space the lines about 2 inches/

5cm apart, doing five lines one way and five lines the other. Return to the oven for a final 10 minutes, until the surface is golden brown and a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool for 10 minutes, then evenly pour the cooled sugar syrup over the cake. Set aside for 1 hour, until completely cool. When serving, follow the indentations to cut out individual pieces.

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**Ma'amoul bars**



*If making the pistachio filling: spread the pistachios out on a parchment-lined Ma'amoul maad*

baking sheet and toast for about 8 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside until completely cool. Put the honey, orange blossom water, and water into a small bowl. Mix well to combine and set aside. Once the pistachios are cool, transfer them to a food processor, along with the marzipan, and blitz for 2 minutes. You want them to turn into fine crumbs but still have a little bit of texture. Add the honey mixture, spices, and salt and pulse a couple of times popular ma'amoul. Sitting on the floor in a circle, everyone would have their to combine, to form a sticky paste.

designated job: kneading or rolling the dough, stuffing or molding, baking, and packing. It seemed to go on for days, in Sami's imaginings, and led him to think that the process must be a long and complicated one. It was with the water and melted ghee. Mix to combine, then, while kneading with one some surprise then, when he made the cookies for himself years later, that hand, gradually pour the mixture over the dough. Continue to knead for Dough

he saw that the recipe couldn't be easier. Time set aside for festive catch-ups, about 5 minutes (either by hand or in a stand mixer fitted with the paddle 1 cup plus 7 tbsp/320g unsalted

Sami now sees, should be factored into the write-up of the recipe. These are attachment), until the dough is soft and comes together well and is pale in butter

traditionally cookies to mark Easter or Eid, but make them year round. They color. Add a few more drops of water, if you need to, if the dough is too dry.

2 cups/320g semolina



have a wonderfully crumbly shortbread-like texture: crunchy, rich and melt-in-2½ cups/320g all-purpose flour

When ready to assemble, divide the dough into 2 equal pieces and, working the-mouth. Crumbs are part of the equation here, but that's how some things  
4 tsp baking powder

with wet fingers, press half the dough gently into the base and sides of the should be.

⅔ cup/80g confectioners' sugar

prepared baking dish.

½ tsp fast-acting dried yeast

*Getting ahead:* The dough needs to rest for at least 4 hours, so it's a good idea 1 tsp mahleb (see page 338; or a tiny

Place the filling between two sheets of parchment paper (about 12 x 16 inches/

to make this the day before you want to bake. Once made, the dough keeps drop of almond extract)

30 x 40cm) and gently roll with a rolling pin to form a rectangle, about 9 x well in the fridge for up to two days; you'll need to bring it back to room  
2½ tsp ground anise

13 inches/23 x 33cm—don't worry about getting the dimensions exact here, temperature before using, though, so that it is malleable. If you are using the ½ tsp salt

they can be adjusted in the baking dish.

dough the day you make it then it does not need to go into the fridge. You can also make the fillings a day ahead. Once made, the bars keep in a sealed Date filling



Remove and discard the top layer of parchment from the filling and then, container, at room temperature, for up to a week.

1 lb 6 oz/625g Medjool dates,

sliding your hand under the paste to help you, flip it upside down into the pitted and finely chopped

baking dish. With the paper still attached (and now facing upward), start *Playing around*: We've given a choice of two fillings—one with dates and one ½ tsp mahleb (see page 338; or a

pressing it gently in to and up the sides of the dish. Carefully pull away the with pistachios. If you want to make both versions, just double the quantity tiny drop of almond extract

paper and then flatten the filling to fill any gaps.

of the dough.

¾ tsp ground cinnamon

Repeat the process with the second half of the dough, spreading the remaining ¾ tsp ground cardamom

dough evenly over the filling, taking it right up to the edges. Pinch some of 2½ tbsp sunflower oil

the excess pastry to fill any gaps and, using your fingers, seal the edges very To make the dough, put the butter into a small saucepan and place over very well. Using a small, sharp knife, cut the dough (keeping it in its dish) into 4 rows Pistachio filling

low heat, for about 2 minutes, just to melt.

and 6 columns, to make 24 squares. Take the knife right down to the bottom of 2⅔ cups/375g pistachios



the dish. The lines will close up as the dough bakes, but will help when it comes Put the semolina, flour, baking powder, confectioners' sugar, yeast, mahleb, ¼ cup/75g honey

to finally cutting them. Next, use the back of a fork to press down gently into ground anise, and salt into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle 4 tsp orange blossom water

the middle of each square, to make line patterns with the tines of the fork.

attachment. Mix on low speed for 1 minute, to combine. With the mixer still 3 tbsp water

on low speed, pour in the melted butter, continuing to mix until well combined 9 oz/250g natural marzipan,

Bake for 30–35 minutes, rotating the dish halfway through cooking, until the and the texture is that of sticky, wet sand. Cover the bowl with a plate and set cut into ¾-inch/2cm chunks

ma'amoul is golden brown, and the edges are looking crispy. Remove from aside for about 4 hours, at room temperature, for the semolina to really absorb 1¼ tsp ground cardamom

the oven and allow to cool completely before cutting.

the fat. Letting it rest for this long makes it much easier to work with.

1 tsp ground cinnamon

½ tsp salt

Arrange the ma'amoul squares on a serving platter, dust generously with Preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease well and line the base and sides of a confectioners' sugar, and serve.

9 x 13-inch/23 x 33cm baking dish and set aside.

2½ tbsp rose water



2½ tbsp orange blossom water

*If making the date filling:* put all the ingredients into a medium saucepan and 2½ tbsp water

place over low heat. Heat for 8 minutes, stirring a few times, to form a mushy, 5 tbsp/75g ghee, melted

sticky paste. Remove from the heat and set aside. If you make this in advance you'll want to warm it through a little when filling the pastry; it's much easier Confectioners' sugar, to dust

to spread when warm.

310 Sweets

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**No-churn strawberry ice cream**

*Bouza*



After supper in Haifa one night on our travels, Sami stopped by an ice cream shop for something sweet. Opting for what Tara thought the least delicious option—the hallucinogenic-pink bubblegum-flavored ice cream—Sami proceeded to skip happily down memory lane, remembering the holiday treats of his childhood. Palestinian ice cream has a distinct texture, thanks Serves eight

to the mastic in the mix. It's unusual to those who haven't had it before, but the taste—that of licorice or anise—is soon acquired. Mastic is available 1<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cups/400g strawberries, hulled

in Middle Eastern grocery stores or online.

1 tbsp lemon juice

1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tbsp sugar

*Keeping notes:* Once made, this keeps in the freezer for a good 2 weeks.

1 tsp Arabic mastic gum

(see page 338)

1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups/300ml heavy cream

6 tbsp/120g condensed milk

Place half the strawberries in a food processor, along with the lemon juice and 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> tsp orange blossom water

1 tbsp of sugar. Blitz for 1 minute, until very smooth, then set aside.

2 tsp sumac (optional)

Cut the rest of the strawberries into ½-inch/1cm cubes and place in a medium bowl. Add 4 tbsp of the strawberry sauce to the bowl, mix to combine, and keep in the fridge until ready to serve.



Put the mastic and remaining 1½ tsp of sugar into a spice grinder (or mortar and pestle). Grind for a few seconds, to form a fine powder, then transfer to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Add the cream, condensed milk, and orange blossom water, then whisk on high speed for 2–

3 minutes, until the mixture is airy and creamy and soft peaks form. Pour the rest of the strawberry sauce into the whipped cream and then, by hand, gently swirl it through, taking care not to overmix. Spoon the mixture into a roughly 1 quarter/1 liter airtight container and freeze for at least 6 hours, or overnight.

Serve straight from the freezer. Scoop the ice cream into individual glasses or bowls. Spoon on the chopped strawberries and sprinkle with the sumac, if desired.

312 Sweets



**Orange blossom, honey, and baklava**



## **semifreddo**

This is a real show-stopper of a dessert. There are a few elements to it but none of them is complicated. The only thing to keep an eye on is timing, as the bubbling syrup needs to be added to the eggs halfway through their being whisked. Just follow the instructions and you'll be in for a treat that sees the best part of baklava—the sticky, nutty filling—layered in a simple Serves six to eight

semifreddo.

Semifreddo

*Getting ahead:* This keeps for up to 2 weeks in the freezer so you can make the 1 cup/240ml heavy cream

whole thing well in advance.

6 tbsp/75g sugar

2 tbsp honey

2 tbsp water

1 egg, plus 2 egg yolks

Lightly grease and line the base and sides of an 8½ x 4½-inch/ 20 x 10cm loaf 1½ tbsp orange blossom water

pan. Set aside until ready to use.

Baklava filling

To make the semifreddo, put the cream into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted ⅔ cup/90g pistachios,

with the whisk attachment. Beat on medium-high speed for about 3 minutes, toasted (see page 339)



or until medium peaks form. Transfer to a separate bowl and keep in the fridge  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup/60g walnut halves,

until needed. Wash the bowl and whisk and return them to the mixer; they toasted (see page 339)

need to be clean and ready to whisk the eggs halfway through the next stage.

