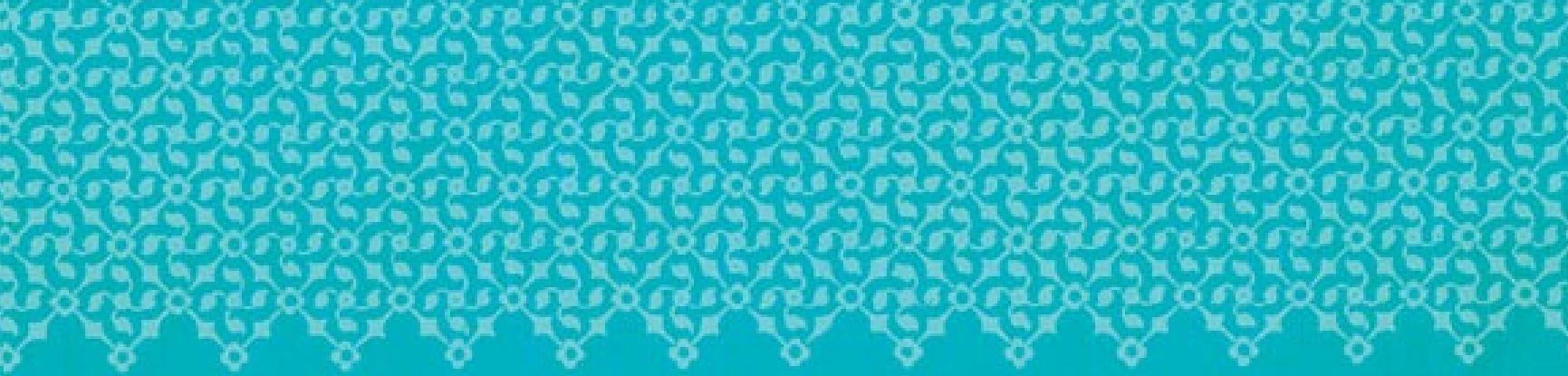




THE Complete Middle Eastern COOKBOOK



TESS
MAILOS



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TESS MAILOS



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INTRODUCTION

Cooking should be an enjoyable experience. It should also open doors to many cultures and creeds, and its acceptance and appreciation should not be clouded by politics or prejudice. Middle Eastern cooking, as presented here, is open to controversy, but not for these reasons.

First the selection of the countries is controversial, as the area covered includes Greece, Cyprus, Turkey and Armenia. More correctly, perhaps, the title should have been Near and Middle Eastern Cookbook, though Greece and Turkey are regarded as the eastern boundaries of Europe. There seemed to be only one course open to me – to delve into the region's early history and justify the inclusion of certain countries from that viewpoint. Pure geography has also played a part, as the area covered fits rather neatly between longitudes 20°E and 70°E, and between latitudes 15°N and 45°N.

The region encompasses the birthplace of civilisation and its history goes back as far as 3500 BCE with a pre-history dating back to 10,000 BCE. The Mesopotamian, Assyrian, Ancient Egyptian, Phoenician, Hebrew, Minoan, Mycenaean, Ancient Greek and Persian civilisations all flourished within this area, and their contributions to world knowledge cannot be disputed. In pre-history humans first learned to harness nature, and farming had its tenuous beginnings in the area now known as Kurdistan, stretching from southeast Turkey across to northern Iran.

It is on this basis that the countries have been selected, for Middle Eastern cookery has evolved over several thousand years.

The second area of controversy relates to the actual recipes. Which dish really originated in which particular country? Again, history can solve this in part; however, there has been so much interchange of culture through trade, migration, colonisation, invasion and counter-invasion that even this presents difficulties. So many similar recipes turn up in the culinary repertoire of a number of countries that to trace the source of many of them is virtually impossible. There are dolmas with variations in both name and ingredients stretching from Greece to Afghanistan and south to the Arab Gulf States; keftethes in Greece gradually change in name and character to kofta in Afghanistan; a sweet preserve made from green walnuts is made in Greece and Cyprus and the same delicacy is prepared in Iran, but nowhere else in between; there are variations on the Greek kourabiethes and the Gulf States ghiraybah in every other country of the region.

Do not assume that the book is a collection of a group of recipes with countless variations – I have avoided this as far as possible – for the scope of Middle Eastern cooking surprised me as much as it will probably surprise you.

Food and its preparation around the world have almost come full circle. (I say almost, for many aspects have of course changed, and will continue to do so – this is the essence of civilisation. There has been change in the manner of cultivation and the raising of livestock, though there are areas in the region where primitive methods are still employed; and there has been change in cooking methods.)

People have realised that highly refined foods are responsible for a number of their ailments; nutrition experts now advocate a diet based on simple, natural foods – meats, fish, poultry, less refined cereals, pulses, vegetable oils, pure butter and ghee, vegetables, fruit, nuts, yoghurt and cheese. And these, along with herbs and spices, are what Middle Eastern cooking is all about – a diet basically unchanged for thousands of years.

Western kitchen appliances – the electric blender, food processor, grinder, mixer and juicer – cut down on preparation time considerably. Many ingredients you will already have or be familiar with; the others are readily available at Middle Eastern, Greek and Armenian food stores, and at specialised food stores such as those stocking natural foods. The glossary will assist you greatly as it gives the various names for particular ingredients, and which substitutes, if any, may be used for unusual or hard-to-come-by ingredients.

Now let us mount the magic carpet for a culinary tour of the mystical, exotic world of Homer, the Arabian Nights and Omar Khayyam. Ahlan wasah'lan! (Welcome!)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tess Mallos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Tess" on the first line and "Mallos" on the second line.

Tess Mallos

BASICS OF MIDDLE EASTERN COOKING

Many foods are common to most Middle Eastern countries. Though most recipes give full details of their preparation, here is some basic information for easy reference.

Preparation of vegetables

Okra

Wash well, handling the okra gently. Trim the stem end without cutting the pod. If desired, trim around the conical stem attached to the pod, removing a thin layer. This is the correct way to prepare okra, but it is time consuming and only serves to remove the fine brown ring just above the pod and the outer layer of the stem. Middle Eastern cooks prefer to do this as the whole vegetable is then edible.

Fuzz can be removed if desired by rubbing the pod gently with a fine nylon scourer. Do this under running water. If the okra is young, there is no need to remove fuzz. Dry the okra well in a cloth, or spread out and leave until dry.

Place in a bowl and pour 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) vinegar over each 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) okra. Toss gently using your hands so that the vinegar coats the okra. Leave for 30 minutes, drain and rinse well. Dry and use as directed in recipes. The vinegar treatment stops the okra becoming slimy during cooking.

FREEZING OKRA

As fresh okra are available for only a short time, it is worthwhile freezing some if tinned or frozen okra are not readily available.

Method I: Prepare as directed above, then dry. In a deep saucepan, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil for each 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) okra. Fry the okra for 5 minutes, tossing gently with a wooden spoon. Cool, place in freezer bags, expel the air, then seal and label. Place in the freezer.

Method II: Prepare as above. Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil. Have ready a bowl of iced water. Place the prepared okra in a frying basket and lower into the boiling water. Boil for 3 minutes, timed from when the water returns to the boil. Lift out and place in iced water for 3 minutes. Drain well, pack and store in the freezer.

Globe artichokes

Have ready a large bowl of cold water, with the juice of 1 lemon and some lemon slices added. If desired, stir in 2–3 tablespoons plain (all-purpose) flour, as this is quite effective in preventing discolouration.

Wash the artichokes well and cut off the stem close to the base. As each artichoke is prepared to requirements, rub the cut surfaces with a lemon slice from the bowl and place in the bowl until all are prepared. Cook as soon as possible after preparation.

Whole artichokes: Remove the tough outer leaves and trim carefully around the base, just enough to neaten.

Cut off 3 cm (1¼ inches) from the top and trim the remaining leaf ends with scissors. If the artichokes are of a good shape and quality, it is not necessary to trim the leaf ends.

Artichoke hearts: As for whole artichokes, only remove three or four layers of leaves, until the tender inner leaves remain. Scoop out the hairy choke and pink thorny leaves from the centre, using a spoon or melon ball scoop. Leave whole, or cut in half.

Artichoke bases (fonds): Pull off all the leaves. Remove the hairy choke and trim the base into a neat cup shape. Do not over-trim, as you will lose too much of the best part of the artichoke.

Eggplant (aubergine)

Recipes give details of preparation in most instances. However, as a general rule, leave the skin on, removing the green stem for general usage.

The stem is left on if baking or grilling as it provides a convenient handle.

Slice, cube or slit the eggplant as directed in the recipe. While it has always been my habit to salt eggplant for many recipes, I have found that if I choose them carefully, salting is not required. When eggplant is required for frying, choose eggplant about 400 g (14 oz) in weight. Look at the base: the little 'navel' should be oval in shape, not round.

BAKED EGGPLANT FOR PURÉES

Recipes give detailed instructions, as methods vary in different countries. However, a microwave oven is an excellent means of cooking whole eggplant. Pierce it in several places with a fork or fine skewer, place on a suitable dish and cook for 3–5 minutes, according to size. The flesh becomes soft and creamy and remains light in colour.

Whichever way eggplant is baked, the skin must be removed quickly and the flesh combined with some lemon juice or vinegar from the recipe to avoid discolouration.

Spinach and silverbeet (Swiss chard)

Spinach should not be confused with silverbeet — the two vegetables are not even related botanically. Spinach is native to Iran, and widely used there and in other countries of the region. As spinach has a short season, from mid-winter to late spring, frozen leaf spinach may be substituted at other times.

Silverbeet can be used instead of spinach, but in some recipes the result is not quite the same, particularly for Iranian recipes. However, there are instances where silverbeet is the desired vegetable, with spinach an impractical substitute. Individual recipes indicate whether one can be substituted for the other. Whether spinach or silverbeet is being prepared, it is preferable to cook either vegetable in a stainless steel or enamelled pan as aluminium can cause discolouration.

As bunch sizes vary, I have given a weight as the amount required for a recipe. If your bunch is above the weight given, the success of the recipe will not be affected if the whole bunch is used. Some recipes give amounts in cups of shredded spinach leaves, or the number of silverbeet leaves.

Preserving grape vine leaves

Pick leaves early in their growth period — that is, early summer — when vines are well covered with leaves.

Choose leaves of medium-light colour, not too young. If the vines have been sprayed, wait for the period recommended for general harvest by the insecticide manufacturer. When picking leaves, snip off the stem.

Wash the leaves and stack them in piles of 24, shiny side up. Roll up and tie with string.

Bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil with 3 tablespoons salt. Drop in one four-leaf bundle at a time, return to the boil and blanch for 3 minutes, turning the rolls over so they blanch evenly. Lift out and drain.

Make a brine by boiling 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water with 315 g (11 oz/1 cup) rock salt. Pack the rolls upright into warm sterilised jars and pour the hot brine over the leaves. Remove air bubbles and seal when cold.

The brine should be sufficient for 20 bundles of leaves. Adjust according to the quantity being preserved.

Parsley

In all recipes flat-leaf parsley (sometimes called Italian parsley) is used. Curly parsley may be used as a garnish.

Pulses or legumes

Pulses are the edible seeds of leguminous plants. The glossary lists them individually with their botanical names, as well as the names by which they are known in the various countries of the region. Following is a general run-down on their basic preparation.

To soak or not to soak? Some require pre-soaking, some do not, just as some cooks prefer to pre-soak while others do not. It all depends on the nature of the seed and on its age. A dried bean less than a year old cooks more quickly than one that has aged somewhat in the pantry or store. As pulses are more readily available, and stores turn over stocks more frequently because of higher demand, the ones you are likely to encounter are relatively fresh. However, as a general guide, I have categorised them.

Lentils, split peas and mung beans

There is no need to pre-soak these unless a recipe specifically calls for it. Brown lentils are often soaked for certain recipes so that the skin can be removed before cooking (see '[Skinning pulses](#)').

As a general rule, place the required amount in a sieve and rinse well under cold running water. If it looks as though small stones have been left in after processing, spread the dried peas, beans or lentils on a tray, remove any stones and discoloured seeds, then rinse.

Black-eyed, cannellini, haricot (navy), red kidney beans and butterbeans (lima beans)

Pick over the beans and wash well under cold running water. To each cup of beans, add 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) cold water and bring slowly to the boil. Allow to boil for 2 minutes, then cover, remove from heat and set aside until the beans are plump. Cook as specified in the recipe, using the liquid in which they were soaked.

If overnight soaking is preferred, wash the beans well and use 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water for every cup of

beans. If the weather is warm, place them in the refrigerator to soak. Often beans soaked overnight at room temperature ferment – reason enough for not recommending this method for the beans listed above.

Another method I use — particularly for the quickercooking black-eyed, lima and haricot beans — is to wash them, then soak them in very hot water. In 2 hours they are plump enough for cooking.

Dried broad beans (fava beans) (large and small varieties) and chickpeas

Wash the beans or chickpeas well and add 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) cold water for every cup of beans. Soak for 12–48 hours, in a refrigerator in warm weather. Soaking time depends on the recipe.

Skinning pulses

After soaking chickpeas or green or brown lentils, take a handful and rub them with the palms of both hands so that the seeds actually rub against one another. Drop them back into the bowl and take up another lot. Skim off the floating skins as they accumulate.

Another method for skinning chickpeas is to place the drained peas in a shallow dish in a single layer and roll a bottle or rolling pin over them, exerting considerable pressure. Add water so that the skins float, skim them off, pour off the water, and repeat until all are skinned.

There is no shortcut to removing skins from large broad (fava) beans — none that I know of anyway. After soaking for 48 hours, squeeze each bean firmly: it should pop out of its skin easily. If not, slit the skin with a fingernail or the point of a knife, then squeeze. Sometimes these beans are available already skinned — ask for skinned ful nabed if the storekeeper is confused.

I am not an advocate of the long soak-drain-and-cook method unless absolutely necessary for the success of the dish. The reason is simple: as well as containing proteins and minerals, pulses are a good source of certain vitamins, in particular B group vitamins such as niacin, riboflavin and thiamine. These are water soluble; by soaking and throwing the water away you are losing valuable nutrients. As the cooking liquid in most pulse recipes forms an integral part of the dish, I advocate thorough washing before soaking so that the soaking water can form part or all of the liquid in the finished dish.

For the same reason I do not recommend the addition of bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) when soaking — this also destroys nutrients.

Rice

In many countries of the Middle East, rice is as important a part of the daily diet as it is in Asia. However, one rice dish you will never find in a Middle Eastern household is plain boiled rice.

In its simplest form, rice is light and fluffy, tinged with a golden hue from the butter, ghee or oil in which it is coated, each grain glistening separately from the other. This is the riz or timman of the Arab world, the pilav of Turkey, the pilafi of Greece, the chelou of Iran and the chalau of Afghanistan.

Then there are the exotic polous and palaus of Iran and Afghanistan; the more elaborate versions of timman and roz, and numerous other rice dishes of the Arab world; the imaginative and flavourful pilavs and pilafis of

Turkey, Armenia, Greece and Cyprus.