1 tsp ground cinnamon

Put the sugar, honey, and water into a small saucepan and place over medium-10 cardamom pods, shells crushed

high heat. Bring to a boil, then decrease to simmer, stirring often. After and then discarded, seeds finely

3 minutes, add the egg and egg yolks to the bowl of the stand mixer. Beat on ground in a mortar and pestle

medium-high speed for about 3 minutes, until pale and creamy. Decrease the (or  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp ground cardamom)

speed to medium-low and slowly pour in the bubbling hot syrup, which should  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp flaky sea salt

be foamy and glossy. Once the syrup is completely incorporated, increase  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp honey

the speed to medium-high and continue to beat for about 6 minutes, until the 1 tbsp orange blossom water

mixture is pale and glossy and the bowl is cool to the touch. Using a spatula, fold in the orange blossom water and whipped cream until just combined. Put Orange sauce (optional)

half the mixture—about 7 oz/200g—into the prepared loaf pan and smooth 2 oranges



out the top. Wrap with baking parchment and freeze for 2 hours. Refrigerate Mounded ½ cup/80g pomegranate

the other half of the mixture in a separate bowl until needed.

seeds (from about 1 pomegranate)

¼ cup/5g mint leaves, roughly torn

To make the baklava filling, put the pistachios and walnuts into the bowl of a food processor and blitz roughly until crumbled. Transfer to a small bowl and stir in the spices, salt, honey, and orange blossom water. Once the semifreddo has been in the freezer for 2 hours, gently top with the baklava filling. Spread it out so that the top is covered, without pushing it in. Remove the reserved semifreddo from the fridge, give it a good whisk by hand, then pour it over the baklava filling. Spread it out until smooth, then wrap the pan with baking parchment and freeze overnight.

To make the sauce, use a small, sharp knife to trim the tops and tails off the oranges. Cut down along their round curves, removing the skin and white pith.

Release the segments by slicing between the membranes and transfer them to a bowl, discarding any seeds and squeezing what's left of the membranes to release any liquid into the bowl. Just before serving, add the pomegranate seeds and mint leaves to the sauce.

Either spoon the sauce in a line along the top of the semifreddo or serve alongside.

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### **Chocolate and qahwa flour-free torte**

*Qahwa* means “coffee” in Arabic. Arabic coffee tends to be very strong and intense, consumed in small quantities and usually paired with something sweet, like a date or two. The Arabic coffee theme plays a strong note here, making this torte incredibly rich and intense. You only need a thin slice, served with some crème fraîche, vanilla ice cream, or plain yogurt alongside.

No need for an extra caffeine shot.

Serves ten to twelve

*Playing around:* The saffron can be dropped, if this is not to your liking, and 1 cup/220g unsalted butter,

replaced with a pinch of cinnamon. Again with the rose water, decrease or at room temperature, cut into



remove it (or replace it with orange blossom water, or a tsp of vanilla extract) ½-inch/1cm dice

if you prefer.

7 oz/200g dark chocolate

(50% cocoa solids), broken into

*Keeping notes:* Once baked, this keeps for up to 3 days in the fridge.

roughly ½-inch/1cm pieces

*Ingredients note:* We've used two types of dark chocolate: one with 70 per cent 1¾ oz/50g dark chocolate

cocoa solids and the other (which can be called semisweet chocolate) with (70% cocoa solids), broken into

roughly 50 per cent cocoa solids. You can use all 70 per cent if you need to, roughly ½-inch/1cm pieces

but this will make it even more intense.

2 tbsp instant espresso powder

(also known as espresso instant

coffee), plus ½ tsp to garnish

⅛ tsp saffron threads, roughly

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Grease and line the base and sides of a 9-inch/

crushed in a mortar and pestle

23cm springform cake pan and set aside.

(optional)



10 cardamom pods, shells

Place the butter and both types of chocolate in a large heatproof bowl. Put the discarded and seeds finely

2 tbsp espresso powder, saffron (if using), cardamom, sugar, rose water, and crushed in a mortar and pestle

2 tbsp of water into a small saucepan and place over medium-high heat. Bring (or  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp ground cardamom)

to a boil, stirring continuously—this should take about 5 minutes—then pour  $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups plus 2tbsp/275g sugar

this over the chocolate and butter. Stir everything together until the chocolate 1 tbsp rose water

has melted and you are left with a thick but pourable sauce.

5 eggs

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp flaky sea salt

Separate 3 of the eggs, setting the whites to one side. One at a time, add 2 tsp cocoa powder

the yolks and the remaining 2 whole eggs to the chocolate sauce, stirring Vanilla ice cream, crème fraîche,

to incorporate.

or plain yogurt, to serve

Put the 3 egg whites and the salt into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Beat on medium speed for about 2 minutes, until stiff but not dry peaks form. In two batches, gently fold the egg whites into the chocolate until just incorporated; taking care not to overmix.



Pour the mixture into the prepared pan and bake for about 50 minutes, or until a skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool for about 1 hour, then refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or preferably overnight. Remove the torte from the fridge at least 30 minutes before serving; you want it to be room temperature. Transfer the torte out of the pan onto a serving platter.

Mix together the cocoa powder and remaining ½ tsp espresso powder in a small bowl. Using a fine-mesh sieve, sprinkle liberally and evenly over the torte, to coat. Serve with a spoonful of ice cream, crème fraîche, or plain yogurt alongside.

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### **Palestinian Bakewell tart**

*Al mabroushy*

This is our take on the Bakewell tart. Kids love these, adults love these, Mr. Kipling himself would have loved these, we're sure!



*Keeping notes:* Once baked, this keeps, well in a sealed container for up to 3 days.

Makes twelve bars

*Shortcut:* Start with shop-bought strawberry jam, if you like: just stir in Rose jam

the rose water and take it from there. You'll need 250 grams.

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup/250g strawberry jam

2 tsp rose water

Shortbread base

To make the jam, put the strawberry jam and rose water in a bowl. Mix well  
 $1\frac{1}{3}$  cups/165g all-purpose flour

and set aside.

$\frac{2}{3}$  cups/75g confectioners' sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$  tsp flaky sea salt

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Grease and line the base and sides of an 8-inch/

1 lemon: finely grate the zest to

20cm square baking dish and set aside.

get 2 tsp

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup plus 2 tbsp/150g unsalted

To make the shortbread base, put all the ingredients into a food processor and butter, fridge-cold, cut into



pulse for about 15 seconds, until the mixture has the consistency of coarse ½-inch/1cm dice

breadcrumbs. Remove 2¼oz/60g of this—about an eighth—and keep in the fridge until needed. Press the remaining mixture into the prepared baking Halva spread

dish, so that it evenly covers the bottom, and bake for about 25 minutes, or 2¼ oz/60g halva

until cooked through and lightly golden. Remove from the oven and set aside 1 tbsp tahini

to cool for about 15 minutes.

1½ tbsp water

To make the halva spread, put the halva, tahini, and water into a bowl. Beat with a fork until smooth.

Shortbread topping

¼ cup/25g sliced almonds

Evenly spread the halva over the cooled shortbread base. Top this with ¾ cup/

¾ oz/20g halva

250g of jam—just under half—and set aside.

1 tbsp sesame seeds

1½ tsp all-purpose flour

To make the shortbread topping, combine the reserved shortbread base in a ½ tsp flaky sea salt



bowl with the almonds, halva, sesame seeds, flour, and salt. Using your hands, 2 tbsp confectioners' sugar,

rub together until the consistency is that of crumble.

to dust (optional)

Sprinkle the shortbread topping unevenly over the jam. Bake for a final 25 minutes, or until golden, then set aside for 1 hour, to cool. Remove from the pan and slice into 12 pieces. Dust with confectioners' sugar, if desired, and serve either warm or at room temperature.

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### **Sticky date and halva puddings**

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Liberally grease and line the base of eight 3 or **with tahini caramel**

3¼ inch/7½–8cm mini cake pans with parchment paper and set aside. If using a muffin tin, line each well with a paper liner.



To make the caramel, put the tahini, rose water, and water into a small bowl.

These little puddings—our take on sticky toffee pudding—are a knockout, best Whisk until smooth and set aside.

eaten warm with a spoon of crème fraîche, yogurt, or sour cream alongside.

Place a medium saucepan over medium-high heat and, once hot, add a third  
*Playing around:* We love the tahini-rose caramel drizzled on top, but the of the sugar; it will begin to melt as it hits the pan. Give it a stir once or twice puddings work well alone if you want to serve them with just the crème and, once the sugar has completely melted, add another third of the sugar.

Makes eight or twelve muffins

fraîche or yogurt. The rose water can also be replaced by water, if you don't Continue in this way for 3–4 minutes, until all the sugar has been incorporated like the flavor or don't have a bottle open.

and has turned into an amber-colored caramel. Remove from the heat, add Tahini caramel

the cream and butter, and slowly whisk in—the sauce will splutter, but this 2½ tbsp tahini

*Getting ahead:* The puddings can be made ahead and stored in an airtight is normal. Return the pan to medium-low heat, whisking to smooth out any 2 tbsp rose water or water

container for up to 2 days. Reheat in a microwave as they are or in a hot oven, lumps, then add the tahini-rose mixture, along with the flaky salt. Whisk until 2 tbsp water

wrapped in aluminum foil. They can also be frozen, for up to 2 months.

smooth and set aside.

¾ cup/150g sugar



*Equipment note:* Mini cake pans are widely available and useful to have, but, ½ cup/120ml heavy cream, at room

To make the date pudding, place the dates in a bowl along with the boiling if you don't have them, a deep muffin tin with 8 molds or a regular 12-well temperature

water, coffee, vanilla extract, and baking soda. Mix to combine and set aside.

muffin tin also work.