One point all countries have in common is that you will rarely find two cooks agreeing on which is the right way to cook a particular rice dish. However, on one point they do all agree: to wash the rice well until the water runs clear. From that point on there is controversy.

In testing rice recipes, I looked for the simplest methods to give the required results. As to the washing of the grain, in most recipes it is necessary, but there are exceptions; I find rice produced in the West is as clean as you could wish it to be, and some dishes benefit from the extra starch not lost in the rinsing process. As to the soaking of the grain before cooking, I found in comparing results that there is no detectable benefit to be derived from soaking. Many cooks believe it to be absolutely necessary and refuse to prepare a rice dish without a pre-soaking time ranging from 10 minutes to several hours.

Not all countries are particular about the type of rice used. Greece, Cyprus and Egypt are flexible in their choice of grain, with a general preference for short-grain rice. Turkey prefers long-grain rice of good quality for pilavs, but uses any available grain in dolmas, soups and puddings.

Most of the Arabic countries use only high-quality, aromatic long-grain rice: the basmati rice of Pakistan. Any good-quality long-grain rice can be used successfully, though others lack that special fragrance of basmati.

In Iran, rice is of such importance in the daily diet that none of the rice produced is exported. It is said to be the finest of all the rices — delicate in flavour and aroma, and hard of grain.

Irrespective of the variety, rice is available in three main qualities — Berenje Domsiah, Berenje Sadri and Berenje Champa. The first is the whole, long slender grain; the second is grain slightly broken in the polishing process; the third consists of broken grains.

Basmati or any good-quality long-grain rice may be used successfully for Iranian rice dishes.

Nuts

Middle Eastern cooking calls for plenty of nuts: nuts in pastries, nuts in cakes, nuts in sauces, stuffings and rice dishes — nuts, nuts and more nuts.

Almonds

Purchase almonds in their shells or, for easier storage, already shelled (but not blanched if they are to be stored for a while). The skin prevents the kernel drying and losing flavoursome oils. Store in a sealed container, in the refrigerator during summer when certain nut-loving insects decide to multiply.

To blanch: Pour boiling water over the kernels, leave for 2–3 minutes and drain. When cool enough to handle squeeze the nut and the kernel will pop out of its skin.

To split almonds: Separate the two halves with a fine-bladed knife.

To sliver almonds: Let them soak a little longer when blanching to soften the kernel, then cut into three or four slivers. (If the almonds are very crisp, slivers break in the wrong places.) Dry out slivers in the oven at 150°C (300°F).

To chop: Use a nut chopper, food processor or blender and chop to degree required.

To grind: Use a nut grinder or food processor. A blender is likely to cause oils to separate. Almonds should be

dry and crisp for grinding finely.

Walnuts

For peak flavour, purchase walnuts in shells, or buy them ready-shelled from a reputable retailer. If walnut halves are required, it is best to purchase these prepared in this way — as any frustrated walnut-cracker will confirm. Store, chop and grind as for almonds.

Pistachio nuts

Unsalted pistachios are the ones required for cooking; they are usually purchased in the shell. Break them open and remove the kernel. Store, blanch, chop and grind as for almonds.

Hazelnuts

Hard nuts to crack! Buy these ready-shelled. Blanch as for almonds and dry off in a low oven. Alternatively, place in a 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) oven for 15–20 minutes, then rub in a tea towel (dish towel) to remove the skins. Store, chop and grind as for almonds.

Bread

This most ancient of foods has sustained humans from time immemorial. It is said that bread — or the lack of it — makes history. A profound statement. However, it is not my intention to expound on its history, only on the basics of bread-making so that your efforts to produce Middle Eastern breads will be successful. Actually these principles are worth applying to the baking of any bread.

The flour

Wheat flour is the most widely used, varying from white to wholemeal (also called whole-wheat or wheatmeal). The gluten in the flour is the protein which, when worked by mixing and kneading, becomes an elastic network to hold in the gases generated by the yeast.

The percentage of gluten in flour varies; the higher the percentage, the better the flour for bread-making. As flours are rarely labelled with relevant information, your only guide to high gluten content is where the flour was milled, which is usually close to where it was grown.

Wheat grown in the warmer regions of your state or country has a harder grain and is therefore higher in gluten content, so look for flours milled in such areas.

If in doubt you can increase the gluten content by adding 1 teaspoon gluten (available from specialist food

stores) to each 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) flour. Sift together twice to blend thoroughly.

The yeast

For convenience, a long shelf life and consistently good results, I have used active dried yeast granules in recipes; 1 sachet is equivalent to 7 g ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz or 2 teaspoons) of granules if purchased loose, rather than in sachets.

Compressed yeast may be substituted for the active dried yeast in the proportion of 30 g (1 oz) for each sachet.

Where cake yeast is available, it should not be confused with compressed yeast; 1 yeast cake (a little over 10–15 g/ $\frac{1}{2}$ oz) may be used in place of 1 sachet.

Whatever yeast is used, it should be dissolved in warm water first – lukewarm for cake or compressed yeast, 30°C (85°F), and a little warmer for active dried yeast, but no more than 45°C (115°F). Do not cream cake or compressed yeast with sugar as the sugar slows down the yeast action. Add the balance of the liquid to the dissolved yeast, then add the sugar if used, and pour into the flour. Stir a little of the flour into the yeast liquid and leave covered for 10–15 minutes in a warm place until frothy, to speed up the rising process.

Where fat is used, adding it to the yeast liquid retards the action — it is better to add it after some of the flour has been incorporated; better still, blend the yeast liquid into the flour and work the fat in afterwards.

If you follow these guidelines, your doughs will rise much more quickly.

TESTING YEAST FRESHNESS

If you are unsure about the freshness of the yeast, dissolve it in 60 ml (2 fl oz/ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup) warm water, stir in 2 teaspoons flour, then cover and leave in a warm place. If there is no sign of activity in 15 minutes, the yeast is stale.

Baking flat breads

Basically there are two types of flat breads — those with a pocket, and those without. To form a pocket, bread must be rested for a period after shaping and before baking, and it has to be baked in the hottest part of the oven. The heat must be even, otherwise the bread does not puff properly. If the oven heat is uneven, an electric frying pan may be used with good results. The recipes give further details.

For bread without a pocket, prick the shaped dough with a fork or pinwheel, or during cooking press the bread with a folded cloth. Again recipes give details.

Some breads have a higher water content than normal, in order to give a characteristic chewy texture. Flour with a high gluten content is necessary, and as beating must be prolonged so that the water may be absorbed, a high-powered electric mixer with a dough hook attachment is recommended. My 12-year-old mixer coped very well indeed with the rigours of the long beating necessary.

Storing flat breads

When baking flat breads it is worth preparing enough bread to freeze for later use. Package cooled breads in

freezer bags, sealing well. To use, individually wrap frozen breads in foil and reheat in the oven at 200°C (400°F) for 10 minutes.

Fillo pastry

Fillo is the Greek name for this delicate, tissue-thin pastry. Frequently it is spelled 'phyllo', which perhaps is a closer transliteration of the Greek word meaning 'leaf'; however, I prefer the simplified spelling.

The Turks call the pastry yufka, and in the Arab countries it is generally known as ajeen, which can be rather confusing, as ajeen is any dough or pastry.

Fillo pastry is available commercially either fresh (chilled) or frozen. If properly sealed, fresh pastry can be stored in the refrigerator for several weeks, but must never be frozen. Frozen fillo pastry is more readily available at supermarkets. It varies slightly from fresh fillo, a different formula being used to withstand the rigours of freezing. For thawing, follow the directions on the packet.

Both types of fillo should be left in their packaging and brought to room temperature for 2 hours before using. If opened out while chilled, the pastry could break apart at the folds and can be difficult to handle.

Handling fillo pastry for cooking

Remove fillo from the wrapping and open out. Spread the leaves on a folded dry tea towel (dish towel) and cover with another folded dry tea towel. Moisten a third tea towel with water and wring it well to make it evenly damp. Spread over the top tea towel.

Remove one sheet at a time, re-covering the fillo with cloths. If the recipe requires pastry to be cut to size, cut all the sheets, then stack and cover. Fillo dries out very quickly in the heat of the kitchen, so it is essential to cover it, particularly if shaping individual pastries takes time.

Rolling pastry or dough thinly

Many recipes require the pastry to be rolled out thinly. As doughs are often elastic, normal rolling methods can prove very frustrating. This method, widely practised in Greece, Turkey, Armenia and Iran, is referred to in recipes, and is a skill worth developing. A length of wooden dowelling 60 cm (24 inches) long and 1 cm ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch) in diameter is required, although the dowel used for rolling fillo may also be used.

Shape the dough into either a ball or a square. Dust your work surface and dough with flour and roll out to a 20 cm (8 inch) round or square using a rolling pin.

Dust your work surface and dough again with flour. Place the dowel on the dough end nearest you. Roll the pastry onto the dowel, pressing down firmly as you roll to the end. Unroll carefully, turn the pastry around 180 degrees and dust your work surface and pastry again with flour. Roll up again onto the dowel, then unroll carefully.

The pastry is now ready for use. Be guided by the dimensions given in the recipes, and roll a third time if very thin pastry is required.

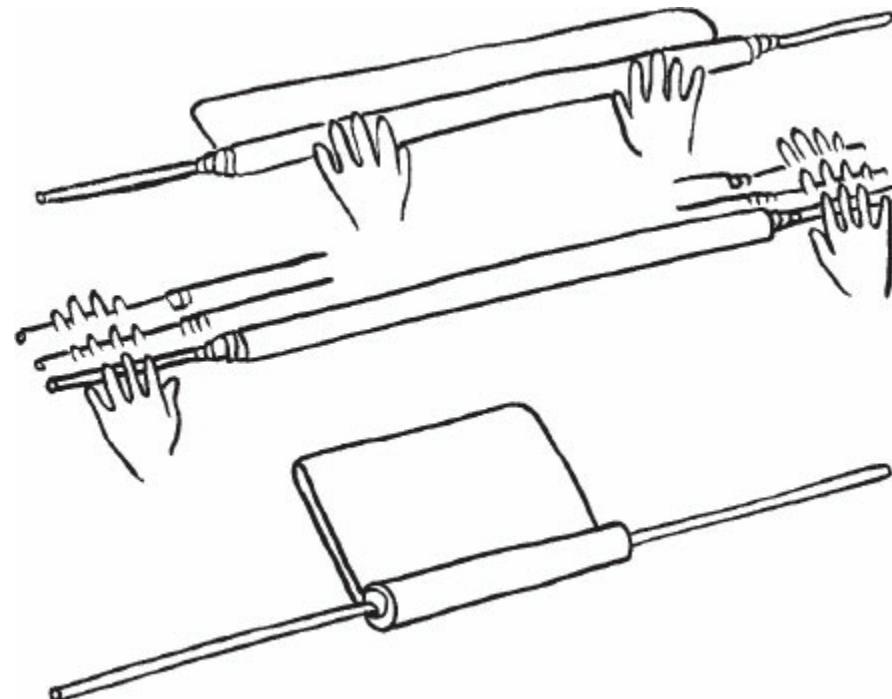
Do not grip the dowel as you would a rolling pin. Place the palms of your hands on the dowel, on each side of

the pastry, letting the dowel roll under your hands. Move your hands outwards as the pastry stretches on the dowel.

Perhaps it is worth mentioning another method — a variation on the one just given.

Roll the pastry onto the dowel to within 5 cm (2 inches) of the end of the pastry. Place the palms of your hands, fingers spread out, on top of the pastry, then roll back and forwards with four or five quick movements, moving your hands outwards along the pastry as you roll. Roll up to the end of the pastry, then unroll carefully. Turn the pastry around 180 degrees, dust again with flour and roll again.

The advantage of this method is that pastry can be rolled very thinly, and it is a good way to stretch fillo pastry; the disadvantage is that the centre can become much thinner than the edges, and is often creased in the process. I call this the 'rock and roll' method — this might give you an indication of the kind of movement involved.



Homemade fillo pastry

Equipment required: Large work surface, large cloth, mixing bowl, plastic wrap, greaseproof (parchment) paper, rolling pin, wooden dowel no less than 60 cm (24 inches) long and 2 cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ inch) in diameter.

Sift 600 g (1 lb 5 oz/4 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour and 1 teaspoon salt into the mixing bowl. Add 335 ml (11½ fl oz/1½ cups) tepid water with 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive, corn or peanut oil. Stir to a soft dough, then knead in the bowl with your hands for 10 minutes, using a kneading action similar to how you would knead for bread-making. It is easier to do this sitting down with the bowl placed in your lap. The dough will feel sticky at first, but with kneading the gluten in the flour is developed and the dough becomes smooth and satiny.

Wrap the pastry in plastic wrap and leave to rest at room temperature for 1 hour or longer. If all the dough is not to be used, wrap the unused portion and refrigerate for up to 1 week. Bring to room temperature before rolling out.

Divide pastry into 12 even portions, shaping each into a smooth ball. Cover with a cloth.

Take a ball of pastry and shape it into a square. Place on a lightly floured work surface and dust the top with flour. Roll out to a 15 cm (6 inch) square. Dust again with flour.

Place the dowel on one end of the pastry. Roll the pastry neatly onto the dowel, pressing firmly as you roll, keeping your hands on each side of the pastry.

Unroll the pastry and dust the work surface and pastry again with flour. Roll up again from the opposite side of the pastry, again exerting pressure. Unroll carefully. After the second rolling, the pastry should be about 25×30 cm (10×12 inches) in size.

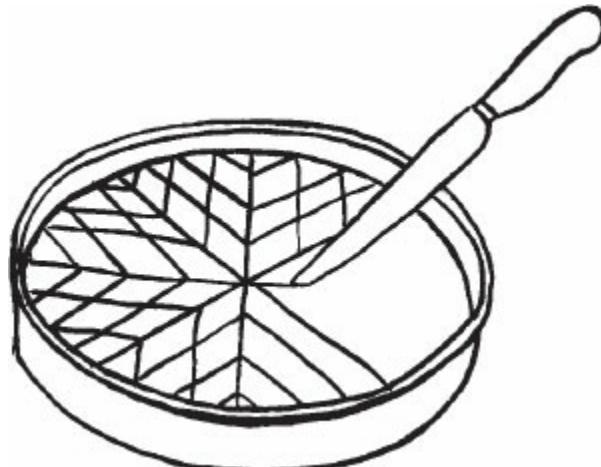
Using the backs of your hands (remove any rings), place your hands under the pastry and gently stretch it, moving your hands to stretch it evenly, working towards the edges. The edges can be given a final stretch with your fingertips. You will end up with a piece of fillo about 36×46 cm (14×18 inches) in size. Place on a cloth, cover with greaseproof (parchment) paper and fold a cloth over the top.

Repeat with the remaining pastry, laying each completed sheet on top of the previous one, with greaseproof paper in between. Use the pastry soon after making, as directed in recipes. For pies and layered pastries where a number of sheets are required, use half the number of homemade fillo sheets to those given in recipes.

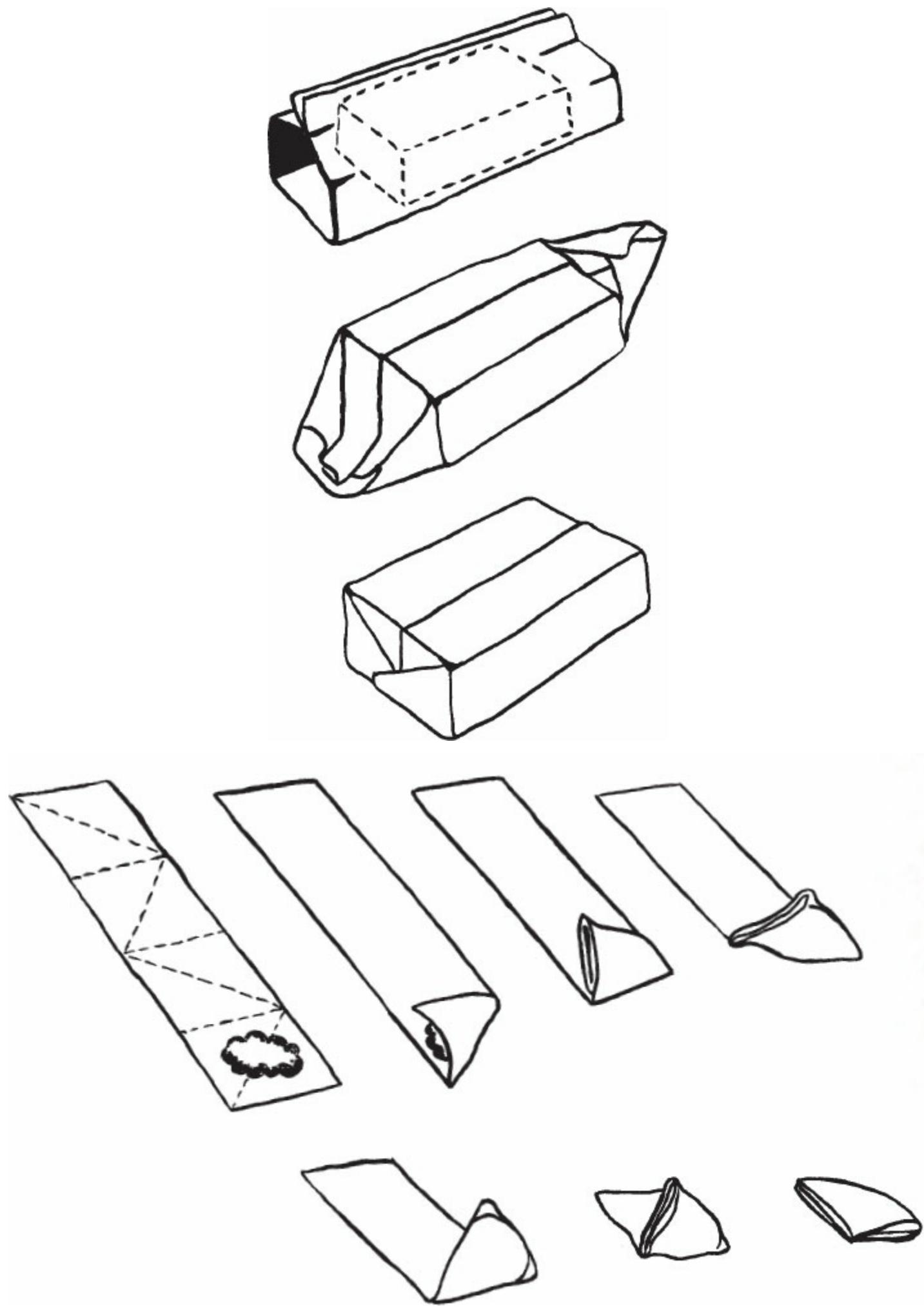
Don't be concerned if the pastry tears during stretching. Tears may be mended as the fillo is being used, or avoided if cutting the pastry into pieces or strips.

Cutting and shaping techniques

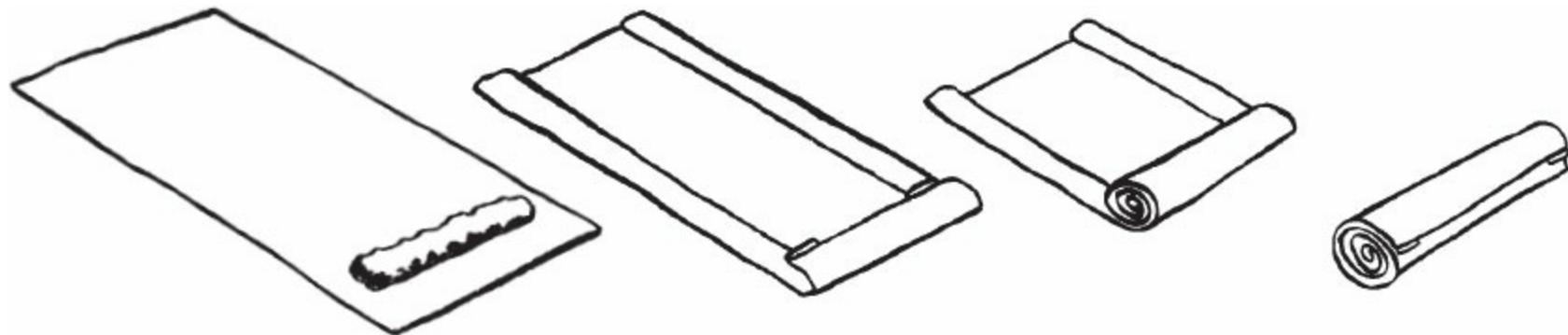
Many recipes refer to cutting foods into diamond shapes for serving. This can be done whether the dish is round, square or rectangular.



In special recipes, I refer to the chemist or druggist fold, as it gives an interesting finish to individual, fillo-wrapped packages ([Arnaki se Fillo](#), and [Talas Kebap](#),).



The shaping of pastries in triangles or rolls, though described in recipes, is perhaps clarified with these step diagrams.



Syrups

Syrups are widely used for fruit preserves, pastries and cakes. The recipes are self-explanatory, but it is helpful to know the basics.

Use a heavy-based saucepan and dissolve the sugar in water over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Boiling should begin only after all the sugar crystals have been dissolved. Once boiling, do not stir, as the syrup will become cloudy or even crystallise. When a thick syrup is required, you can usually judge this by the nature of the bubbling. As the syrup boils, the bubbles become smaller and the sound of the bubbling changes; the sides of the pan become peppered with minute drops of syrup.

If you have a sugar thermometer, the temperature of a thin syrup should be 105°C (220°F); for thick syrup, 110°C (230°F).

Experienced cooks have their own favourite methods of determining when a syrup is right. Putting a drop on the thumbnail or a cold saucer: the drop does not spread when the syrup is thick enough. Dropping it off the end of a spoon: when thick enough, the last drop clings to the end of the spoon. Spooning a tablespoon of syrup onto a saucer and cooling it quickly by spooning it up with a small spoon, then dropping it back until cool.

When testing the syrup, first remove it from the heat, so you don't risk overcooking the syrup if it happens to be of the right thickness.

The food processor

If there is one modern appliance tailor-made for Middle Eastern cooking, the food processor must be it. Though the processor container might not be large in capacity, preparation time is so abbreviated that even if it is necessary to process food in separate portions, you are still way ahead. Where applicable, recipes give details on using both the food processor and the blender, as well as the conventional method.

Use your food processor for chopping and grinding nuts to whatever degree required, from coarsely chopped to finely ground; for crumbing bread; for chopping large amounts of herbs and onions; for grating cheese and vegetables; for grinding or chopping meat; for grinding pulses, whether soaked and still raw, or cooked; and for puréeing anything that requires puréeing.

The food processor makes the best taramasalata, the finest baba ghanoush or melitzanosalata, the creamiest

tahini and tarator sauces, and is a great time and effortsaver when making kibbi. Anyone tackling Middle Eastern cookery should consider using this whizz of an appliance.

Yoghurt

To the Middle Eastern cook, the making of yoghurt is a necessary daily routine. Because it is made so frequently and the art is so developed, each batch is as good as the last; the traditional method always produces a good yoghurt in the Middle Eastern kitchen.

As the Western cook might not use yoghurt as frequently I have given a second method, which ensures a constant good result, minimising the varied results obtainable if following traditional methods in the Western kitchen.

Yoghurt I

(Yaourti, yogurt, madzoon, laban, mast, maust, yurt, leben hamid)

Combine 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) whole milk and 75 g (2½ oz/¾ cup) full-cream or skim milk powder in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Remove from the heat and leave to cool until a little above body temperature. The favoured method for testing temperature is to insert a little finger into the milk for a count of 10 before the sting of the heat is felt. It is wise to check with a thermometer: 45°C (115°F) is the desired temperature.

Blend 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of the warm milk with 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) of starter (fresh, commercially made yoghurt). Gently stir the starter into the milk and pour into a casserole dish or deep bowl. Cover with the lid or a plate, then wrap in thick towels or a blanket. Leave undisturbed for at least 6 hours at room temperature and away from draughts. Remove the covers and test: the yoghurt is ready when it is set like a junket. For a more tart flavour, yoghurt may be left in its wraps for up to 12 hours.

Remove the wraps, place in a covered container in the refrigerator and chill for 2 hours before using. If using this yoghurt as a starter for a new batch, the starter should be used within 3 days, otherwise the balance of the bacteria in the culture alters, causing variable results.

Yoghurt II

Equipment required: 1.5 litre (51 fl oz/6 cup) jar; either six sterilised 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) jars, or three 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cup) jars; thermometer; preserving pan or large pot; blanket or thick towels.

Blend 75 g (2½ oz/¾ cup) full-cream or skim milk powder and 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) whole milk, preferably homogenised.

Pour into a clean 1.5 litre (51 fl oz/6 cup) jar, cover with a lid and stand in a saucepan of water. Heat the water until the milk temperature is 80°C (180°F). Remove the jar from the hot water bath and cool to 45°C (115°F).

Remove 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of the warm milk and blend it with 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) fresh, commercially made yoghurt. Stir the mixture into the milk in the large jar, then pour into smaller jars. Seal the jars with their lids and stand them in the preserving pan.

Add water to the pan to come up to the necks of the jars. Heat until the water temperature reaches 50°C (120°F), then remove from the heat.

Cover the pan with a lid, then wrap in thick towels or a blanket. Leave undisturbed for 3 hours. Remove the jars, screw the lids on tightly and store in the refrigerator.

Yoghurt made this way will keep in good condition for 7–10 days, with little change in the balance of the culture. Use some of this for your next yoghurt. After making three or four batches, it is advisable to begin with a fresh starter.

A thermostatically controlled yoghurt-maker is a good investment for those who make yoghurt frequently, as it is so simple to use and produces good results.

Low-fat yoghurt

Use skimmed milk and skim milk powder instead of whole milk and full-cream powdered milk. Follow the directions given in either Yoghurt I or Yoghurt II.

Drained yoghurt

Recipes often call for drained yoghurt. Simply place yoghurt in a cheesecloth or a doubled piece of muslin (cheesecloth), tie it up with string and suspend it from a fixed object over a receptacle to collect the draining liquid.

Leave for 2–4 hours, depending on the initial thickness of the yoghurt.

When drained, the yoghurt should have the consistency of softened cream cheese.

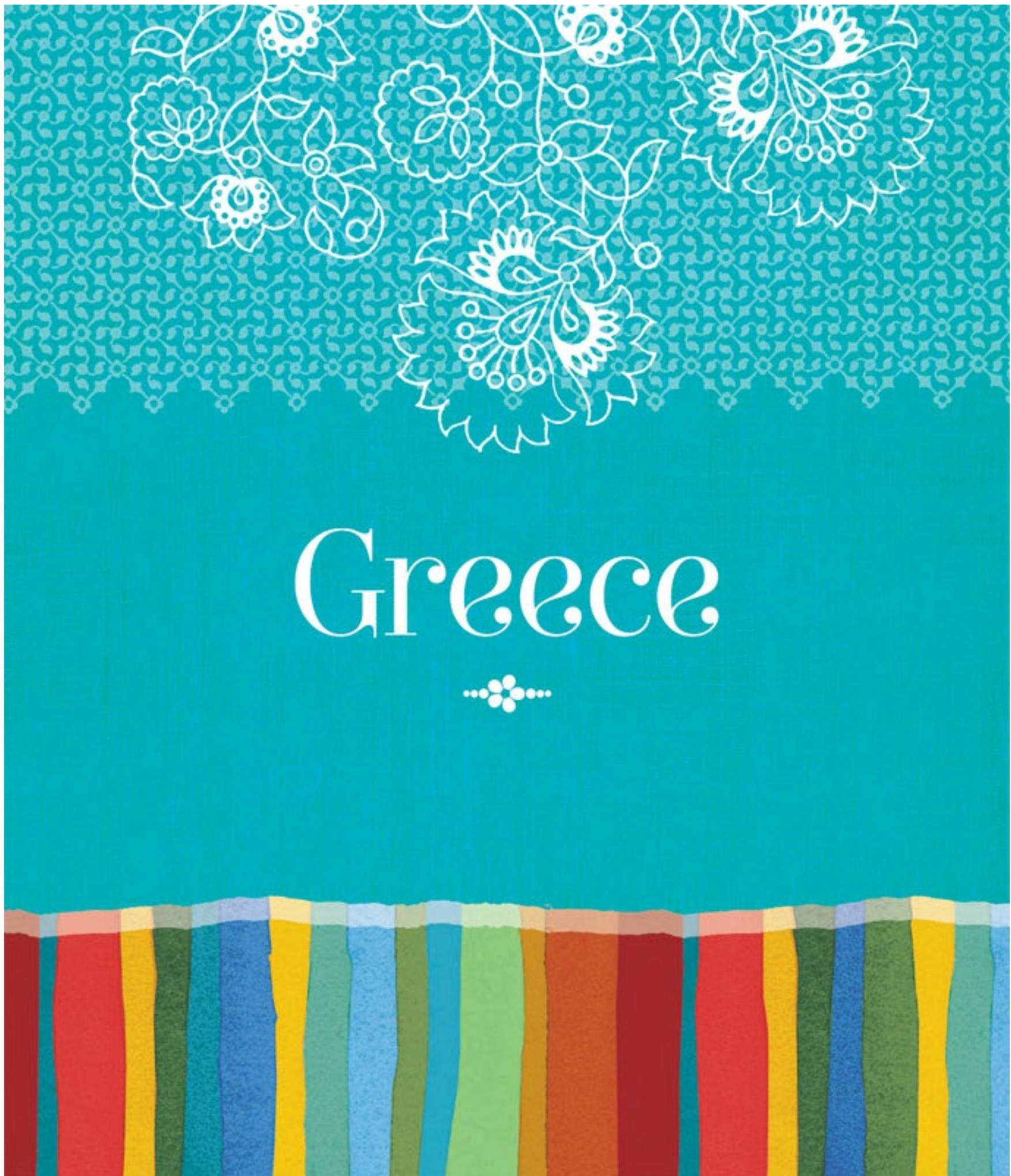
Sterilising jars

Pickles, preserves and spoon sweets should be packed into sterilised jars to ensure they keep well.