3 tbsp unsalted butter, at room

temperature

Put the butter and sugar into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle 1 tsp flaky sea salt

attachment (or alternatively use an electric hand mixer) and beat on medium speed for about 3 minutes, until pale and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, Date pudding

beating to incorporate. Using a spatula, fold in the flour, baking powder, and 6⅓ oz/180g Medjool (or other good-sesame seeds. Last, stir in the date mixture, along with all its liquid, as well as quality) dates, pitted and roughly

the halva. The mixture will be quite wet.

chopped (5¾oz/160g)

Spoon the mixture into the prepared pans, filling them about two-thirds full.

½ cup plus 1 tbsp/140ml

Bake for 22–25 minutes—depending on what size mold or muffin tin you are boiling water



using—or until a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean. Let to cool 2 tbsp strong brewed coffee

for 5 minutes, then, using a cloth to hold the pans so that you don't burn your ½ tsp vanilla extract

hand, slide a small knife around the outsides to loosen them. Transfer them ¾ tsp baking soda

onto a baking sheet, then loosely cover with aluminum foil to keep warm.

5 tbsp/75g unsalted butter,

at room temperature

Just before serving, return the tahini caramel to medium-high heat and bring ¾ cup/150g sugar

to a simmer, stirring often. Place one pudding on each plate and pour on the 2 eggs

caramel. Sprinkle with the 1½ tsp of sesame seeds and serve, with a spoonful 1⅓ cups plus 1 tbsp/175g

of crème fraîche alongside.

all-purpose flour, sifted

2 tsp baking powder

2 tbsp white sesame seeds

3 oz/85g halva, roughly crumbled

1½ tsp sesame seeds

About ½ cup/120g crème fraîche

(or yogurt or sour cream)



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#### **Labneh cheesecake with roasted apricots, honey and cardamom**

Cheesecake is not, traditionally, a dessert eaten in Palestine, but all the ingredients are: the labneh and filo, the nuts and floral orange blossom. The base was Noor's idea; blitzing up the sheets of filo to make crumbs. Mixing this with the nuts calls baklava to mind. The result, we think, is distinct and special.

Serves ten to twelve

*Playing around:* Rose water or vanilla extract can be used instead of the orange Base



blossom water, if you like. If using vanilla in the filling, use 1½ tsp of vanilla 5 sheets good-quality filo

paste or the scraped seeds of half a vanilla pod, in addition to the vanilla extract pastry (about 4 oz/110g)

already there. Lots of other fruits—stone fruits or otherwise—work as well as 6 tbsp/90g unsalted butter, melted

the apricots here; peaches, plums and cherries as are strawberries. As always, ⅓ cup/40g walnut halves

with nuts, other nuts can be used apart from those we suggest. Brazil nuts or ½ cup/60g pistachios

macadamia nuts both work in any combination in the base; just keep the net 1½ tbsp all-purpose flour

weight the same.

¼ cup/50g sugar

10 cardamom pods, shells

*Getting ahead:* If you are making your own labneh (which couldn't be easier; discarded and seeds finely

it just requires getting organized a day ahead), it needs to be made 1–5 days crushed in a mortar and pestle

before using. To get the 2 cups plus 2 tbsp/500g of labneh called for, you'll (or ¾ tsp ground cardamom)

have to start with 3½ cups/840g of Greek yogurt, mixed with ¾ tsp of salt (see 1 tsp ground cinnamon

page 48 for the recipe). The base and cheesecake are best baked the day before ¼ tsp flaky sea salt



serving, so that it can chill in the fridge overnight. The apricots are best roasted and put on top of the cake on the day of serving. Once assembled, the cake is Filling

best eaten the same day.

2 cups plus 2 tbsp/500g labneh

(see headnote and page 48)

2 cups/500g ricotta

1 cup/200g sugar

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

½ tsp flaky sea salt

Grease and line the base and sides of a 9-inch/23cm springform baking 2 eggs, plus 3 egg yolks

pan and set aside.

2 tsp finely grated orange zest

To make the base, lay out one sheet of filo on a clean work surface.

Measure 1 tbsp orange blossom water

out a third of the butter—this will be used for brushing the sheets—and set 1¼ tsp vanilla extract

the remaining ¼ cup/60g aside for later. Brush the filo sheet with butter 1½ tbsp cornstarch

until well coated, then top a second sheet. Continue in this fashion until all the filo and butter have been used up, finishing the last layer with a coating Topping



of butter. Transfer the filo stack to the prepared baking sheet and bake for ¼ cup/75g honey

about 20 minutes, or until lightly golden and crispy. Remove from the oven  
2 tsp orange blossom water

and set aside to cool for 15 minutes (or longer) before breaking apart into  
2½ tbsp/ orange juice

large shards. In two batches, place the shards in a food processor and blitz 6  
cardamom pods, shells on, seeds

for about 10 seconds, to form fine crumbs. Place in a medium bowl, then  
roughly bashed together in a

add the nuts to the processor. Blitz for about 20 seconds, until fine but not  
mortar and pestle

powdery. Add the nuts to the filo along with the flour, sugar, spices, flaky  
12¼ oz/350g ripe apricots, pits

salt, and reserved ¼ cup/50g of butter and mix to combine. Tip the mixture  
removed, cut into 6 wedges

into the base of the prepared baking pan and press it down firmly and  
evenly A small handful of mint leaves,

so that the whole bottom is covered. Bake for 12 minutes, or until golden.

to garnish (optional)

Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.

*Continued on the next page*

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To make the filling, combine the labneh, ricotta, sugar, and salt in the bowl  
of **Shortbread cookies**



a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix for just a few seconds.

Scrape down the sides of the bowl, then add the eggs, egg yolks, orange zest, *Ghraybeh*

orange blossom water, vanilla extract, and cornstarch. Mix on medium speed for about 3 minutes, to combine.

*Ghraybeh* means “swoon” in Arabic. Aptly, these little sugar cookies are Pour the filling into the cake pan. Bake for 60–70 minutes, or until the cake is often served at celebrations such as baptisms or weddings, when the air is beginning to take on some color around the edges but still has a slight wobble thick with “swooning.” They’re a popular choice for large events for practical in the middle. Remove from the oven and let to cool at room temperature for reasons—he recipe scales up, if there are many mouths to feed, and they are 1 hour before refrigerating for at least 4 hours or (preferably) overnight.

Makes about thirty-five cookies

quick and easy to prepare. Use them for everyday baking as well; they’re lovely to have around to snack on.

On the day of serving, preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup plus 2 tbsp/200g ghee or

*Playing around:* Play around with the shape and flavorings, if you like. We’ve clarified butter (see page 336),

gone for a thin bracelet with the ends “cemented” together with a nut but a Put the honey, orange blossom water, orange juice, and cardamom pods into at room temperature

little round cake or a diamond also looks good. You can also stick two cookies a small saucepan and place over medium-high heat. Cook for 4–6 minutes,  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup/80g confectioners’



together with any sort of jam—to create a sort of Palestinian linzer cookie.

stirring often, until the mixture has reduced by half and is beginning to  
sugar, sifted

Flavor-wise, the orange blossom and rose water can be replaced with  
vanilla form a thin syrup. Spread the apricots out on the prepared baking  
sheet, on 3 cups/370g all-purpose flour, sifted

extract and lemon zest.

their side, and drizzle with half the syrup. Bake for about 8 minutes, turning  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp salt

the apricots over halfway through baking, until completely softened but  $1\frac{1}{2}$   
tsp orange blossom water

*Getting ahead:* The dough can be made up to 3 days in advance and kept in  
the still retaining their shape. Remove from the oven and set aside for about  
1 tsp rose water

fridge (or longer in the freezer). The cookies can also be shaped and frozen,  
30 minutes, until completely cool.

2–3 tbsp/12g unsalted pistachios

then baked straight from frozen; they'll just need an extra minute in the  
oven.

(enough for one to go on each

Once baked, the cookies keep well in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

Just before serving (or up to 1 hour, if you want to prepare ahead), release  
cookie)

the cake from its pan and transfer to a round serving platter. Top with the  
apricots—there should not be any overlap—and drizzle with the remaining  
syrup. The bashed cardamom pods can be used for garnish as well—they



look Put the ghee and confectioners' sugar into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted nice—but these are not to be eaten. Scatter with the mint leaves, if desired, with the whisk attachment. Mix on medium-high speed for about 4 minutes, and serve.

until pale and fluffy. Replace the whisk with the paddle attachment. Add the flour, salt, orange blossom water, and rose water and mix for another 3 minutes, until the dough is uniform and smooth. Using your hands, bring the dough together and shape into a ball. Place the dough in an airtight container and place in the fridge for about 1 hour, to rest. You'll need to remove it from the fridge 10 minutes before you want to roll it out so that it has some malleability.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

Pinch off a bit of the dough, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz/20g, and roll it into a sausage—it should be about 4 inches/10cm long and  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch/ $\frac{1}{2}$ cm thick. Bring both ends together, slightly overlapping them and pressing down where the two ends meet. Press a single pistachio into the dough where the ends join and place on a baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough and pistachios, spacing the rings  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch/1cm apart on the sheet. Bake for 15 minutes, until the cookies are cooked through but have not taken on too much color. Remove from the oven and set aside until completely cool before serving.

*Pictured on page 318*

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## **Muhallabieh with cherries**

### **and hibiscus syrup**

This is basically Palestinian panna cotta—a simple set pudding—but even lighter and easier to make. Milky set puddings are traditionally served on New Year’s Day as a symbol of prosperity and happiness. We can’t vouch for the prosperity but they do make us happy. This takes minutes to prepare and is the perfect way to round off a meal.