Wash the jars well in hot soapy water, then rinse and drain. Stand the jars upright on a baking tray and place in a cold oven. Close the door and set the oven temperature to 140°C (275°F/Gas 1).

Once this temperature is reached, switch off the oven and leave the jars in the oven until required for filling.

As a general rule, pack hot foods into hot jars, and cooled foods into cooled jars, so the jars don't crack.





GREECE

Having cut my first tooth on a paximathi and coped with many a childhood illness fortified with bowls of avgolemono soupa, I had taken Greek cooking for granted. When friends returned from a visit to Greece with a grand passion for Greek cooking, I began to look at it through the eyes of my non-Greek friends. And what did I see? I saw a cuisine shaped through over 3000 years of history; through the geography and climate of a country lolling in azure blue seas; through sloping mountains thrusting upwards to the heavens where humans and nature vie for control; through the people of the land whose joy for life is evident every evening at the quaysides, in the tavernas, in town squares at the kafenia.

Such vast differences in geography and climate have given Greek cookery an infinite variety, but there are still some dishes that are universally prepared and loved: avgolemono, the delightfully tangy egg and lemon combination used in sauces to bathe meats, fish and vegetables, and as a soup with chicken, lamb or fish stock, recognised as the crowning glory of Greek cooking; taramosalata, the caviar of Greece, so symbolic of the sea and its importance to the Greek; moussaka, the marrying of eggplant, lamb and a cheese-topped béchamel sauce; octopus and squid, regarded in horror by those who have not dared to taste them, and relished by those who have; spanakopita, a delightful combination of spinach, herbs, eggs and cheese, but with regional variations and adaptations; and many, many more.

While there are no taboos regarding any particular food, fasting is an important part of the Orthodox faith, and after the fasting, there is feasting! During periods of fasting, no animal products — meat, butter, cheese, milk or eggs — may be taken, so Greek cuisine offers many dishes for those who prefer to reduce the amounts of such foods in their diet.

Spanakopita is a most popular, very typically Greek pie; and not to be denied its enjoyment when fasting, it is prepared similarly to the [Spanakopita Peloponnisos](#) recipe, though its final shape could be a roll, smaller rolls, or a flat pie, depending on the mood of the cook. This is a favourite of Chantal Countouri, a well-known Greek-Australian actress from the 1970s whose family came from the southern Peloponnese. Chantal frequently adds eggs and feta cheese, for yet another variation of spinach pie.

The permutations and combinations of Greek cooking are endless. If any recipe seems to be omitted, the basic

recipe could be included under another name. For example, if you have tried trigona in Greece, a sweet pastry filled with walnuts, then it is a simple matter to adapt the baklava recipe. Just cut the pastry into strips, butter them, put on some of the filling and fold into triangles (see for [pastry shaping](#) techniques). Baking is quicker and the cooled syrup is poured on the hot pastries. If you prefer floyeres (almond pipes), use almonds instead of walnuts, and roll the strips into cylinders. Actually, floyeres are similar to the sarigi burma that you'll find in the chapter on Turkey, using the alternative shaping at the end of that recipe. Indeed, any other Greek recipe you might be looking for could be in the Turkey, Cyprus or Armenia chapters.

THE FLAVOURS OF GREEK FOOD

The flavours of Greek foods tend to be subtle rather than overpowering. Favourite herbs are parsley — always the flat-leaf variety — rosemary, dill, fennel, bay leaves, mint, rigani (a wild marjoram, not to be confused with oregano) and celery leaves. Basil always grows in Greek gardens, but was seldom used in cooking in the past, though its addition to the Greek cooking pot is increasing of late. It is of religious significance, as the Greeks claim that basil grew on the site of the Cross. A sprig is always handed to visitors on their departure as a gesture of goodwill.

Of the spices, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, masticha and mahlepi (mahlab, the kernel of the black cherry stone, imported from Syria) are the most frequently used; all but masticha and mahlepi feature in both savoury and sweet dishes.

For sweet preserves, the leaf of the rose geranium imparts a particular fragrance and often is used instead of cinnamon and lemon rind. These sweet preserves, called glyka, are made from orange, lemon or grapefruit peel; little green figs; grated quince preserve and quince jelly; watermelon rind; or green walnuts. There is even one similar to a vanilla fondant. Glyka are an important aspect of Greek hospitality: a guest is offered a glass of cold water into which the glyka is placed, adhering to a spoon. The guest sucks small mouthfuls and sips the water alternately.

Among the fruits, the lemon reigns supreme. A Greek garden without a lemon tree is unthinkable. Seafoods and vegetables without lemon? Well, almost never. Even lamb is not spared. The rind makes a superb sweet preserve and is used in most other preserves, together with the juice to prevent the sugar crystallising. Then, of course, there would be no avgolemono without the lemon — nothing can substitute for it, though it is believed that the sour sauce of Ancient Greece used the juice of the citron, since lemon was not introduced until much later.

On second thoughts, the lemon does not reign alone, for without the olive, would there be a Greece? For countless centuries the olive tree has been an enduring symbol of Greek life. The fragrant oil, from earliest times, has sustained the people, been used in trade and has given Greek cooking its essence.

MEALS GREEK STYLE

Greece is a country established in the European cultural traditions, and with a lifestyle similar to that of most countries bordering the Mediterranean; eating is a very social occasion, reminiscent of the symposiums of Ancient Greece.

To the Greek, food is incidental. What is important is enjoying the company of friends, discussing a wide variety

of topics with much gesticulating — with the occasional pause to dip a piece of bread into taramosalata or pop an olive into the mouth and sip an ouzo or a beer. From midday onwards, this scene is enacted in a wide variety of locations. It could be at an outdoor restaurant, in the town square, in the colourful Plaka in the old part of Athens, or at a waterfront tavern anywhere in Greece. Such occasions can extend far into the early hours of the morning. This basically is how the Greek regards eating, as just part of the happy business of living.

The main meal of the day is taken at midday and the food is served in a Western manner; that is, at a table spread with a cloth, with china, cutlery and glassware. The food is placed in its dishes on the table at the beginning of the meal. There could be a roast leg of lamb with potatoes that were cooked in the same dish to absorb the flavours of the meat with its rigani, lemon and olive oil. A Greek salad — a mixture of sweet red tomatoes, crisp cucumbers and capsicums (peppers), feta cheese and olives — would accompany the meat course. Bread is served with every meal and is used to soak up the salad dressing or meat juices. A wine, more often than not a retsina, accompanies the meal. Quite often other dishes could be served, such as one of the vegetable stews for which the Greeks are famous.

Dessert is seldom served; if it is, it could be a simple bowl of yoghurt or rizogalo (creamed rice). Fresh fruit and cheese complete the meal. In summer lunch is taken outdoors on the terrace, patio or balcony or in the garden.

After lunch it is time for siesta, and even if there are guests present they are offered pyjamas and a bed. Very hospitable! After siesta is the time when the exotic sweets and pastries are likely to be eaten, if not at home then at the local zaharoplastio, which is similar to the French patisserie.

Early evening sees a repeat of the symposium-type gathering described earlier, which often suffices as the evening meal. The variety of mezethakia served in Greece is limited only by the imagination of the cook and the availability of ingredients.

Where an evening meal is served, it could be taken at any time from 8 to 11 p.m. and is generally a lighter meal. More often than not, particularly in the summer months, it is taken at a restaurant or taverna. Early bedtime for children during summer vacation is seldom demanded, and even more seldom obeyed — there is too much living to do.

COOKING METHODS

Greece is more Western than Eastern, and even the humble village home has a modern stove. Even so, sometimes in cities as well as rural and island villages people take the midday meal — ready prepared in its tapsi (round baking dish) or tsoukali (casserole dish) — to the local bakery so that the kitchen will not become hot from the heat of the stove: a very popular practice during the summer months. Women who hold a job also take advantage of the baker's oven and deliver the prepared food on their way to work, to be collected at midday. The baker tends, checks, stirs and turns the food. After the early morning's bake, the food cooks slowly in the residual heat of the oven — a marvellous service for little cost. Slow cookers will never take off in Greece while the baker is so obliging.

Kitchen equipment is as modern as any, though you'll find traditional items such as the pestle and mortar, a briki for making coffee, tapsi and tsoukalia (mentioned previously), saganaki (two-handled frying pan), a long piece of wooden dowel used as a rolling pin for pastry, and perhaps a kakavi, a large copper pot once hung over the hearth for cooking, now seldom used except for ornamentation.

INGREDIENTS FOR GREEK COOKING

Fortunately, you can buy anything you might need at your usual market, and any particularly Greek ingredient is available at Greek, Armenian and Middle Eastern food stores. Rigani is a must, as are feta cheese, olive oil, fillo pastry, macaroni and pulses (dried beans, lentils and peas). But why list them here? The recipes are self-explanatory and the introductory passages and Glossary will fill in the gaps. It is evident that you do not need to chase around for the ingredients for Greek cooking — you probably use most of them already.

PRONUNCIATION

Recipe names have been transliterated from the Greek. Pronounce each syllable with equal emphasis, for example do-ma-tes, with 'o' as in ought, 'a' as in past, and 'es' as in esteem. Pronounce 'e' as in egg, 'ou' as in soup, 'i' as in sit and 'y' as 'i' when between consonants, and as in yes or your when followed by a vowel.

TOMATA PELTES

Tomato paste MAKES: APPROXIMATELY 1 KG (2 LB 3 OZ) 5 kg (10 lb 15 oz) tomatoes

2 tablespoons salt

olive oil, for sealing

Choose ripe, sound tomatoes; do not use any with signs of decay. Wash well, core out the stem end and slice the tomatoes into a large preserving pan. Cover and heat gently until the tomatoes are soft. Rub them through a sieve.

Return the juice to the pan and leave over medium-low heat, uncovered, until reduced by half (it will be a tomato purée at this stage).

Pour the mixture into two large dishes (baking dishes will do) and place in the sun; protect with a covering of gauze. Dry in the sun for 2–4 days, stirring the paste now and then.

Alternatively, place the dishes in a 100°C (210°F/Gas ½) oven and let the purée evaporate; this will take 4–6 hours.

When the paste is the consistency of the type available commercially (a soft paste, or concentrated purée), stir in the salt, then transfer to sterilised jars. Pour a layer of oil on top of the paste and seal. Store in a cool place.

Once a jar of paste has been opened, store it in the refrigerator.

SALT SA AVGOLEMONO

Egg and lemon sauce

MAKES: 625 ML (2 FL OZ/2½ CUPS)

375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) stock 1 tablespoon cornflour (cornstarch)

3 eggs, separated

juice of 1 lemon

salt and freshly ground white pepper, to taste Bring the stock to the boil in a saucepan. Mix the cornflour to a paste with a little cold water and add it to the stock, stirring until thickened and bubbling. Let it boil for 1 minute.

In a bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff, then add the egg yolks and continue beating until light and fluffy. Gradually add the lemon juice, beating constantly. Slowly pour in the boiling, thickened stock, beating constantly.

Return the sauce to the pan and cook over low heat, stirring constantly, for 1–2 minutes to cook the egg. Do not allow the sauce to boil. Remove from the heat and continue to stir for 1 minute. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Serve immediately with poached fish, boiled or steamed vegetables, meat and chicken dishes.

✿ Note: Choose a stock to complement the dish with which it is to be served: fish stock for poached fish, chicken stock for boiled or steamed vegetables — or use the cooking liquid from the dish with which it is to be served.

MAYONNEZA

Mayonnaise

MAKES: 375 G (13 OZ/1½ CUPS) Yes, this is a French recipe. Nicholas Tselementes was a Greek who trained in Vienna and worked in many hotel kitchens in Europe and the US, especially New York, during the early part of last century. Returning to Greece, he wrote a large tome on Greek cookery, including many French recipes. This is one of them, taught to me by my mother.

2 egg yolks

1 small garlic clove, crushed ½ teaspoon mustard powder

½ teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground white pepper, to taste 1–2 tablespoons lemon juice 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup)

olive oil Remove all traces of egg white from the yolks using a piece of egg shell. Place the yolks in a small mixing bowl and stir them well with the garlic, mustard, sugar, about ½ teaspoon of salt and some pepper. Beat until light and smooth, using a wooden spoon or balloon whisk, or the small bowl of an electric mixer.

Add 2 teaspoons of the lemon juice and about one-quarter of the oil, a drop at a time. Mix in the remaining lemon juice and oil alternately, this time adding the oil in a thin trickle.

When the mayonnaise is thick, adjust the flavour and seasoning with more lemon juice, salt and pepper if necessary.

Finally, beat in 1 tablespoon boiling water so that the mayonnaise will not separate if it is to be stored in a cool place for a while before use.

Serve with steamed fish, cooked lobster and prawns (shrimp), or as directed in recipes.

✿ Note: If the mayonnaise curdles, begin again with an egg yolk beaten in a clean bowl. Gradually add the curdled mayonnaise and the mixture will begin to emulsify immediately. And a special tip: use olive oil, not extra virgin olive oil, as it is too strong in flavour.

MIZITHRA

Cottage cheese

MAKES: ABOUT 600 G (1 LB 5 OZ)

Given modern-day packaging and health concerns regarding fat content, whole, unhomogenised milk may be difficult to obtain. Homogenised milk can be used instead, as can fortified milk with a low fat content. If using either of these alternatives, double the amount of rennet to 4 tablets. Skim milk that has not been fortified with skim milk powder is not recommended.

2.5 litres (85 fl oz/10 cups) whole unhomogenised milk

3 teaspoons salt

2 rennet (junket) tablets

Heat the milk in a heavy-based saucepan until lukewarm. Stir in the salt and remove from the heat.

Crush the rennet tablets in a small bowl, add 1 tablespoon cold water and stir until dissolved.

Slowly pour the rennet liquid into the milk, stirring gently. Cover the pan with a lid and leave it at the side of the stove, undisturbed, for 30 minutes.

When the liquid has set, break up the curds by stirring with a whisk or spoon. Let the curds settle.

Line a colander or large sieve with a double layer of muslin (cheesecloth). Ladle the curds into this. Collect the whey in a bowl if required (see [note](#)).

Let the curd drain for a while, then scrape down the cheese on the sides of the cloth and tie the ends of the cloth together. Suspend from a fixed object and leave to drain for another 6 hours at room temperature, then suspend from a shelf in the refrigerator with a dish underneath to gather the remaining whey. Leave for another 12 hours to drain thoroughly.

Turn the cheese out of the cloth and store in a sealed container in the refrigerator. It will keep for 4–5 days.

* Note: The whey may be used for making a whey cheese such as anari, a cheese from Cyprus normally made after making haloumi cheese. The Syrians also make a whey cheese called kareeshee bi limoun. Another use for whey is for storing feta cheese in the home (see the Glossary entry for [feta](#)).