Serves four

*Playing around:* Figs can be used instead of the cherries, if you like, and all  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup/50g cornstarch

sorts of nuts work as well as (or instead of) the pistachios—walnuts are 2 cups plus 2 tbsp/500ml whole milk



particularly good. A sprinkle of unsweetened shredded coconut, sliced  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup plus 2 tbsp/200 ml water

almonds, or pomegranate seeds is also lovely.

Rounded  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60g sugar

*Getting ahead:* Both the puddings and the cherries can be made a day or two  
Cherries and hibiscus syrup

ahead of serving. Just keep them separately, in the fridge, and assemble when 1 pure-hibiscus tea bag

ready to serve.

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60ml boiling water

Rounded  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup/60g sugar

*Ingredients note:* Traditionally, dried hibiscus flowers are used to make the  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp thyme leaves

syrup. We've played around with hibiscus tea bags, instead, as an easier-to-

$\frac{1}{2}$  vanilla pod, seeds scraped ( $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp)

find alternative.

1 tsp lemon juice

3 $\frac{1}{2}$  oz/100g cherries, cut in half and

pitted

Put the cornstarch into a small bowl along with 7 tbsp/100ml of milk.  
Whisk 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp/25g pistachios,

to make a smooth paste and set aside.



roughly chopped

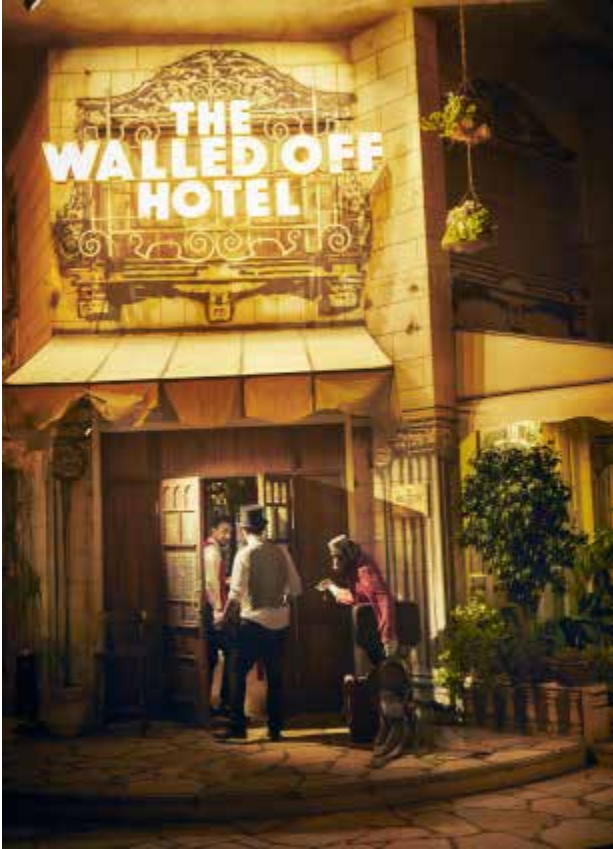
Pour the remaining  $1\frac{2}{3}$  cups/400ml of milk into a medium saucepan along with the water and sugar. Place over medium heat for 2–3 minutes, stirring a few times, until the sugar dissolves. When it starts to release steam, whisk in the cornstarch paste and keep whisking for another 3 minutes, until the mixture boils and has the consistency of thick custard. Remove from the heat and set aside for 5 minutes, then pour into individual glass bowls, wine glasses or little tumblers. Cover with plastic wrap and chill in the fridge for at least 3 hours, or overnight, to set.

To make the syrup, place the tea bag in a small saucepan and pour in the boiling water. Set aside for 5 minutes, to brew, then lift out the tea bag. Add the sugar, thyme, vanilla seeds, and lemon juice to the pan and place over low heat for 3 minutes, stirring a few times, to help the sugar dissolve. Add the cherries, then remove from the heat and set aside to cool.

Top each milk pudding with a few pieces of cherry and about 1 tbsp (or more, if you have a sweet tooth) of the syrup. Garnish with the pistachios and serve.

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**The Walled Off Hotel, the separation wall,  
and the Balfour bungle**

The Walled Off Hotel, in Bethlehem, is a work of Banksy genius. That's what we think, anyway. Other opinions are available. We'll get to those in a bit. For now, here's the pitch.

The Walled Off is a nine-room hotel that sits in the shadow of the eight-foot-high wall that separates Israel from the Palestinian Territories. From the name of the hotel—a play on the “Waldorf”—onward, everything inside slightly skews reality and plays with the expectations of a typical hotel guest. Walking through the heavy red velvet curtains that hang at the entrance door, visitors feel as though they've entered some sort of colonial dystopian nightmare. Welcome to the hotel, the Walled Off boasts, with “the worst view in the world.”



First impressions are of a space that feels incongruously old-school, embarrassingly English, unironically Empire-ish. Tea is imbibed from little china cups, teapots are silver, pictures sit in large gilded frames. The wait staff wear waistcoats. A piano tinkles away, providing soothing background music.

Blink and look again, though, and the cracks soon appear. The cherubs floating over the piano are wearing gas masks. The kids on swings in the picture are flying around an Israeli military watchtower. The piano is eerily self-playing. The stuffed stag heads on the walls are not stag heads at all, but surveillance cameras.

The experience continues in the bedrooms, accessed via a secret door that looks, at first glance, like book-stacked shelves in a slightly dusty library. Frames hang on walls, empty of anything other than a written description of the picture you'd expect to see in a days-of-Empire drawing room. "Rural Landscape," says one, "Dog," says another. A montage of pictures hangs together around a velvet sofa and chair, showing a "Dog," a "Naval Battle," "Dog," "Dog," "Fruit," "Amateur Watercolor Done by Friend of the Owner," "Portrait of Race Horse," "Two Dogs."

The hotel's ten rooms are all very different from each other. One, the

"budget room," feels prison-like, filled with three sets of metal bunk beds, each separated by a thin mosquito curtain. Other rooms are more plush. In the "Banksy room," a mural shows an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian protester having a great, big, fluffy pillow fight. The Presidential Suite is the most lavish and provocative of all. A mural of three leopards reclining is positioned above a zebra-print sofa where padded entrails snake out of the cushions. Next to the sofa is a large Jacuzzi set in the floor of the room. A pineapple-shaped ice container sits, in attendance, ready to chill the requisite sun-downers. It's disconcertingly bling, completely 329

incongruous, and hugely thought-provoking. We think it is a little bit genius, a big acceptable to the tourists who just come to Bethlehem to "see the Banksy," "see bit stir-mongering, and all the more important and useful for that.



the Church of the Nativity,” and then scoot back in their bus or taxi to Jerusalem. For anyone not quite getting the irony of it all, a visit to the small museum where they are staying.

on the ground floor soon clarifies the hotel’s genuine and serious perspective. The question of Banksy benefiting from the hotel is one refuted by the facts.

museum is small but massively hard-hitting in terms of the information packed. The hotel is locally run, with forty-five staff on the payroll, and all profits from the in. The impact felt by visitors as they walk, read, listen, and watch their way around hotel and gift shop next door are plowed back into local community projects.

the range of pictures, video footage, and text is big. A three- or four-minute video The question of making Bethlehem a “two-stop shop” has a point, but it’s a reality at the outset, spoken in a plummy, military-style English-speaking voice, brilliantly faced by lots of places people tend to visit for, frankly, one of two reasons. Pisa, for summarizes the British bungle that kick-started this great big political, geographical example, has more to offer than just its Leaning Tower. Is it not incumbent upon conflict in the first place.

enterprising locals in Bethlehem to give tourists reason to venture on beyond the To summarize the summary (with an acknowledgment that doing so will hotel and the church; to see the refugee camps, to have somewhere to go for a only ever provide a reductive sweep over big events), there were two major things drink and some food afterward to take it all in? Getting a good meal in Bethlehem going on here—the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the Second World War—and is, surprisingly, quite hard. Falafel and hummus—great, fine—but, at the time they came together eventually in the formation of the State of Israel in 1948, when of writing, all the really tasty, interesting, and fresh cooking is being done inside Jewish survivors of Nazi persecution in Europe, desperate for a safe place to live, people’s homes rather than being available to visitors through a restaurant.



were granted a new homeland by the United Nations. Starting a national state for The “making art of the occupation” question is complex but our take is that, a population who had been persecuted, killed, and tortured over centuries was not surely, when there are so many issues in the world—where to start?—it’s better just an understandable necessity; it was a global imperative. The big mistake, of to be one being talked about than one getting no air time at all. If art helps get course, was ignoring the rights of the Palestinians who were already living there.

people to look at (and therefore think about, talk about, and tell people about) the From the late nineteenth century and the birth of the Zionist movement, separation wall, for example, is this really such a bad thing?

there had been calls, from Jews facing anti-Semitism in Europe, for a Jewish Next door to the hotel sits the “Wall Mart” shop. In it, Tara bought three homeland. This movement was given legitimacy with the Balfour Declaration, T-shirts for her kids to wear back home in London. Each has an image of Banksy’s when Arthur Balfour, the British foreign secretary at the time, stepped in with his Bethlehem-based art: a young girl floating upward, holding on to a bunch of magic wand and said, “Look here, chaps, I know what, we can create a state for balloons; a donkey having its papers checked by an armed soldier; a masked rioter you here, the State of Israel, and you can all set up shop and be safe and well. Job throwing not a Molotov cocktail but a bunch of flowers. Does this make Tara an done!” Or words to that effect.