MELITZANOSALATA

Eggplant dip

MAKES: ABOUT 500 G (1 LB 2 OZ/2 CUPS) 1 large or 2 medium oval eggplants (aubergines), about 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) in total

1 garlic clove

½ teaspoon salt

**60 g (2 oz/1 cup) soft white breadcrumbs 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup)
olive oil 1 small onion, grated**

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Place the whole, unpeeled eggplant on a baking tray and cook in a 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) oven for 30–50 minutes, depending on size, until it is soft to the touch. While it is hot, remove the skin and chop the flesh roughly. Drain off excess moisture.

While the eggplant is baking, crush the garlic with the salt using a mortar and pestle.

Gradually add the warm eggplant to the mortar, alternating with the breadcrumbs. Add the lemon juice and olive oil alternately, working the mixture thoroughly with the pestle. Mix in the onion, parsley, and salt and pepper to taste.

Transfer to a bowl, cover and refrigerate; the mixture thickens when thoroughly chilled.

Garnish with black olives and serve with crackers, toast fingers or crusty bread.

✿ Note: Eggplant discolours quickly once exposed to air, so mixing it with the other ingredients straight away is important. You can also use a blender or food processor to make the dip. Add all the ingredients except the oil to the processor. Blend until smooth, then gradually add the oil; this makes a smoother dip.

✿ Variation: Add 1 large peeled, chopped ripe tomato to the garlic mixture with the eggplant.

OKTAPOTHI TOURSI Pickled octopus SERVES: 6–8

1 octopus, about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz)

1 garlic clove, crushed

**125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) vinegar salt and freshly ground black pepper,
to taste For serving**

lemon wedges

**flat-leaf parsley To clean the octopus, pull off the tentacles and remove the intestines and ink sac. Cut
out the eyes and beak. Remove the skin and rinse well.**

Place the body and tentacles in a large saucepan without any liquid. Cover and simmer the octopus in its own juices over low heat until it turns deep pink and is tender — about 45–60 minutes.

Drain the octopus. When cool enough to handle, strip off the suckers from the tentacles if desired. Cut the head and tentacles into bite-sized pieces and place in a bowl.

Combine the garlic, oil, vinegar, salt if necessary, and pepper to taste in a small bowl and pour over the octopus. Mix well, then cover and leave to marinate in the refrigerator for 12 hours before using. Stir occasionally.

To serve, lift the octopus out of the marinade, pile into a dish and garnish with lemon wedges and parsley. Supply cocktail sticks for your guests' convenience.

SPANAKOPITA PELOPONNISOS

Peloponnese spinach rolls

SERVES: 6–8

The Greek Orthodox religion has many fast days during the year, but the 40-day Lenten fast is the most important. Home cooks try to prepare interesting meals without meat and other animal products. Very strict adherents even deny themselves olive oil. This recipe is easy to adjust to dietary restrictions.

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) spinach 85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil

1 onion, chopped

1 leek, white part only, chopped

8 spring onions (scallions), chopped small handful chopped flat-leaf parsley

3 teaspoons chopped dill or fennel

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

8 sheets fillo pastry

olive oil or melted butter, for brushing Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Wash the spinach well and cut off any coarse stems. Chop the leaves roughly and place in a large saucepan. Cover and place over medium-low heat for 7–8 minutes, shaking the pan now and then or turning the spinach with a fork. Heat just long enough to wilt the spinach so that the juices can run out freely. Drain well in a colander, pressing occasionally with a spoon.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion for 10 minutes. Add the leek and spring onion and fry gently for a further 5 minutes, or until translucent.

Place the well-drained spinach in a mixing bowl and add the onion mixture, herbs and nutmeg. Mix thoroughly, adding salt and pepper to taste.

Place a sheet of fillo pastry on your work surface and lightly brush with oil or melted butter. Top with three more sheets of pastry, brushing each with oil or melted butter.

Brush the top layer lightly with oil or butter. Place half the spinach mixture along the length of the pastry towards one edge, leaving 4 cm (1½ inches) clear on each end.

Fold the bottom edge of the pastry over the filling. Roll once, fold in the ends, then roll up. Place a hand at each end of the roll and push it in gently like a concertina. Repeat with the remaining pastry and filling.

Place the rolls in an oiled baking dish, leaving space between the rolls. Brush the tops lightly with oil or melted butter and bake for 30 minutes, or until golden.

Serve hot, cut into portions.



SPANAKOPITA

Spinach pie

SERVES: 8 AS AN APPETISER, 6 AS A LIGHT MEAL

While I use butter for the fillo sheets, olive oil may be used if desired. A spray can of olive oil is a time saver — but use it sparingly.

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) spinach 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil

1 onion, chopped

8 spring onions (scallions), chopped

small handful chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 teaspoons chopped dill or fennel

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) *Mizithra* or ricotta cheese 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) well-crumbled feta cheese 25 g (¾ oz/¼ cup) finely grated kefalograviera or parmesan cheese 4 eggs, lightly beaten

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste melted butter, for brushing

10 sheets fillo pastry

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Prepare the spinach as directed in the [Spanakopita Peloponnisos](#).

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion for 10 minutes. Add the spring onion and cook for a further 5 minutes or until translucent.

Transfer the onion mixture to a large mixing bowl. Add the drained spinach, herbs, nutmeg, cheeses and eggs and stir to combine. Check the saltiness of the mixture, then season to taste with salt and pepper.

Brush a 25 × 30 cm (10 × 12 inch) baking dish with melted butter and line it with a sheet of fillo pastry. Top with another four sheets, brushing each with butter.

Spread the filling over the pastry and top with the remaining fillo, brushing each sheet again with butter. Trim the edges if necessary and tuck the pastry in on all sides.

Brush the top lightly with more butter. Lightly score the top layer of pastry into squares, using a sharp knife or stanley knife. Sprinkle a little cold water on top to prevent the pastry curling up.

Bake for 45 minutes, or until puffed and golden brown. Remove from the oven and allow to sit for 5 minutes before cutting into portions for serving.

SPANAKOPITES APO TI SAMOS

Spinach pies from Samos

MAKES: 20

**500 g (1 lb 2 oz) fresh spinach, or 2 × 250 g (9 oz) packets of frozen leaf spinach 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) olive oil, plus extra for brushing 8 spring onions (scallions), finely chopped 300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) crumbled feta cheese 3 tablespoons finely chopped dill or fennel 2 eggs, beaten
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste**

10 sheets fillo pastry

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Prepare the fresh spinach as directed in the [Spanakopita Peloponnisos](#). If using frozen spinach, let it thaw, then drain well and chop if necessary. Place the spinach in a mixing bowl.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the spring onion until soft. Add the mixture to the spinach, along with the cheese, herbs, eggs and nutmeg. Mix well to combine, then season with salt and pepper.

Open out the fillo pastry sheets and cut them in half, so that you have pieces approximately 20 × 30 cm (8 × 12 inches) in size. Stack them and cover with a cloth.

Take a sheet of fillo pastry and brush it lightly with oil. Fold it in half to make a strip about 10 cm (4 inches) wide. Brush it again with oil and spread about 2 tablespoons of the filling across one long edge, leaving the ends clear of filling. Fold in the ends, then roll up firmly. Bend the roll round into a coil and place it in an oiled baking dish. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Brush the tops lightly with oil and bake for 25 minutes, or until golden brown. Serve hot as an appetiser or light meal.

TIROPITAKIA

Cheese triangles

MAKES: ABOUT 60

375 g (13 oz/2½ cups) crumbled feta cheese 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) ricotta cheese or Mizithra

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 teaspoons finely chopped mint, optional freshly ground black pepper, to taste 2–3 eggs

375 g (13 oz) fillo pastry

185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) butter, melted Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Combine the feta and ricotta or mizithra cheese in a mixing bowl. Mash finely with a fork to mix thoroughly. Add the parsley, the mint if using, and pepper to taste.

Lightly beat two of the eggs and stir into the cheese — the mixture should be soft, but still hold its shape. If it is too stiff, add another egg.

Cut each fillo pastry sheet into three strips, each approximately 13 × 30 cm (5 × 12 inches) in size. Stack them on a dry cloth and cover with another folded, dry cloth. Place a moistened cloth on top.

Take a strip of fillo and brush it lightly with melted butter. Fold it in half lengthways and brush it again with butter. Place a generous teaspoon of the cheese mixture towards the bottom edge of the strip. Fold the end of the strip diagonally over the filling, so that the bottom edge is in line with the folded edge, forming a triangle. Fold up once, then fold diagonally to the opposite side. Continue to fold in a triangle to the end of the strip (see [illustrations](#)). Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Place the pastries on lightly greased baking trays and brush the tops lightly with more butter. Bake for 20 minutes, or until puffed and golden. Serve hot.

TIROPITA

Cheese pie

SERVES: 12 AS AN APPETISER, 6 AS A LIGHT MEAL

Pies such as this one are prepared in villages and cooked in the home wood-fired oven after the weekly bread baking. A tray of sesame rings may also be baked, along with slices of the previous week's bread to make rusks, a breakfast staple.

500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) milk 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) fine semolina (farina)

40 g (1½ oz) butter

125 g (4 oz/1 cup) coarsely grated sharp cheddar cheese 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) crumbled feta cheese

35 g (1 oz/⅓ cup) grated kefalotiri or parmesan cheese

3 eggs

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley, optional salt and freshly ground white pepper, to taste

10 sheets fillo pastry

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter, melted

Preheat the oven to 220°C (430°F/Gas 7).

Combine the milk and semolina in a heavy-based saucepan. Add the 40 g (1½ oz) butter and stir constantly over medium–high heat until thickened and bubbling. Reduce the heat and let the mixture boil gently for 2 minutes.

Add the cheeses and stir until well combined. Remove from the heat and leave to cool, stirring occasionally.

Beat the eggs well and stir into the cheese sauce. Add the nutmeg, the parsley if using, and salt and pepper to taste.

Butter a 25 × 30 cm (10 × 12 inch) baking dish, then line it with half the fillo pastry sheets, brushing each sheet with melted butter.

Spread the filling in the dish, then top with the remaining pastry sheets, again brushing each with melted butter. Brush the top with the remaining butter and tuck the edges under to hold in the filling.

Score the top sheets in squares or diamonds with a stanley knife, according to the servings required — small for appetisers and snacks, larger for a light meal or first course.

Sprinkle the top lightly with cold water to prevent the pastry curling. Bake for 30 minutes, or until puffed and golden.

Leave to cool in the dish for 10 minutes. Cut into portions and serve hot or warm.

✿ Note: Shortcrust pastry or home-made [Fillo Pastry](#) may be used instead of fillo pastry sheets.



TARAMASALATA

Fish roe purée

MAKES: ABOUT 500 G (1 LB 2 OZ/2 CUPS) Tarama is the salted and cured roe of the grey mullet or cod, the basis of this popular and delicious Greek meze. As there are various types available, you might have to experiment to find one to your liking, and adjust the recipe accordingly.

The best tarama to my mind is the one imported from Greece. Usually available in bulk or in jars, it is a very firm, dusty-pink paste. Sometimes a retailer 'improves' it by softening the tarama (with what I do not know) and brightening it with food colouring. Avoid this variety.

Small tins of locally produced tarama are more widely available and handy to have in the refrigerator. This is a firm, orange-coloured paste and just a little bitter to my taste, though this lessens considerably if the taramosalata is refrigerated a day or two before serving.

Avgotaraho — salted, dried, amber-coloured roe — is often available at fishmongers and delicatessens. This makes an excellent taramosalata, but choose one that is not too hard. You can also prepare your own [Avgotaraho](#).

The strong-flavoured tarama must be broken down with crustless stale white bread, preferably from a Greek or continental-style loaf. Equal proportions by weight of these two ingredients is a good rule of thumb. Some cooks add mashed potato instead of the bread, or a combination of the two, to the detriment of the final taramosalata 4–5 thick slices of crustless stale white bread, about 150 g (5 oz) 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) tarama

1 small garlic clove, crushed

½ small onion, finely grated or ground 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice, strained 1 egg yolk, plus 1 egg white if needed 165 ml (5½ fl oz/⅔ cup) olive oil, plus extra for drizzling For serving

black olives, to garnish

crusty bread and crackers

raw vegetables such as radishes, celery and cucumber sticks Soak the bread in cold water and then squeeze dry. Add to a food processor with the tarama, garlic, onion and half the lemon juice.

Process until smoothly combined.

Add the egg yolk and beat well, then slowly add 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) of the oil. Taste and add more lemon juice if the mixture is too salty. Gradually add the remaining oil until the tarama is light and creamy. If it is very stiff, add the egg white and beat in well. (Some taramas will take the egg white, while others have a satisfactory consistency without it.) When completed, the taramosalata should hold its shape; chilling will thicken it further. Store it in a sealed container in the refrigerator until required.

To serve, pile the taramosalata in a deep bowl and garnish with olives. Serve with crusty bread, assorted crackers and a dish of crisp celery pieces, radish and cucumber sticks. The vegetable accompaniment is not traditional, but a joy to eat with the taramosalata spread onto the pieces.

AVGOTARAH

Dried mullet roe (Boutargo)

One of my most persistent childhood memories is of my mother preparing avgotaraho. For the uninitiated, this is the salted and dried roe of the mullet, rich amber in colour and a delight to eat, though its one annoying characteristic is that it rather clings to the teeth. At least the taste lingers for longer!

First of all you need to be on good terms with your fishmonger, particularly if he has a large Greek clientele. Cultivate the friendship so that it is ripe by early autumn or fall, wherever you happen to live. This is when the mullet is about to spawn, and some of the catch will yield trembling pairs of yellow roe. A good fishmonger knows how to gut the fish so as not to cut into the roe. However, my father preferred to do this himself at the fishmongers.

fresh mullet roe, in pairs

good-quality pure cooking salt

beeswax or paraffin wax, optional

Remove any red veins on each roe by carefully scraping with the back edge of a spoon. The spoon edge should not be sharp, as this could break the fine skin. Leave the roe in pairs.

Cover a flat dish with a layer of salt. Arrange the fish roe side by side on the salt, sprinkle thickly with more salt and place another layer of roe on top if you have a good supply. Top with more salt, adding enough to completely cover the roe. Leave for 6 hours at room temperature.

Have a large bowl of cold water ready. Dip each pair of roe into the water, lift out immediately and place flat on a rack. Smooth the roe with your fingers and leave to drain for 10 minutes.

Place the drained roe flat on a clean wooden board, then carefully place another board on top. If the top board is not very heavy, weigh it down with a heavy object. Leave for another 30 minutes.

Transfer the roe to a stainless steel or plastic-coated rack. Dry in an airy, shaded place for 1 week, turning the roe once each day. Cover them lightly with muslin (cheesecloth) to protect them. After drying, the roe will be firm and an amber shade, varying in depth according to the original colour.

Store the roe in a cool place, but not in a sealed container. The longer they are stored, the firmer they become; they will keep for up to 6 months.

To store them longer, dip the roe in melted beeswax or paraffin wax, place them on flat trays and leave them until set. This protects the roe more, but the roe will not dry out as much as the uncoated roe. Connoisseurs prefer very firm roe.

To eat, remove any wax coating and the fine skin, and slice the roe thinly. It is excellent as an appetiser with crusty bread and butter, or drizzle it with olive oil and add a squeeze of lemon juice and a grinding of black pepper.

The dried roe may also be used to make Taramosalata. Grate the amount required, mix well with a little lemon juice and leave until it softens. Then follow the recipe directions for [Taramosalata](#).

AGINARES ME AVGOLEMONO

Artichokes with Egg and Lemon Sauce SERVES: 6

Egg and Lemon Sauce marries perfectly with globe artichokes, which grow wild in rural Greece and on the islands. In this dish, they are used in a vegetable stew.

juice of 1 lemon 1 tablespoon olive oil

6 globe artichokes

Egg and Lemon Sauce

chopped fresh dill or parsley, to garnish, optional Add the lemon juice and oil to a saucepan of salted water and bring to the boil. Prepare the whole artichokes, add them to the boiling water and cook for 30 minutes, or until tender. Test by pulling a leaf — if it comes away easily, the artichokes are done.

Lift the artichokes out with a slotted spoon and invert them to drain. Place in a serving dish and keep hot.

Make the Egg and Lemon Sauce using chicken stock, or half stock and half cooking liquid from the artichokes. Pour the sauce over the artichokes and sprinkle with dill or parsley if desired. Serve as a first course or a light meal.

✿ Variation: Instead of artichokes you can also use asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts or celery hearts. Steam or boil according to the vegetable used, and make the sauce with chicken stock.

AGINARES ME ANITHO

Artichokes with dill

SERVES: 8 AS AN APPETISER, 4 AS A LIGHT MEAL

12 globe artichokes

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) chopped spring onions (scallions), white part only juice of 1 lemon

salt and ground freshly ground white pepper, to taste 2 tablespoons finely chopped dill, plus extra to garnish 3 teaspoons cornflour (cornstarch)

2 eggs

Prepare the [artichokes](#) as directed and cut each one in half.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and gently fry the spring onion until soft. Add half the lemon juice and 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water. Season generously with salt and pepper and bring to the boil.

Drain the artichokes and add them to the pan with the dill. Return to a slow simmer, then cover and simmer gently for 30 minutes, or until the artichokes are tender.

Lift the artichokes out with a slotted spoon and keep them hot in the oven, at 150°C (300°F). Strain the cooking liquid into another saucepan and boil until it has reduced by half.

Mix the cornflour to a paste with a little cold water and stir it into the simmering liquid. Stir until thickened and bubbling and leave to simmer gently.

Beat the eggs in a mixing bowl until light and frothy and gradually add the remaining lemon juice. Gradually pour in the simmering stock, beating constantly. Return the mixture to the pan and stir it over low heat for a minute or two to cook the egg.

Pile the artichokes on a warm platter. Drizzle with the sauce and sprinkle with a little more dill. Serve as a first course or a light meal.

SPANAKOPITAKIA

Spinach pastries MAKES: 15 TRIANGLES

Use half the quantity of spinach filling from the [Spanakopita](#). Shape into triangles or rolls as directed in the [Tiropitakia](#), or the Bourekakia Apo Tiri recipe to the right.

✿ Note: To freeze cheese and spinach pastries, prepare the pastries ready for baking and place on foil-lined baking trays. Brush the tops lightly with melted butter and place in the freezer only until firmly frozen. Remove them carefully and pack into freezer containers, placing plastic wrap between the layers. Seal and store in the freezer. To serve, transfer the frozen pastries to greased baking trays and bake in a preheated 190°C (375°F/Gas 5) oven for 20–25 minutes, or until golden brown and puffed.

BOUREKAKIA APO TIRI

Cheese rolls MAKES: 8 ROLLS

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Use the same ingredients as for the [Tiropitakia](#). Cut the pastry sheets in half, so that you have strips of fillo about 25 × 30 cm (10 × 12 inches) in size. Brush the strips with melted butter and fold in half lengthways. Brush them again with butter.

Spread about a tablespoon of filling along the bottom edge, keeping the sides clear. Turn the end of the pastry over the filling and fold in the sides along the length of the strip to contain the filling. Roll up firmly and place on greased baking trays, with the fold underneath.

Bake for 20–25 minutes, or until golden brown and puffed.

* Note: The filling for the [Tiropita](#) may be used instead of the cheese filling given in the [Tiropitakia](#). Use 2 eggs so that the filling is firmer and easier to work with.

PSOMI

Greek bread

MAKES: 2 LOAVES

This is the crusty, torpedo-shaped bread available at Greek and continental delicatessens. The moist atmosphere in the oven and spraying the bread with water produces a thick, crisp crust.

900 g (2 lb/6 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 tablespoon active dried yeast

2 teaspoons salt

3 teaspoons sugar

1 tablespoon olive oil or melted warm butter

1 tablespoon fine semolina (farina)

Sift the flour into a heatproof mixing bowl and warm it in a low oven.

Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) warm water. Stir in 440 ml (15 fl oz/1 3/4 cups) warm water, the salt and sugar.

Remove about 300 g (10 1/2 oz/2 cups) flour from the bowl and set aside. Make a well in the remaining flour and pour in the yeast mixture.

Stir in a little of the flour until the liquid is thick. Cover and leave in a warm place until frothy — about 10 minutes.

Stir the rest of the flour into the liquid, gradually adding the oil or butter. Beat with a wooden spoon or by hand until smooth for 10 minutes, or in an electric mixer with a dough hook for 5 minutes.

Gradually knead in the reserved flour; only knead in enough to stop the dough sticking. The dough is ready when it is satiny and the surface has a wrinkled texture. Shape into a ball.

Put the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, then turn it over so that the top is oiled. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place in a warm place for 1–1 1/2 hours, or until the dough has doubled in size.

Punch down the dough and divide in half. Turn out onto a floured board and form each half into a torpedo-shaped loaf.

Grease a baking tray and sprinkle it with the semolina. Place the loaves well apart on the baking tray and make four diagonal slashes across the top of each loaf. Cover them with a cloth and leave in a warm place until they have doubled in size — about 1 hour.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Place a dish of boiling water on the floor or the lowest shelf of the oven. Spray the bread lightly with water and bake for 35–40 minutes. After the first 15 minutes, spray the loaves again with water, then again 10 minutes later.

Cool on a rack near an open window.

FASSOULATHA

Bean soup

SERVES: 6–8

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) dried haricot (navy), cannellini, butterbeans (lima beans) or black-eyed beans

1 large onion, finely chopped

375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 2 tablespoons tomato paste (concentrated purée)

140 g (4¾ oz/1 cup) chopped celery, including leaves 155 g (5 oz/1 cup) diced carrot 3

tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley, plus extra to garnish 85 ml (3 fl oz/⅓ cup) olive oil ½ teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Wash the beans well in several changes of water. Place them in a large saucepan with 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water and bring to the boil. Leave to boil for 2 minutes, remove from the heat and leave the pan covered until the beans become plump. The time varies according to the size of the beans, with the smaller beans plumping in 1 hour; larger beans take about 2 hours.

Add the remaining ingredients, except for salt, which will stop the beans softening. Bring to the boil, then cover the pan, reduce the heat and simmer gently for 1 hour.

Add salt to taste. Cook for a further 30–60 minutes, or until the beans are tender — the actual time depends on the beans.

Serve hot in soup plates, sprinkling some more chopped parsley on each serve. Crusty bread, black olives, cheese and wine can accompany fassoulatha for a complete meal.



AVGOLE MONO SOUPA

Egg and lemon soup

SERVES: 6

1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) chicken or fish stock 75 g (2½ oz/⅓ cup) short-grain white rice or small soup noodles

3 eggs, separated

juice of 1 large lemon

salt and freshly ground white pepper, to taste Bring the stock to the boil and add the rice or noodles and salt. Stir until the stock returns to a slow boil, then cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes, or until the rice or noodles are tender. Skim off any froth during cooking.

In a mixing bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff. Add the egg yolks and beat until light and creamy. Gradually beat in the lemon juice.

Ladle about one-quarter of the simmering soup into the eggs, whisking constantly.

Gradually add the egg mixture to the soup, stirring vigorously. Remove the soup from the heat.

Keep stirring for 1 minute. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper and serve immediately.

✿ Note: This soup does not reheat satisfactorily, so must be prepared just before serving. Only the stock can be prepared beforehand. The rice or noodles must also be cooked in the stock just before serving.

MAYERITSA

Easter soup

SERVES: 6–8

The Paschal lamb, so much a part of the Greek Easter Sunday celebrations, usually comes with head and edible innards. The head is left on and it secures the lamb to the spit more successfully. The innards are used for making either mayeritsa or [Kokoretsi tis Souvlas](#). Often extra ingredients are obtained for making both.

A bowl of mayeritsa is the first meal served after the Lenten fast and follows the Saturday midnight service of the Resurrection.

As you are unlikely to purchase a lamb with all its spare parts, the recipe is given with ingredients easily obtained from your butcher.

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lamb tripe

2 lamb lungs

1 lamb heart

1 lamb liver

juice of 1 lemon

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter

240 g (8½ oz/2 cups) chopped spring onions (scallions)

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 teaspoons chopped dill

salt and freshly ground white pepper, to season

75 g (2½ oz/⅓ cup) short-grain white rice

To finish

3 eggs

juice of 1 lemon

Rinse the tripe well, place in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil, then drain.

Put the scalded tripe in a deep saucepan and add 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) cold water. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, rinse the lungs, heart and liver. Place in a bowl, cover with cold water and add the lemon juice. Leave to soak for 30 minutes, then drain.

Add the lungs, heart and liver to the pan and simmer gently, uncovered, for a further 10 minutes, skimming as required.

Lift out all the meats, reserving the stock. Cut the meat into very small pieces, discarding any tubes from the heart and liver. Set aside.

Melt the butter in a frying pan and gently fry the spring onion until translucent. Add the chopped meats and stir over medium heat for 5 minutes.

Transfer the pan contents to the saucepan of hot stock. Add the parsley and dill, and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 2 hours, or until meats are tender.

Rinse the rice and add to the pan. Boil, uncovered, for a further 20 minutes, adding a little more water if necessary.

To finish, beat the eggs in a bowl until foamy. Gradually beat in the lemon juice. Ladle about 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) of the boiling stock into the egg mixture, beating constantly. Pour the mixture back into the soup and stir over low heat for a minute or two to cook the egg. Do not let the soup boil again.

Remove the pan from the heat so that the heat of the pan does not curdle the egg. Keep stirring for a further minute and serve immediately.

✿ Note: The soup may be prepared and cooked for 2 hours, or until the meats are tender, then removed from the heat before the rice is added. When required for serving, return to the boil, add the rice and complete the cooking.

BAMYES TIGANITES

Fried okra

SERVES: 6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) okra 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil salt, to season lemon wedges, to serve Prepare the okra as directed. Dry very well with paper towels or a cloth.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan with a lid to fit. Add the okra and fry over medium heat, turning the okra carefully using blunt-ended tongs so it browns evenly.

When lightly browned, reduce the heat to low and cover the pan with the lid. Cook for 10 minutes, or until the okra are tender. Sprinkle lightly with salt.

Serve hot as a vegetable accompaniment, with lemon wedges for squeezing over the okra. Cooked this way, okra tastes like asparagus.

TOMATES YEMISTES

Stuffed tomatoes

SERVES: 6

12 ripe tomatoes

sugar, for sprinkling

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste **125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil**

1 large onion, chopped

40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts, optional **330 g (11½ oz/1½ cups) short-grain white rice** **75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) currants**

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 tablespoons chopped mint

water or dry white wine

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Slice the tops from the tomatoes and reserve. Scoop out the pulp and place in a saucepan. Sprinkle the cavities with a little sugar and set aside.

Add ½ teaspoon sugar to the tomato pulp and season with salt and pepper. Simmer until soft, then press through a sieve, reserving the pulp.

Heat half the oil in a saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the pine nuts, if using, and cook for a further 5 minutes. Stir in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) hot water. Add the rice, currants, parsley, mint and salt and pepper to taste.

Bring to the boil, then cover and reduce the heat. Simmer gently for 10 minutes, or until the rice has absorbed the liquid.

Spoon the mixture into the tomato cavities, allowing room for the rice to swell. Replace the tops and stand the tomatoes in a baking dish.

Pour the puréed tomato pulp and an equal quantity of water or white wine into the baking dish. Spoon the remaining oil over the tomatoes.

Bake, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Serve hot or cold.

✿ Note: This makes a pleasant luncheon dish, or an attractive accompaniment to main meals.

AGINARES ALAPOLITA

Braised artichokes

SERVES: 6

12 globe artichoke hearts

4 spring onions (scallions), chopped 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) baby carrots, scraped 12 small onions, peeled

12 small new potatoes, scraped

juice of 1 lemon

185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) olive oil chicken stock or water

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 1 tablespoon chopped dill or flat-leaf parsley, plus extra to garnish 1 tablespoon cornflour (cornstarch) Prepare the artichoke hearts as directed.

Line a wide-based saucepan with the spring onions. Arrange the artichoke hearts and other vegetables on top.

Add the lemon juice, oil and enough water or chicken stock to barely cover. Season with salt and pepper and sprinkle the dill or parsley over the vegetables.

Cover and simmer gently for 30 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender.

Remove the vegetables to a heated platter with a slotted spoon, arranging them attractively. Keep them hot.

Mix the cornflour to a paste with a little cold water and stir it into the liquid in the pan. Let it boil gently for 2 minutes, until thickened.

Pour the sauce over the vegetables and serve sprinkled with some more chopped herbs.



BRIAMI

Vegetable casserole

SERVES: 6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) zucchini (courgettes) 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) potatoes 2 green capsicums (peppers)

2 onions

2 garlic cloves, crushed

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes ½ teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley, plus extra to garnish 2 teaspoons chopped dill or fennel, plus extra to garnish 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Cut the zucchini and potatoes into 1 cm (½ inch) slices. Wash the capsicums and remove the stems, seeds and white membrane, then slice the flesh. Slice the onions.

Mix together the garlic, tomatoes and sugar.

Oil a baking dish and arrange some onion slices on the base. Add a layer of zucchini, potato and capsicum, then top with some of the tomato mixture. Season with salt and pepper and sprinkle with some of the herbs and oil. Repeat with a few more layers until all the ingredients have been used, finishing with the herbs and oil.

Cover and bake for 1–1½ hours, or until the vegetables are tender, removing the lid or foil for the last 15 minutes.

Garnish with some more chopped herbs and serve immediately as a course on its own, or as an accompaniment to roasted or grilled meats, fish or meat patties.

✿ Variation: Reduce the zucchini to 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) and add an equal quantity of eggplant (aubergine), sliced thickly and salted for 30 minutes. Rinse and dry before using.

KOUKIA TIGANITA

Fried broad beans

SERVES: 6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) very young broad beans (fava beans) (fava beans) plain (all-purpose) flour, for coating olive oil, for pan-frying lemon wedges, to serve Wash the broad beans well. Remove the tops and tails, pulling off the strings as they are removed. Leave whole.