“occupation tourist,” making light of what she has seen by a “been there, done The problem with this “magic solution,” of course, was that this piece that, got the T-shirt” attitude? Or does it mean that her six- and ten-year-old kids of land was already home to about 700,000 Palestinians. The words issued by are now wearing them in south London and, as an absolutely direct result, knowing Balfour at the time have to be read to be believed—suggesting, as they did, that about Banksy and the wall, talking to their little friends about the situation and it was somehow possible to “*view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a occupation?* On one hand, these souvenirs are all too easy, too neat: the fridge *national home for the Jewish people*” at the same time as ensuring that “*nothing* magnet, the tote bag.



But the questions and chats really do follow. “Do donkeys need *shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish* passports in Palestine?” Tara hears her daughter’s friend ask. “Why can’t the girl *communities in Palestine.*” The two halves of the sentence just don’t fit, Arthur! A just walk around the wall?” asks another. Getting people talking, getting kids asking new carving appeared on the separation wall outside the hotel in 2017 to coincide questions; it’s a really important part of the process of making change happen.

with 100 years since Balfour’s declaration. “ER,” it says (to be read either as a hesitant “er” or as a more regal and reverent “Elizabeth Regina”) on one line, with a one-word “SORRY” on the second. The great British Balfour bungle indeed.

The hotel has its critics. Banksy—the anonymous graffiti artist—will always generate a degree of controversy but this is part of the point: to get people talking, discussing, disagreeing. The specific problem some locals have is the idea that the hotel, and the graffiti on the wall around and beyond the hotel, make art of (and therefore benefit from) the occupation. The view of some is that by making the occupation the subject of art, it somehow normalizes or trivializes it, rendering it 330

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**Glossary: the pantry and politics of Palestine** BAHARAT translates literally from the Arabic as it is poured. The aroma is intense (a result

“spices.” The combination of spices in a particular of no fewer than twenty-five essential oils being blend depends on what is championed by each

present in the seeds), so a little bit goes a long region (and within each household in each

Two notes. First, on content. The words in our or salads, or pickled, once its spiny leaves and way. If a recipe calls for ground cardamom you region!), so no single flavor tends to dominate.

glossary cover a lot of ground, all the way from thistles have been removed.

can either source this pre-ground or make your Generally, though, it’s an aromatic, warm spice own. To make your own, bash open the pods in

the pantry to the politics of Palestine. When it ALEPPO CHILE FLAKES are named after the

made up of a combination of black peppercorns, a mortar and pestle and discard the dry outer

comes to the politics, any attempt to compress Syrian city of Aleppo. These dried chile flakes have coriander seeds, cinnamon, cloves, allspice,

husks. Transfer the inner small black seeds to very involved subjects down to just a line or two a medium heat and sweet aroma, similar to the

cumin, cardamom, and nutmeg. It brings a sweet a spice or coffee grinder (or return them to the is, clearly, only ever going to be partial. The aim Turkish chile flakes, pul biber. Aleppo flakes can depth and flavor to all sorts of savory and sweet mortar and pestle) and grind until smooth. It

of this glossary, then, is to quickly and briefly be sprinkled fairly liberally over all sorts of dishes.



dishes. It's widely available to buy, but if you want might seem like a lot of work but the result is a inform, it does not do justice to the amount that They work particularly well with eggs and are great, to make your own, place the following spices in a real flavor-bomb—pungent, smoky, lemony, and

can be said, from all perspectives, on all the also, added to a bit of melted butter or heated oil, spice grinder or a mortar and pestle and grind until floral—so it's well worth doing.

various matters.

which is then drizzled over a stew or soup. If you a fine powder is formed:  
1 tsp black peppercorns, 1

Second, on spelling. When Arabic words

can't find any, just substitute regular chile flakes—

tsp coriander seeds, 1 small cinnamon stick, ½ tsp CHICKPEAS See pulses.

are transcribed into English, they are written the hotter they are, the less you'll need.

whole cloves, ½ tsp ground allspice, 2 tsp cumin out phonetically. This can lead to a lot of different CLARIFIED BUTTER, known as ghee or samneh

seeds, 1 tsp cardamom pods, and ¼ tsp ground

ways to spell the same thing: pitta or pita, for ALLSPICE is an essential spice in the Palestinian (or samna) in Arabic, is the pure fat left over from nutmeg. Store in an airtight container, where it example; hummous or humous or hummus or

pantry (as well as throughout the Levant), used when butter has been separated from its milk

will keep for 2 months.



hummos! We have chosen the spelling that makes in both savory and sweet contexts. It's made

solids. It has a long shelf life so was traditionally most sense to us and then stuck to it throughout.

from the dried, unripe berries of the *Pimenta* BALADI, translated literally, means "village,"

a key part of the Palestinian pantry (see mooneh).

*dioica* tree. Despite its Latin name, it's not related

"country" or "land." The word conjures up more Nowadays, cooks are more likely to reach for

ADHA means "pouring" or "spilling" in Arabic. A to either black pepper or capsicums. It's called than that, though, it encapsulates the deep roots regular butter, olive oil, or other vegetable oils bit like tarka in Indian cuisine or the Turkish kIzgIn

"allspice" because of its ability to conjure up the Palestinians have in their land and their feelings as a healthier cooking fat.

tereyag~I, it's poured over a dish just before serving, flavors of many other popular spices: cinnamon toward what grows out of it. The "i" in "baladi"

to bring a final layer of flavor, aroma, and texture.

DATE SYRUP (also known as date molasses), is

and cloves, bay and black pepper, mace and hints makes it "my"—"my village," "my country," "my Adha is made from a combination of garlic, spices, the dark, sticky sweet syrup made from cooking of nutmeg. The berries are brown-green when

land."



and fresh herbs that are brought to the point of down dates. A little bit goes a long way in both pickled and turn to a reddish brown when dried.

sizzle in a little bit of butter, oil, or ghee. It can be BDS This stands for “Boycott, Divestment,

sweet and savory cooking. One teaspoon added

drizzled over all sorts of dishes—stews, soups, or ANISE is a versatile spice that can be used in a and Sanctions.” The movement began in 2005,

to a meatball mixture or in a stew, for example, dips, for example—so make more of it than you

sweet or savory context. The small, pale brown when a coalition of 170 Palestinian civil society brings a real depth of sweet flavor. It’s wonderful need. It keeps well in a sealed container at room seeds, which smell and taste sweet, are used

groups issued a call for “people of conscience” to paired with tahini, to be either spread on toast or temperature for up to a week.

either whole or ground in a range of cakes,

boycott (Israeli goods, universities, and cultural spooned over yogurt (see page 25) in the morning.

custards, and cookies (see the ma’amoul recipe, institutions), divest (from companies that provide On toast, it’s the equivalent of the classic peanut AKKAWI CHEESE originated in the port city of

page 310)—as well as, for a savory example, fish goods and equipment to Israel), and support the butter and jam combination.

Akka. Akkawi is a slightly salty semihard cheese.

stew. The flavor has warming notes of licorice, application of sanctions by other countries on It can be eaten either as it is—for breakfast or DILL SEEDS smell like caraway, taste like anise, star anise, and fennel. Anethole



is the principal Israel. The movement elicits strongly opposing added to salads, as you would feta—or used

and bring a spicy warmth to dishes. They pair

essential oil and it's this that gives aniseed its opinions—those who think it does as much harm

in the making of sweet knafeh (see page 302),

naturally with acidity—lemon juice, for example—

distinct taste. It greets you head-on every time as it does good—from both Palestinian and Israeli where the salty cheese contrasts so well with the and are ideal for pickling vegetables. Dill seeds you have a sip of a drink such as the Greek ouzo, individuals and groups.

sugar-syrup-drenched pastry. Before being used (and dill weed) are widely used in Gazan cuisine, French pastis, Lebanese raki, and Turkish arak.

in a sweet dish, the cheese needs to be soaked in BESARA is somewhere between a soup and a

playing a leading role in Gaza's signature spicy several changes of cold water. It's widely available AREAS A, B AND C These are the three areas that thick, warm dip. The main ingredient is fava

tomato salad dagga (see page 194). You can buy in Middle Eastern grocery stores, but, if you can't the West Bank is divided into. Each area has a beans, pointing to its origins in Egypt before it dill seeds online if you can't find them in a grocery find any, a mixture of grated firm mozzarella and different set-up in terms of who leads on the

spread to other Levantine countries. In Palestine, store, but, otherwise, celery seeds or caraway ricotta makes a good alternative. The ratio should governance, administration and civil and security the herbs in the Egyptian version—cilantro and seeds can be used as an alternative. The seeds be two-thirds mozzarella to one-third ricotta. In a control in the area. Area A (18



percent of the West parsley—are matched by Palestine’s flavor—should be crushed in a pestle and mortar before savory context, substituting feta also works.

Bank) is under Palestinian Authority (PA) control.

packed dried leaf, molokhieh. Wherever it’s made, being used, in order to release their fragrance.

See also jibneh baida and Nabulsi cheese.

Area B (about 22 percent) is shared-responsibility: a mixture of fried onion, chile, lemon, and olive oil DRIED IRANIAN LIMES are small and rock-hard.

the PA is responsible for civil administration and is always spooned on top.

AKKOUB is the Arabic name for the *Gundelia* plant, They are lovely added to all sorts of soups, stews, Israeli jurisdiction covers security control. Area C

from the daisy family, which is native to the wild CARDAMOM Cardamom brings its distinctive

or rice dishes, such as maqlubeh (see page 264), (at 63 percent, the largest chunk of land) is under hills and mountains of the eastern Mediterranean flavor and aromatic sweetness to all sorts of

infusing them with their distinct and pungent

full Israeli civil and security control. When the and the Middle East. The vegetable (also known cakes, desserts, and sweets. It works as well in a sweet-sharp aroma. Puncture them here and there plan was written up in 1993 as part of the Oslo as tumbleweed), with its spiny leaves and prickly savory context, and we’ve also added some to our with the tip of a knife before adding to a dish, and Accords, the measure was meant to be an interim thistles, is hard to get outside the area, so it’s not an breakfast granola (see page 25). Throughout the remove them before serving—their



job is to infuse one, with full Palestinian governance achieved ingredient used in *Falastin*. Still, it's an important Levant, cardamom pods are also often placed in rather than to be eaten.

by 1999. Twenty years on, the division of land into part of Palestinian village cuisine, added to stews the spouts of coffee pots to flavor the hot liquid areas A, B and C is still in place.

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EGGPLANTS: how to char The more you char your be replaced with the gluten-free alternative, if you steam generated by a bit of moisture trapped in the length and strength of the salt brine. These eggplants, the smokier the flesh, and the better are looking for one. Use the same amount of white the eggplant helps it cook for a long time without cheeses need to be soaked in water before using, your m'tabbal (see page 82), grilled eggplant and quinoa as bulgur, throw it into boiling water for drying out.

to pull back on some of their saltiness.

lemon soup (see page 152), and charred eggplant 9 minutes, then rinse under cold running water. In JUTE MALLOW See molokhieh.

and tomato sauce (see page 110) will taste. Unless EGYPTIAN RICE looks like short-grain rice but is the case of that kubbeh on page 201, when mixing you don't mind your whole house smelling of

creamier and holds its shape more. Because of

the cooked quinoa with the fish, add a couple of KATAIFI PASTRY is popular across the Levant (as charred eggplants, ventilation is key. Open the this, it works particularly well in long and slow-tablespoons of chickpea flour to the mix, to help well as Turkey and Greece), kataifi consists of windows, open the door, put on the fan! We char cooked dishes and in dishes where vegetables or everything bind together.



long, thin strands of shredded filo pastry. It's what our eggplants in one of two ways. The first, if you vine leaves are stuffed. It's fairly easy to source, THE GREEN LINE is the generally recognized

is used to make our Knafeh Nabulsi on page 302.

have a gas flame on an open stove top (as opposed in well-stocked supermarkets or specialty stores, boundary or dividing line between Israel and the Being in strands makes it easy for the pastry to to an electric stove) is to put one eggplant over but can be replaced by arborio rice, if need be.

West Bank. It is properly referred to as the 1949

get wrapped around or layered with various sweet each gas ring, turn the flame on high, and leave it A FALAFEL SCOOP is a good investment if you

Armistice line; the ceasefire line of 1949. The exact or savory fillings before being baked or fried. This there for 15–20 minutes, turning halfway through are planning to make a lot of falafel—they're not borders of Israel and a future Palestinian state are vermicelli-like pastry loves being drenched in with long tongs so that all sides get charred. The expensive—but, otherwise, a small ice-cream scoop subject to negotiation between the two parties.

melted butter, oil or sugar syrup and develops a advantage of doing this is that it is a really quick or just your hands can be used as an alternative to The Palestinians want a complete end to the Israeli wonderfully light crunch when cooked. It's the and very effective way of getting the flesh smoky.

shape the falafel mix.

occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East not the easiest of ingredients to find but it should The disadvantage is that it can cause a bit of a Jerusalem, and use the phrase to mean a return to be stocked in the frozen section of a good Greek, mess on your stove top if the eggplants leak once FATTEH, or fatta, means “crushed” or “crumbled”



the pre-June 4, 1967, borders.

Arab or Turkish grocer.

they've been turned and their skin gets pierced.

or "broken into pieces" in Arabic. It describes a This mess can either be cleaned up with a bit of type of food preparation practiced throughout

HARISSA (Not to be confused with harisa—see

KISHEK, also known as jameed are preserved

elbow grease or minimized in the first place if you the Levant and North Africa, where a piece of

page 309—the sugar-syrup-soaked semolina cake

discs of fermented yogurt and (though not always) cover your stove top with aluminum foil. Make

flatbread is torn into chunks and then layered popular all over the Middle East!) We use this wheat. The discs are made at the end of summer holes in the foil for the gas rings to pop through into a dish. If the bread is fresh or untoasted, it will spicy North African chile paste as an alternative in Palestine (and throughout the Levant), just after and then proceed. If you have an electric stove, soak up the juices or sauce in a dish and collapse to shatta if we don't have a batch ready-made.

the wheat harvest. First, bulgur is made by boiling, you'll need to heat up a grill pan until it is very happily in with the other ingredients. If the pieces Rose harissa (we like the one produced by Belazu) drying, and crushing the wheat grain. This is then hot—place it over high heat for at least 5 minutes, of bread are toasted, they will retain their shape is what we tend to use: the addition of the rose mixed with yogurt, spread out on a tray, and set until smoking—then add the eggplants directly

and crunch, and can be used instead of a fork to petals softens and sweetens the kick from



aside until all the liquid has been absorbed into to the pan. Pierce them a few times with a sharp scoop things up with and eat.

the chile.

the grain. The kishkek grains are then spread out knife before doing so. This method takes longer on cloths and left to dry in the sun. Finally, these than the open-flame option—35 or 40 minutes,

FAVA BEANS See pulses.

HAWADER Roughly translated as “ready to eat,”

are rubbed together to produce a powder. This can again turning throughout with long tongs so that this is the practice of batch cooking or preparing then be added to soups and stews to both thicken all sides get charred—but you will get the same FREEKEH is a Middle Eastern whole grain or

food in advance that can then sit in the freezer them and bring a deep flavor. There are also wheat-result. At the end of the 40 minutes, transfer the cracked wheat. The whole grain wheat is just

or in jars on the shelf, ready to be served after free versions of kishkek. These are just blocks of eggplants to a foil-lined baking sheet and place called freekeh. The cracked version sometimes

heating through if needed. Hawader plays a big dried, fermented yogurt which are crushed and

under a hot broiler for a final 10 minutes. Once goes by the name “greenwheat.” Either way,

role in the seemingly effortless hospitality of then reconstituted. With or without the wheat, charred (whether on a gas ring or in a grill pan), the wheat is harvested before it is fully ripe and Palestinian home cooks. If the freezer is full of kishkek has a deep umami flavor similar to what place the eggplants in a colander. Once cool



then roasted over an open fire so as to burn off ready-made kubbeh or fatayer, for example, food you'd find in a mature cheese such as tart feta or enough to handle, slit them open to scoop out the the husks. This gives a wonderfully smoky and

can always appear—as if by magic!—whenever

Parmesan. The taste is totally distinctive, so it's flesh and place in a clean colander. Don't worry if nutty flavor. It's widely available in well-stocked someone turns up unexpectedly.

worth hunting down in Middle Eastern markets,

some of the charred skin sticks to the flesh: this supermarkets, in specialty stores, health food specialty stores, or online. If you can't get it you all adds to the smoky flavor. Set aside for an hour shops, and online.

JAMEED, like kishek, is a dried and fermented

can make a (very!) vague approximation by mixing or so (or overnight), over a bowl, to drain. You're yogurt. There are various ways to preserve and together some sour cream or crème fraîche along GLUTEN-FREE The “bulgur vs. quinoa” debate is

then all set for the smokiest of all smoky spreads, ferment yogurt; in the case of jameed, the

with some grated Parmesan and a few very finely one that Sami and Tara had many times during

soups, and sauces.

yogurt is shaped into balls and dried in the sun.

chopped anchovies.

the writing of *Falastin*. “Please! Quinoa is just *not* This method of preservation made its way into



EGGPLANTS: to salt or not to salt Opinion divides an ingredient used in Palestine,” Sami would point Palestine via the Bedouins of Jordan.

LABNEH is an Arabic cheese made by hanging

on whether or not eggplants should be salted (to out, entirely reasonably, when discussing a dish yogurt (with salt, to draw out the liquid) until it’s release their bitterness) before cooking. For us such as the baked fish kubbeh (see page 201).

JIBNEH BAIDA is an umbrella term for the

drained of all its liquid; the longer it is left to drain, it’s more about whether we want moisture in the

“But I don’t eat bulgur wheat,” Tara would

semi-hard, rindless, white, salt-brined Arabic the drier and firmer it becomes. If you are rushed, eggplants before cooking (rather than it being respond, entirely selfishly, “and it does work cheeses that appear throughout the Middle East.

you can bring it about in 6 hours; you’ll just need about bitterness, which we rarely find to be an here!” For all the tussles over traditional versus They show up under various different names,

to squeeze the ball of yogurt a few times during issue these days). Our policy is to salt and drain nontraditional ingredients and twists, the line depending on where they come from: jibneh

that time to help the process along. Ideally, it will when we are frying eggplant—getting rid of the was very firmly drawn, by Sami, at quinoa! While Nabulsi from the city of Nablus or jibneh Akkawi hang for a couple of days. Once made, it can either moisture in the eggplant makes sense before it noting, therefore, that quinoa is absolutely not from the port city of Akka. Their flavor is always be spread as it is on toast, sprinkled with za’atar goes into hot oil—but not when we are roasting used in traditional Palestinian kitchens, Tara would pronounced, but varies according to the



milk from or sumac and drizzled with olive oil, or rolled into cubes or wedges of eggplant. In an oven, the

like to whisper that bulgur is often very happy to which they are made (goat, ewe, sheep, cow) and balls that are then preserved in oil. It keeps in the 336 Glossary

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fridge for up to 2 weeks (if not preserved in oil) or, sliced okra. The result, when blitzed together, dish of Jordan, and is a typical Bedouin dish.

for the most traumatic collective memory for

as balls covered in oil, for about 2 months. Labneh is not the exact flavor of molokhieh but will get It's traditionally served at celebratory meals Palestinians, and literally means "a catastrophe"

can be made with either a combination of goat (or you somewhere close in terms of texture.

in Palestine—weddings and major feasts. The

or "disaster." In the Palestinian consciousness, this sheep or ewe) yogurt and Greek yogurt or, for a less lamb and its tangy sauce tend to be assembled

date represents the displacement of Palestinians, MOONEH translates literally as "pantry essential

"tangy" version, just Greek yogurt. For the recipe, on a large serving platter, with buttery rice and their separation from their land, and the subsequent items," things such as rice, flour, grains, and to get the ratio of yogurt to salt, see page 48.

paper-thin flatbread called shhrak layered in, ban on their return to what they see as their homes sugar that always need to be well stocked, as they and a garnish of toasted nuts, such as pine nuts and properties.