Drop the beans into boiling salted water and boil rapidly for 5 minutes. Remove and drain well. Leave until dry.

Roll the beans in flour to coat. Heat enough oil in a frying pan to coat the base. Fry the beans over medium-high heat until golden brown, turning to brown them evenly.

Serve hot, with lemon wedges for squeezing over.

SPANAKORIZO

Spinach pilaff

SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) spinach 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil

120 g (4 oz/1 cup) chopped spring onions (scallions) 1 leek, white part only, chopped, optional 440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) short-grain white rice 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 teaspoon chopped dill

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Remove the roots and any damaged leaves from the spinach. Wash the spinach well in several changes of water, then drain. Tear the leaves into pieces and chop the stalks.

Heat the oil in a deep saucepan and gently fry the spring onion and leek, if using, until soft.

Wash the rice, drain well and add to the pan. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring frequently.

Add the remaining ingredients and 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water and bring to the boil. When the mixture is boiling, add the spinach, stir well and cover tightly with a lid. Reduce the heat and simmer gently over low heat for 15 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat, leaving it tightly covered, and allow to stand for 5–10 minutes before serving.

Serve hot as an accompaniment to main meals, particularly grilled meats and fish. It is also good served cold.

✿ Note: Silverbeet (Swiss chard) may be used instead of spinach. Remove the stalks, wash the better stalks and chop finely. Parboil the stalks for 5 minutes in salted water, drain, then add to the rice with the chopped leaves.

SALATES

Salads

To the Greeks, salads range from the puréed [Taramosalata](#) and [Melitzanosalata](#), through to a variety of boiled vegetable salads simply dressed with olive oil and lemon juice and usually served lukewarm, to the traditional salads made from raw ingredients.

The cooked and raw vegetable salads require dressings and these are given with serving suggestions. Use them for Cypriot cooking as well.

LATHOXITHO

Oil and vinegar dressing

MAKES: ABOUT 200 ML (7 FL OZ)

Pepare as for [Latholemono](#), but substitute wine vinegar for the lemon juice and add ½ teaspoon mustard powder. Serve with any raw vegetable salad, or cooked dried bean, potato, and beetroot salads.

LATHOLEMONO

Oil and lemon dressing

MAKES: ABOUT 200 ML (7 FL OZ) 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice 2 teaspoons chopped oregano or flat-leaf parsley, optional

1 garlic clove, crushed, optional

½ teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to taste Combine the ingredients in a bowl and beat well with a fork, or place in a screw-top jar, seal and shake well.

Beat or shake again just before using.

* Note: This dressing can be used in a variety of ways. Pour it over hot boiled vegetables such as green beans, endive, zucchini (courgettes) — which are particularly good if their blossom is still attached — broccoli, globe artichokes, cauliflower, cabbage, spinach, silverbeet (Swiss chard), and wild greens such as dandelion and amaranth (vlita). Either serve hot, or let the vegetables cool to room temperature. You can also brush the dressing onto fish, shellfish, lamb or chicken when grilling. It is excellent served with lobster and prawns (shrimp).

SALATA ELINI

Greek salad

The ingredients and the quantities you use in this salad are up to you. The greens, feta and olives are mandatory, and many would not regard it a Greek salad without the anchovies. The combination depends on what is available and the meal it is to accompany — choose a plain salad for rich meals, and a salad with a variety of ingredients for plain meals such as grilled meats, chicken and fish.

salad greens such as cos (romaine), imperial or iceberg lettuce onion rings

sliced radishes tomato wedges

cucumber slices green capsicum (pepper) strips feta cheese

black olives

anchovy fillets chopped flat-leaf parsley pickled capers Lathoxitho

dill sprigs or fennel fronds, to garnish, optional Wash the greens well, shake off the excess moisture and wrap them in a tea towel (dish towel). Place in the refrigerator for 1–2 hours to dry the greens and make them crisp.

Break up the greens, or shred them coarsely using a very sharp knife (this is the Greek method and it is a good one, as the greens are less likely to be bruised).

Place the greens in a bowl and add any other ingredients desired. Add the dressing just before serving and toss at the table. Garnish as desired.



SALATA HORIATIKO

Village salad

SERVES: 6

4 tomatoes

2 slender, young green cucumbers 1 green capsicum (pepper)

2 red onions

125 g (4 oz) feta cheese 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) black olives Lathoxitho

If peeled tomatoes are desired, score a cross in the base of each one, place in a heatproof bowl and cover with boiling water. Leave for 30 seconds, then transfer to cold water and peel the skin away from the cross.

Cut the tomatoes into wedges. Peel the cucumbers thinly, halve them lengthways, then cut into 1 cm (½ inch) slices.

Wash the capsicum and remove the stem, seeds and white membrane, then cut into thick strips. Slice the onion and separate into rings.

Place the prepared ingredients in a salad bowl. Dice the feta and scatter over the top with the olives. Pour on the dressing just before serving.

GARITHES YIOUVETSI

Baked prawns

SERVES: 6

**1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) large raw prawns (shrimp) 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 1 onion, finely chopped
120 g (4 oz/1 cup) chopped spring onions (scallions) 2 garlic cloves, crushed 500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) dry white wine**

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

½ teaspoon dried rigani or oregano salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste 125 g (4 oz) feta cheese crusty bread, to serve Shell the prawns, leaving the last segment of the shell and the tail intact. Devein the prawns and rinse them. Dry with paper towels and refrigerate until required.

Heat the oil in a saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the spring onion and garlic and cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes, wine, most of the parsley, the rigani or oregano and salt and pepper to taste. Cover and simmer gently for 30 minutes, or until the sauce is thick.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 250°C (480°F/Gas 9).

Spoon half the sauce into six individual baking dishes or one large baking dish. Add the prawns and spoon the remaining sauce over them. Coarsely crumble the feta cheese and sprinkle over the top.

Bake for 10–12 minutes, or until the prawns are pink and the feta has melted and is lightly browned. Sprinkle with the remaining parsley and serve immediately as a first course with crusty bread.

OKTAPOTHI KRASATO

Octopus in red wine

SERVES: 5–6

1 octopus, about 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz), plus the ink sac, optional 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil 1 large onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) dry red wine 375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

Clean the octopus as directed in the [Oktapothi Toursi](#) recipe. Reserve the ink sac if still present.

Place the body and tentacles in a saucepan without any liquid, then cover and simmer for 15 minutes — the octopus will exude its own juice. Drain and leave to cool a little.

Cut the body and tentacles into small pieces, stripping off the suckers if desired.

Heat the oil in a separate saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the garlic and octopus pieces and stir over medium heat for 5 minutes longer. Add the wine and cook until most of the wine has evaporated.

Reduce the heat and add the ink from the sac, if using. Add the tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently over low heat for 1½ hours, or until the octopus is tender. Add water during cooking if the mixture looks like it may be scorching.

Stir in most of the parsley, then cook for a further minute. Sprinkle with the remaining parsley and serve hot, with boiled pasta or rice.

✿ Note: The ink from the octopus can also be used as a bread dip: sizzle it in olive oil in a frying pan and combine it with lemon

PILAFI ME MYTHIA

Mussel pilaff

SERVES: 6

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) fresh mussels 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter

1 large onion, finely chopped

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) dry white wine 1½ teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) short-grain white rice 3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley, plus extra to garnish lemon wedges, to serve

Scrub the mussels with a stiff brush, scraping the shells with a knife blade to clean them thoroughly. Tug the beard towards the pointed end to remove.

Place the mussels in a bowl of lukewarm salted water until they open. If any are open to begin with, tap the shell — if the mussel does not close, discard it. While the mussels are open, run lukewarm water into the bowl so that any sand can be expelled from the mussels. Drain.

Heat the oil and butter in a deep saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the mussels, then cover and cook for 5 minutes, or until the shells open. If any do not open, discard them.

Pour in 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) cold water. Add the wine and salt and season with pepper. Cover and bring to a slow simmer. Leave to simmer gently for 10 minutes, then remove the mussels with a slotted spoon.

Wash the rice until the water runs clear, then add to the liquid in the pan with the parsley. Bring to the boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat, cover the pan tightly and cook over low heat for 15 minutes.

While the rice is cooking, scoop most of the mussels from their shells and reserve. Keep six mussels in their shells to decorate the finished dish.

Put the shelled mussels on top of the rice. Place two paper towels over the rim of the pan and fit the lid on firmly. Leave over low heat for a further 5 minutes, then remove the pan to the side of the stove and leave to sit for 10 minutes.

Mix the mussels through the rice with a fork. Pile the pilafi into a dish. Serve garnish with the reserved mussels, some more parsley and lemon wedges.

✿ Note: For a different flavour, replace 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) of the cooking water with 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes).



PILAFI ME GARITHES

Prawn pilaff

Follow the basic ingredients and method for Pilafi me Mythia (left), replacing the mussels with 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) raw prawns (shrimp). Rinse the prawns well and cook them gently in their shells until they turn pink. Shell the prawns and devein them, reserving six in their shells as a garnish.

Follow the remainder of the method for Pilafi me Mythia, adding the shelled prawns to the rice instead of the mussels. Tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) may also replace some of the cooking water in this pilaff.

SOUPIES ME SPANAKI

Cuttlefish with spinach

SERVES: 6

Soupies (cuttlefish), as distinct from kalamaria (squid), are preferred for this dish, though either may be used. Cleaning cuttlefish can be a rather messy business as these marine molluscs have an ink sac (from which the pigment sepia is obtained). The sac ruptures easily and is usually ruptured by the time you purchase the cuttlefish, so don't be put off by their colour — the ink rinses off easily.

**750 g (1 lb 10 oz) cuttlefish or squid 85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) spinach
8 spring onions (scallions), chopped juice of ½ lemon**

Rinse the cuttlefish or squid and remove the head, tentacles and intestines. Discard the intestines. Pull out the cuttle bone, or the fine translucent bone if squid is being used. Pull off the fine skin and rinse. Remove the eyes and beak from the head, leave the head attached to the tentacles, and pull or rub off as much skin as will easily come off from the tentacles.

Slice the hood or body into strips. If the squid are large, slice the head and tentacles; cuttlefish tentacles are usually small and these are left intact.

Place the cuttlefish or squid in a saucepan over medium heat. Cover and cook for 15 minutes in its own juices.

Add half the oil and just enough water to cover. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 45 minutes, or until tender.

Meanwhile, trim the spinach and wash thoroughly. Drain well and coarsely chop the leaves and stalks.

Heat the remaining oil in a large frying pan and gently fry the spring onion until soft. Add the spinach and stir until it wilts.

Add the spinach mixture to the cuttlefish or squid with the lemon juice. Adjust the seasoning to taste.

Cover and simmer for a further 10–15 minutes. Serve hot.



HINA YEMISTI ME KASTANA Roast goose with chestnut stuffing SERVES: 8–10

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) chestnuts 100 g (3½ oz) butter

1 small onion, chopped

5 cooking apples

1 goose, about 4 kg (8 lb 12 oz) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season ½ lemon white wine

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Cut through the shell of each chestnut at each end, cover with water and boil for 10 minutes. Remove from the water a few at a time and peel off the shell and inner covering on the nut. Break half the chestnuts in half to use in the stuffing; leave the rest whole as a garnish and set aside.

Melt 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) of the butter in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until soft. Add the broken chestnuts and cook for a few minutes longer, then remove from the heat.

Peel, core and dice four of the apples and add to the sautéed chestnut mixture. Mix well and set aside.

Remove the fat from the cavity of the goose. Dry well inside and out and sprinkle the cavity with salt and pepper. Fill with the chestnut mixture, secure the opening and truss. Rub the goose with the cut lemon and season well.

Place on a rack in a roasting tin and roast for 3½ hours, or until tender. Place the goose on a warm platter and leave to rest in a warm place for 20 minutes.

Skim the fat from the pan juices and dilute with a little wine. Reheat, adjust the seasoning and strain into a sauceboat.

Meanwhile, melt the remaining butter in a frying pan. Slice the remaining apple, gently fry until golden and remove from the pan. Gently fry the reserved whole chestnuts in the butter.

Garnish the goose with the apple and chestnuts and serve.

KOTOPOULO KAPAMA

Braised chicken

SERVES: 6

1 chicken, about 2 kg (4 lb 6 oz) 60 g (2 oz/ ¼ cup) butter 1 onion, finely chopped 1 garlic clove, crushed 375 g (13 oz/ 1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 1 tablespoon tomato paste (concentrated purée) 125 ml (4 fl oz/ ½ cup) dry white wine 1 bay leaf

2 pieces of cinnamon bark

½ teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Cut the chicken into serving pieces and wipe dry.

Melt the butter in a heavy-based saucepan or flameproof casserole dish and brown the chicken in batches on all sides. Remove to a plate.

Reduce the heat and gently fry the onion and garlic until the onion is translucent. Add all the remaining ingredients, except the chicken. Mix well, then cover and simmer for 20 minutes.

Return the chicken to the pan. Cover and simmer gently for a further 45 minutes, or until the chicken is tender. Remove the bay leaf and cinnamon.

Serve with boiled macaroni or spaghetti and grated cheese.

* Note: The chicken may also be cooked in a 160°C (320°F/Gas 2-3) oven for 1–1½ hours.

KOTOPOULO STIFATHO

Chicken with onions

Follow the Kotopoulo Kapama recipe (opposite). When returning the browned chicken pieces to the sauce, add 3 cloves and 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) peeled small whole onions (with a cross cut into the root ends to stop the centres popping out). Cook for 45-60 minutes. Remove the cloves and serve with mashed potato and a boiled green vegetable or a tossed salad.

KOTOPOULO ME BAMYES

Chicken with okra

Proceed as for Kotopoulo Kapama (opposite). Prepare 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) [okra](#) as directed and dry very well with paper towels or a cloth. Lightly brown the okra in a little butter. Add to the chicken 20 minutes before the end of the cooking time. Serve with whole boiled or mashed potatoes.

PSITO KATSAROLAS LEMONATO

Pot roast with lemon

SERVES: 6

1 boned shoulder of lamb or veal, about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) 85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) lemon juice salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

2 teaspoons dried rigani or oregano

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil 2 garlic cloves, crushed

If using lamb, first trim away the excess fat. Open out the shoulder and rub the meat with some of the lemon juice. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and about ½ teaspoon of the rigani or oregano. Roll up and tie securely with kitchen string.

Rub the outside of the meat with more lemon juice, salt, pepper and rigani.

Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and brown the meat on all sides. Reduce the heat and add the garlic and the remaining lemon juice and rigani.

Cover the pan tightly and simmer over low heat for 2½ hours, or until the meat is tender. Turn the meat occasionally during cooking.

Remove the string and slice the pot roast to serve. Pour the juices into a bowl and serve separately.

* Note: 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) small potatoes, peeled and browned in a little olive oil, may be added to the roast 1 hour before the end of cooking time.