MAFTOUL, also known as Palestinian couscous or are used so much in the kitchen. It means more and almonds. Guests either pull at the bread,

giant couscous, maftoul is made from sun-dried than this, though, referring to the whole process using this in lieu of utensils to scoop up and eat

NUTS: how to toast The best way to toast nuts

and cracked bulgur, which is then hand-rolled in of preparing food well in advance of when it is the lamb and rice, or spoon some onto their own is spread out on a baking sheet in the oven,

flour. The little balls of pasta—like couscous, but going to be used—pickling, preserving, jamming, plate to eat with a fork.

preheated to 350°F. Timings vary depending on

larger—are then steamed and sun-dried. Maftoul fermenting, and so forth. This is done as a way to the nut. Flaked almonds get 6–7 minutes, for

is added to soups or stews, to bulk them out, or make certain seasonal foods available all year-MASHWI, or mashawi, means “grilled,” referring example, pine nuts, walnuts and pistachios about served as it is, itself bulked out with chickpeas, round, and also allows the cook to make the most to grilled food that uses skewered meats such

8 minutes and whole almonds 8–10. Always give

alongside a piece of meat or fish. It’s fairly easy of a particular ingredient when it is abundant at as shuqaf (hunks of lamb), kofta (ground lamb), then a stir halfway through cooking, or give the to find in well-stocked supermarkets but, as an a certain time of the year. This sort of mooneh, or shish taouk (marinated chicken). This (along sheet a shake. Toasting them in the oven is better alternative, fregola can be used instead.

where the focus is on preserving food, is often with “maza” dishes, see maza/mezzeh) are the



than in a pan on the stove, which can result in one prepared in groups—mooneh gatherings—when

types of food more often served in restaurants in side of the nut taking on a lot more colour than MAHASHI, or mahsi, refers to stuffed food. The circles of women come together to sterilize jars, Palestine (as opposed to the more labor-intensive the other. If you do need to toast in a pan, though, stuffing being the “hashwa” (derived from the

make brines, roll labneh, pickle vegetables, stack

“tabeekh” cooking, usually confined to the home.

that’s fine – just keep the heat low, stir often and same word). This can be anything from carrots, vine leaves, make jams, and so on. This sort of remove the pan from the heat a minute or so

cucumbers, zucchini, and potatoes (which need

MASTIC GUM is a resin obtained from the mastic sociable batch cooking allows for many a short before the nuts are ready: the residual heat in the to be cored) to cabbage and vine leaves (which tree, found on the island of Chios in Greece. It is cut to be taken in the making of everyday food.

pan means they’ll continue to cook.

will be rolled). Mahashi also refers to stuffed meat, often called Arabic gum or Yemen gum (but not

from a whole lamb (or any part of the animal) to MUSAKHAN is one of Palestine’s national dishes, gum Arabic, that does not have the same taste).

OPT stands for “Occupied Palestinian Territories.”

a whole chicken, which will be stuffed as it is. The where chicken is cooked and served with layers Mastic starts life as a sap which is then sun-dried The general phrase “occupied territories” refers stuffing can vary—a mixture of rice and meat is of olive oil–drenched flatbread. It’s traditionally into pieces of brittle and translucent resin. When to East Jerusalem, the



West Bank and, strictly common, as is a mix of spiced ground meat, onion, made during the olive oil season, to test the

chewed, this becomes a bright white and opaque speaking, the Golan Heights. Under international and pine nuts, or a vegetarian stuffing of bulgur, quality of that year's crop. Sumac is also a key gum. The taste is initially bitter, then transforms law, Israel is still the occupying power in Gaza, tomatoes, and herbs—as can the cooking methods player, both in the marinade for the chicken and into something pine or cedar-like. Added to things although it no longer has a permanent military and sauces. Other mahashi include fish, seafood, in the onions that are such a star of the dish. See such as ice cream, jams, custards, or other set presence there. The occupied territories are

eggs, and various parts of lamb, sheep, or cow.

page 247 for the recipe.

desserts, mastic brings its distinct, rich flavor—a sometimes referred to as “Palestinian land” to combination of fennel, anise and mint—and

explain why the construction of settlements is MAHLEB, which has a nutty, slightly bitter-almond NABULSI CHEESE, like Akkawi cheese, this is a

almost rubbery texture. In Gaza, it is also added considered illegal by the UN. Critics of the phrase, flavor, is made from grinding the kernel of the slightly salty semihard cheese. It's made with a to soups. It is available in health-food shops and though, say that it is not accurate because, for black St Lucia cherry. The kernels are sold whole mix of milks (traditionally ewe and goat milk, in online. There is no alternative!

example, the West Bank was captured from

or ground to use in bread and sweet baking. It's equal proportions). Authentic Nabulsi is perfumed Jordan in the 1967 war. The phrase “Palestinian in our ma'amoul bars, but is lovely to have around with mastic and mahleb. In a savory context, it MAZA/MEZZEH refers to the large number of



Territories” refers, strictly speaking, to the for general use. Try adding a tiny bit to any butter can be added to salads (grated or in cubes or

small plates of salads, pickles, cured meats,

areas that fall under the administration of the cookies you are making, or adding it to sugar

slices) or eaten for breakfast with bread, as you and other appetisers that everyone can help

Palestinian Authority. They are difficult to work syrups for a fruit salad, or use it to flavor whipped would feta. In a sweet context, it comes into its themselves to at an informal meal or gathering.

out, though, because of the way the West Bank

cream. A tiny drop of almond extract can be used own in knafeh (see page 302), where its tangy

They are often served at room temperature,

was divided into complex security zones under

as an alternative, if you are looking for one.

flavor offsets the syrup-doused pastry. See also meaning that making them ahead works well.

the Oslo Accords and because of on-the-ground

jibneh baida.

changes since the outbreak of violence in

MANAKRA Also known as miqwarah or miqwar,

MOLOKHIEH, also known as jute leaves or jute



September 2000.

these are used to core out vegetables. They

NAFAS means “soul” in Arabic. In the context of mallow, is a dark green leaf, a bit like spinach. The are small, long thin knives which have a thin, the kitchen, the term translates loosely as “soul leaves are used widely throughout the Levantine ORANGE BLOSSOM WATER is a key ingredient

semi-circular serrated blade. This blade makes cooking”—cooking according to intuition, taste, region, added to soups and stews or cooked along in various Arab and Mediterranean cuisines. It is easy work of removing the flesh from inside a

and senses. Recipes are often passed on through with meat. It tastes rather bitter before it gets distilled water made from the macerated blossom vegetable. A swivel peeler (or a power drill, as we talking and sharing and eating together, rather cooked. A bit like okra, it has a slightly gelatinous of Seville oranges. It can be used in savory

discovered over lunch one day when cooking and than being written down, so this element plays consistency that, when blitzed, thickens things cooking, a teaspoon or less added to a green leaf eating in a garage in a car park in Jerusalem!) a key role in the beauty of homemade food.

up. The molokhieh plant is available fresh in the and herb filled soup, for example, but is most works well as an (non-health-and-safety-summer, and dried or frozen for the rest of the NAKBA is the term used by Palestinians to refer to commonly used to flavor syrups, which are then compliant) alternative.

year. Outside Palestine, bags of frozen molokhieh the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians used in the making and soaking of cakes, and

are available in Middle Eastern supermarkets.



baklava, or to fold into creams for desserts. There MANSAF is a stew of lamb braised in kishek,

and the establishment of Israel. It commemorates If you can't find any, an approximation can be are plenty of good brands around; we use the

the fermented goat' yogurt. It hails from the

the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which Israelis made by cooking together spinach and thinly

Cortas brand. See also rose water.

Levant; it originated from Hebron, is the national refer to as the War of Independence. It is the name 338 Glossary

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POMEGRANATE MOLASSES is made by cooking urn is dramatically cracked open and the fragrant, offensive, as it implies that all Palestinians in the TAGHMEES, roughly translating as "dipping,"

and reducing the juice of sour pomegranates

buttery rice pours out. Qidreh cooking can be

West Bank are a potential source of suicide or refers to one of the most common methods of

down to form a thick, dark syrup. It has a sweet-replaced with a cast-iron Dutch oven on a regular other violent attacks. The barrier both prevents eating in the Arabic world. It's not just about sour flavor that pairs brilliantly with all sorts of stove or oven.

freedom of movement and, because it diverges

dipping a piece of flatbread in hummus, though, marinades, meatballs, sauces, salads, stews,



from the Green Line to encompass a number

it's much more about a way of life; it's about stuffed vegetables, and sauces. There are lots of ROSE WATER is the distilled water from the

of settlements, effectively annexes Palestinian making bread into a scoop-shape and using it

good brands available; we use either the Arabic Damascus rose, or ward jouri in Arabic. As with areas into Israel proper. There are a number of like a utensil to pick up food. It's bread as an brand Al-Rabih or the (more expensive and

orange blossom water, it can be used to flavor Palestinians, therefore, who refer to the wall as accompaniment, bread as a utensil, bread as an wonderfully astringent) Mymouné brand, which

milk puddings, ice creams, cakes, and other

an "annexation wall," "segregation wall," or even extension of the hands.

is made from 100 percent pomegranate molasses

sweets. A little bit goes a long way with these

"apartheid wall."

(with no added sugar).

floral-flavored waters. Always start with less than TAHINI This is the paste made from grinding

you need, with the knowledge that you can add

SHATTA, made from either fresh or semidried

sesame seeds. There are no other ingredients,

PRESERVED LEMONS are a wonderful way to



more but can't take it away. There are various green or red chiles, is the must-have spicy

so you'd be surprised how different one brand is add a pop of flavor to all sorts of savory dishes.

brands around. We use either the Cortas or the condiment for all meals. Chiles are finely

from the next. We have a huge bias toward the

Preserving your own lemons is a lovely and easy Mymouné brand, both of which we recommend.

chopped, seasoned heavily with salt, then put in creamy Lebanese, Israeli, and Palestinian brands thing to do—see Sami's book *Jerusalem*, if you the fridge for 3 or 4 days before being blitzed up (rather than the Greek and Cypriot ones, which have it (or you can look online), for the recipe—

SAHLAB is a powder made from the tubers of

with some cider vinegar, or white wine vinegar we find to be a bit gummy). The Arabic brands we but here we use the thin-skinned Beldi preserved wild orchids that grow in the mountains. It's

and lemon juice. See page 73 for the recipe.

love—Al Arz, Al Taj, as just two examples—are

lemons produced by Belazu. They are widely

used as a thickener in the making of many Arabic creamy, nutty, and pourable, easily drizzled over a available.

desserts—particularly set puddings—bringing

STERILIZING JARS is a necessity when preserving multitude of things. Roasted vegetables, fish, and about an almost elastic texture. It can also be offs; makdous, for example (see page 56), or



meat all love tahini sauce (see page 87), and tahini PULSES: dried vs. canned You can use either

dissolved in hot milk, along with some ground

shatta. It ensures that all bacteria and yeasts as it is can just be spread on your toast or spooned dried or canned pulses; the recipe will still work cinnamon, to make a thick, velvety, creamy drink.

are removed from a jar so that the food remains over vanilla or chocolate ice cream.

but the result will be different. Starting with dried It can be found in most spice shops and Middle fresh. There are various ways to sterilize a glass pulses and soaking them overnight will bring

Eastern supermarkets. A (rough) approximation

jar; a water bath, for example (where the jars go TAMARIND brings its sharp, acidic, fruity, sweet-about the “best” results (the creamier hummus, can be made by using 4–5 tbsp of cornstarch for into water, with their lids added separately, the sour flavor to all sorts of soups and sauces. It for example, as you can use the cooking water

each 1 tbsp of sahlab a recipe calls for (for every water is brought to a boil, and then the jars are first comes to a lot of Palestinians in the form of when blitzing together the chickpeas), but

1 quart/ 1 liter of milk).

“cooked” for 10 minutes), or filling them with tamarind juice, sold ice-cold when the sun is out starting with pre-cooked chickpeas will always, just-boiled water and then rinsing and drying with and hot. Pre-made tamarind paste is available in of course, have the advantage of almost-instant SAHTEIN! this is the Arabic equivalent of “bon a clean dish towel. We tend to just put them into supermarkets, but these tend, on the whole, to be readiness. When it comes to fava beans, though, *appétit!*,” this translates as “two healths” or “may the dishwasher, though, and run it as a normal too



acidic. For the best tamarind paste or water, we often prefer using already cooked canned

your health be redoubled.” The response is often wash—it’s a simple solution that works very well.

start with a whole block of tamarind pulp and

beans rather than dried ones. For one thing, they

“al-albak”—“on your heart” or “same to you.” At then soak and strain what you need from there.

are easier find, but also the dried ones can also the end of a meal, guests might also say “sufra SUMAC is made from grinding down the dried

cook unevenly and require peeling.

daymeh”—“may your dining room be eternally

sumac berry. This astringent, tangy spice is

ZA’ATAR is the name for both the wild herb (a

blessed.” “Ahlan wa sahlān,” the cook will often heavily used in Palestinian cooking. It can either variety of oregano) that grows throughout the

QAHWA, or A’AHWAH means “coffee” in Arabic.

reply, “welcome.”

be a seasoning—sprinkled over all sorts of egg region and the iconic Palestinian spice mix

It’s strong and intense, often with a hint of

dishes, or roasted vegetables, meat, or fish—or (which is a blend of dried za’atar, whole toasted cardamom, and is served at every gathering and SAWANI are the equivalent of sheet-pan dishes



added to a batch of onions, cooked slowly for a sesame seeds, sumac, and salt). The leaves

social event in Palestine, before and after meals.

and roasts in Palestinian cooking—dishes baked, long time before starring in a traditional dish such have a distinctive, savory aroma and their flavor It's usually served with something sweet—a date roasted, or braised in large round baking pans as musakhan.

is complex. There's a connection to oregano

or a slice of baklava, for example—an idea we've where everything is tossed and cooked together.

and marjoram but also to cumin, lemon, sage,

run with in our chocolate and qahwa torte (see TABOON OVENS are large outdoor (often

and mint. It's lovely sprinkled over all sorts of THE SEPARATION WALL is the physical barrier

page 317).

communal) ovens made of stone. The heat is not things—eggs, leafy salads, grilled meat and

that Israel started to build during the second sealed in with a door; instead it is the conical or fish—or served as it is with a little bowl of olive QIDREH literally means “pot” in Arabic. Originally intifada, between Israel and the West Bank.

domed shape of the oven that keeps the heat in.

oil alongside, for bread to be dipped into.

from Hebron, it refers to the richly spiced festive Some parts of the barrier consist of a fence and Little stones or pebbles line the base of the oven rice-



and-meat dish (traditionally lamb, but beef or surrounding exclusion zone; others of a 26-foot and, once these are incredibly hot, flatbread and ZAYTOUN, which means ‘olive’ in Arabic, is a UK-chicken can also be used) cooked in an unglazed high concrete fence. What the wall is called

other things are taken into the heart of the oven based social enterprise that imports Palestinian copper pot. The pot sits over slow-burning coals and how it is perceived depends very much

using a long flat paddle. Taboon bread takes on olive oil, dates, almonds, freekeh, za’atar, and either in the ground or in a stone oven. Home

on which side someone is standing. From the

the shape of these pebbles, emerging looking like maftoul. The company began in 2004, when

cooks don’t cook this dish at home themselves; Israeli side, the wall was built as a response the surface of the moon with all its pockmarked volunteers brought back products from their

they fill their pot or urn and take it to a community to suicide bombings. The number of violent

indentations. We tried to re-create this in our travels and started selling them through their qidreh oven where the owner of the oven takes

attacks has decreased since the “security wall”

regular kitchen in London (lining a baking sheet local churches, Oxfam shops, village fairs and care of the cooking. The pots are tightly sealed, has gone up, confirming the legitimacy of the

with lots of stones from the local garden center) so on. Although many of their sales are still

so, in order not to get all mixed up, they are security concerns that gave rise to it. From the and can confirm that this alternative does



made at a grass-roots level, you'll also see them individually named with chalk. Before serving, the Palestinian side, the term "security wall" is not work.

in well-stocked greengrocers and high street shops. For more info see [www.zaytoun.org](http://www.zaytoun.org).

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( *Baatingan w kusaa bil*

Breakfast 20

A ZIBDIYEH is a heavy, unglazed clay bowl. It's a A note on ingredients and cooking

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basic but often precious item in a lot of kitchens Vegetable weights in brackets are net: that is, *banadoura*) 244–5

Fava beans: Molokhieh with fava

throughout Palestine, particularly Gaza. It's often after peeling, chopping, etc. Our measurements accompanied by a lemonwood pestle and, like a

are calculated on the basis that one tbsp is equal A

Avocados: Ful medames 32

beans 150

Braised fava beans with olive oil



mortar and pestle, is used for crushing garlic to a to 15ml and there are three 5ml tsp in a tbsp.

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creamy pulp or for grinding dill (or other) seeds.

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The insides of the bowl are always rough, rather Onions, garlic and shallots are peeled and garlic Abu Aouda, Islam 222–4

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with lamb and fava beans

than smooth, to facilitate this grinding. As well cloves are regular-size (rather than large). Chiles Abufarha, Nasser 250

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as being used to mash and mix ingredients, it's are used whole, or chopped, with their seeds

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also used for cooking some dishes, either on the left in. Salt is table salt, black pepper is freshly Aida refugee camp, Bethlehem

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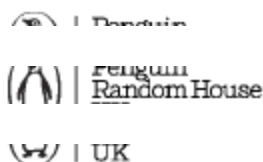


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