LAMBRATIS ANDROS

Easter lamb or kid, Andros style

SERVES: 20

The major problem with preparing this Easter lamb speciality from the lovely island of Andros is having an oven large enough for the lamb. Perhaps an obliging restaurateur or baker in your area might let you use their oven at a convenient time.

In Andros they use a special cover made of baked clay to keep the lamb moist and succulent. Foil is a reasonable substitute, but has to be removed to give the browning effect naturally produced with the traditional covering.

1 baby lamb or kid, about 10–12 kg (22–26½ lb) juice of 2 lemons

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter, melted

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil

Spinach and feta stuffing

2.5 kg (5 lb 8 oz) spinach

185 ml (6½ fl oz¾ cup) olive oil

12 spring onions (scallions), chopped

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) short-grain white rice, washed 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) feta cheese

3 tablespoons chopped dill

3 tablespoons chopped mint

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Wipe the lamb or kid inside and out with a damp cloth. Rub the cavity and the outside with some of the lemon juice, salt and pepper. Cover and set aside while making the stuffing.

Trim the roots from the spinach, if present, and remove any discoloured and damaged leaves. Wash the spinach in several changes of water, drain well and chop roughly.

Heat the oil in a large heavy-based (non-aluminium) saucepan and gently fry the spring onion until soft. Add the spinach and stir until it wilts. Stir in the washed rice, then cover and cook over low heat for 10 minutes, or until most of the liquid has been absorbed. Remove from the heat and cool.

Break the feta into small chunks and add to the spinach mixture with the herbs. Mix well, taste, then add salt if necessary and a generous grinding of pepper. Mix thoroughly.

Partly sew up the lamb or kid cavity with kitchen string. Pack the stuffing in through the opening and finish sewing up the cavity. Push the foreshanks back towards the body and tie them in position, passing string over the back of the carcass. Tie the back legs, leaving them a little apart — tying them will stop them splaying outwards.

Rub the outside again with lemon juice, salt and pepper and place on a rack set in a large catering-size baking

dish.

Combine the melted butter with the oil and brush half the mixture over the meat. Cover the dish with large sheets of foil, sealing the joins with double folds. Press the foil under the edges of the dish to seal it completely.

Roast for 2 hours. Lift the foil and brush the meat with more of the butter and oil mixture. Roast for a further 1½–2 hours, remove the foil and brush again.

Roast, uncovered, for a further 30 minutes, or until the meat is cooked through and browned — depending on its size, it may need a final 30 minutes or so.

Remove from the oven and cover with the foil and a thick cloth. Leave to rest for 30 minutes before carving.

Lift the meat onto a large wooden board. Remove the string and spoon the stuffing onto a platter.

Turn the meat on its back and chop along the backbone from the inside with a cleaver. Then chop each half into chunks and pile them onto platters. The meat on the legs may be carved into slices.

PASTITSO

Macaroni and meat pie SERVES: 12 AS A FIRST COURSE, 6–8 AS A MAIN COURSE

Meat sauce

40 g (1½ oz) butter

1 large onion, chopped 1 garlic clove, crushed 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) minced (ground) beef 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée) 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) dry red or white wine 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) stock

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

½ teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Pasta mixture

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) long macaroni 90 g (3 oz/⅓ cup) butter 75 g (2½ oz/¾ cup) grated kefalotiri or parmesan cheese ¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste 3 eggs, lightly beaten Cream sauce

90 g (3 oz/⅓ cup) butter 75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) milk ¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg salt and ground freshly ground white pepper, to taste 1 egg, lightly beaten

To make the meat sauce, melt the butter in a large saucepan and gently fry the onion and garlic until the onion is soft. Increase the heat and add the beef. Stir well and cook until the meat begins to brown. Add the remaining ingredients, then cover and simmer over a gentle heat for 40 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) and prepare the pasta mixture. First cook the macaroni in a saucepan of boiling salted water until just tender. Drain and return to the pan. Melt the butter in a saucepan until golden brown and pour over the macaroni. Add two-thirds of the cheese, the nutmeg and salt and pepper to taste. Toss well and leave until cool. Add the eggs and toss again. Set aside.

To make the cream sauce, melt the butter in a saucepan, stir in the flour and cook gently for 2 minutes. Add the milk all at once and bring to the boil, stirring constantly. Simmer gently for 1 minute. Add the nutmeg, season to taste with salt and freshly ground white pepper and allow to cool a little before stirring in the egg.

Stir 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) of the cream sauce into the cooked meat sauce.

To assemble the pastitso, butter a 23 × 33 × 8 cm (9 × 13 × 3¼ inch) baking dish. Spoon half the pasta mixture evenly over the base, then top with the meat sauce. Cover with the remaining pasta mixture, levelling the top.

Pour on the cream sauce and spread it to completely cover the macaroni. Sprinkle the remaining cheese on top and bake for 50 minutes, or until golden brown.

Let the pastitso stand for 10 minutes before cutting it into squares to serve.

STIFATHO

Braised beef and onions

SERVES: 5–6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) braising beef 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter or oil 1 onion, finely chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) red wine 2 tablespoons wine vinegar 1 bay leaf

2 pieces of cinnamon bark 4 cloves

1 teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) small pickling onions 2 tablespoons currants, optional Preheat the oven to 150°C (300°F).

Cut the beef into 3 cm (1¼ inch) cubes. Heat half the butter in a frying pan and brown the meat, placing one layer of meat in the pan at a time. Transfer the browned meat to a casserole dish.

Add the onion and garlic to the pan with the remaining butter and fry gently until the onion is soft.

Add the tomato passata, wine and wine vinegar, and stir to dislodge any cooked-on bits on the base of the pan. Pour the juices over the meat in the casserole.

Stir in the bay leaf, spices and sugar and season with salt and pepper. Cover and bake for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, remove the tops and roots from the onions. Cut a cross into the root ends to stop the centres popping out during cooking. Place the onions in a heatproof bowl and cover with boiling water. Leave for 2 minutes, then drain and slip off the skins — they will now slip off easily.

Add the onions to the casserole with the currants, if using, and bake for a further 1–1½ hours, or until the meat and onions are tender and the sauce is thick. Remove the cinnamon.

Serve with mashed potato or pilaff.

✿ Note: This dish may also be cooked slowly on top of the stove.



KEFTETHES

Meat patties

SERVES: 6

These delicious meat patties are a family favourite. Since the introduction of the food processor, I have developed the recipe so that the meat mixture can be made very quickly.

2 eggs

4–5 slices of stale white bread 1 large onion, grated juice of 1 lemon

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

1–2 teaspoons chopped mint, optional 1½ teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) finely minced (ground) beef or lamb plain (all-purpose) flour, for coating oil, for pan-frying Lightly beat the eggs in a deep mixing bowl. Remove the crusts from the bread and discard. Soak the bread in cold water, then squeeze dry. Crumble the bread into the eggs and add the onion, lemon juice, herbs and seasonings. Leave for 10 minutes.

Add the meat and mix lightly and thoroughly, using your hands if necessary. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

With moistened hands, shape the meat into balls about the size of small eggs. Roll them in flour, then flatten each one to a thick patty. Working in batches, pan-fry the patties in hot oil for 3–4 minutes on each side, until nicely browned. Drain on paper towels.

Place the patties in a serving dish as they are cooked and drained, and keep them hot until all the patties are done.

Serve hot with a boiled green vegetable and mashed potato, or with a tossed salad and fried potatoes.

If you wish, make [Tomato Sauce](#), omitting the cinnamon, and pour over the patties before serving.

✿ Note: If using a food processor, combine the well-squeezed, soaked bread in the processor with the roughly chopped onion and herbs. Blend until puréed, then add the lemon juice, eggs, salt and pepper. Process until combined, then add a handful of the beef or lamb and process briefly. Add the mixture to the remaining meat and mix thoroughly with your hands. Cover and refrigerate, then shape and cook as above.

KEFTETHAKIA

Cocktail meatballs

Follow the recipe for [Keftethes](#) substituting 1 tablespoon ouzo for the lemon juice. Shape the meatballs to the size of small walnuts, coat with flour and deep-fry in hot oil, a few at a time. Drain and serve hot or cold as an appetiser. Garnish with lemon wedges and parsley and supply cocktail sticks for your guests' convenience.

KEFTETHES APO TON PONTOS

Meat patties from Ponti

SERVES: 5–6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) veal stewing meat 250 g (9 oz) pork stewing meat 3 thick slices of stale bread, crusts removed 1 onion, finely chopped

1 garlic clove, finely chopped 3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley 1 teaspoon chopped mint

1 teaspoon chopped basil

1 tomato, peeled and chopped 1 egg

1 tablespoon vinegar

1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season plain (all-purpose) flour, for coating oil, for pan-frying

Grind the veal and pork finely, leaving some fat on the pork. Alternatively, ask a butcher to do this for you.

Soak the bread in cold water, then squeeze it dry and crumble it into a mixing bowl. Add the onion, garlic, herbs, tomato, egg and vinegar. Mix in the bicarbonate of soda and season with salt and pepper.

Add the veal and pork and mix lightly and thoroughly, using your hands if necessary. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Roll about 2 tablespoons of the mixture at a time into balls. Moisten your hands occasionally. Roll the balls in flour, then flatten them into rounds about 5 cm (2 inches) in diameter.

Working in batches, pan-fry the patties in hot oil for 4–5 minutes on each side. The patties will puff up, so turn them carefully with a spatula or tongs. Drain on paper towels.

Place the patties in a serving dish as they are cooked and drained, and keep them hot until all the patties are done.

Serve hot with fried potatoes and vegetables or salad.

MELITZANES MOUSSAKA

Eggplant moussaka

SERVES: 6–8

**1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) eggplants (aubergines) salt, for sprinkling
olive oil, for brushing Meat sauce**

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 large onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) minced (ground) beef or lamb 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes 2 tablespoons tomato paste (concentrated purée) 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) white wine 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 teaspoon sugar

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Béchamel sauce

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter 50 g (2 oz/⅓ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) milk ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg 25 g (¾ oz/¼ cup) grated kefalograviera or parmesan cheese salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste 1 egg, lightly beaten

Wash the eggplants. Leaving the skin on, cut them into 5 mm (¼ inch) slices. Sprinkle the slices with salt and leave for 1 hour. Dry with paper towels.

Place a layer of the eggplant on an oiled baking tray and brush with oil. Lightly brown under a hot grill (broiler); turn, brush again with oil and brown the other side. (Alternatively, the eggplant may be pan-fried in oil; however, the grilling method stops the eggplant absorbing excessive oil.) Stack the slices on a plate when cooked.

To make the meat sauce, heat the oil in a large saucepan and gently fry the onion and garlic for 10 minutes. Add the meat and brown over high heat, stirring well. Add the remaining ingredients, then cover and simmer gently for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

To make the béchamel sauce, melt the butter in a saucepan, stir in the flour and cook gently for 2 minutes. Add the milk all at once and bring to the boil, stirring constantly. Let the sauce bubble gently for 1 minute. Remove from the heat, stir in the nutmeg and 1 tablespoon of the cheese. Season to taste. Cover the top of the sauce with buttered greaseproof (parchment) paper if not required immediately.

Grease a 23 × 33 × 5 cm (9 × 13 × 2 inch) baking dish. Place a layer of eggplant slices in the base, then top with half the meat sauce. Add another layer of eggplant, then the remaining meat sauce. Finish with a third layer

of eggplant.

Stir the beaten egg into the béchamel sauce and spread it over the moussaka. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese and bake for 1 hour.

Allow the moussaka to stand for 10 minutes before cutting into squares to serve.

ARNI FRICASSE

Lamb fricassee

SERVES: 4–6

40 g (1½ oz) butter

1 large onion, chopped

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) lean boneless lamb, cubed

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley, plus extra to garnish

1 teaspoon chopped dill or fennel, optional

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

your choice of prepared vegetable (see note)

Egg and Lemon Sauce

Melt the butter in a heavy-based saucepan or flameproof casserole dish. Gently fry the onion until translucent. Increase the heat to medium–high and add the lamb. Cook, stirring constantly, until the meat juices evaporate — the meat should not brown.

Reduce the heat and pour in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) hot water. Stir in the herbs and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 1–1½ hours.

Add your choice of vegetable and continue to cook until the lamb and vegetable are tender.

Carefully drain the liquid from the pan into a measuring jug. Add enough hot water or stock to make 375 ml (12½ fl oz/ 1½ cups) sauce. Keep the sauce contents hot.

Meanwhile, pour the Egg and Lemon Sauce over the lamb mixture. Cover and leave at the side of the stove for 5 minutes.

Arrange the lamb and vegetables in a serving dish and sprinkle with more chopped parsley. Serve immediately with crusty bread and a chilled white wine.

✿ Note: Add any one of the following vegetables to the fricassee:

- 8–12 small globe [artichoke hearts](#), prepared as directed. Add to the meat after 1 hour and cook for a further 30–45 minutes.
- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) celery stalks, cut into 8 cm (3¼ inch) lengths and blanched in boiling salted water for 5 minutes. Drain, add to the meat after 1 hour and cook for a further 45 minutes. Pork can be used instead of lamb with this vegetable.

- 4 heads of endive, washed well and trimmed of any coarse leaves. Slit the heads in half lengthways and blanch them in boiling salted water for 2 minutes. Drain, add to the meat after 1½ hours and cook for a further 15 minutes.
- 4 small firm heads of lettuce, washed well and quartered. Place in a colander and scald with boiling water. Add after 1½ hours and cook for a further 15 minutes.

ARNI LEMONATO

Roast lemon lamb

SERVES: 6–8

1 leg of lamb, about 2 kg (4 lb 6 oz)

2–3 garlic cloves

juice of 2 lemons

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

1 teaspoon dried rigani or oregano

40 g (1½ oz) butter **Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).**

Wipe the lamb with a damp cloth, then cut small slits into the lamb. Cut the garlic cloves into slivers and insert them in the slits. Rub the entire surface of the lamb with lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with the rigani or oregano.

Place the lamb in a roasting tin and roast for 1 hour.

Drain off the fat and add 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) hot water to the roasting tin. Spread the butter over the lamb and return it to the oven. Roast for a further 1½ hours, or until the lamb is cooked to taste. Turn during cooking to brown it evenly.

Allow the lamb to rest in a warm place for 15–20 minutes before carving.

Skim off the excess fat from the pan juices. Reduce it by simmering it in a saucepan if necessary and serve with the lamb.

✿ Note: 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) peeled and quartered potatoes may be cooked with the lamb during the last hour. Sprinkle the potatoes with some extra lemon juice, rigani or oregano, salt and pepper.



PAITHAKIA ALAHASAPIKO

Lamb chops butcher's style SERVES: 6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) lamb shoulder chops 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) olive oil salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 1/2 teaspoon rigani or oregano

4 tomatoes

2 onions, sliced

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) potatoes, peeled and sliced Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Trim the excess fat from the lamb chops. Brush a baking dish with 1 tablespoon of the oil and place the chops in a single layer in the dish. Season with salt and pepper and sprinkle on the rigani or oregano.

Score a cross in the base of each tomato. Place in a heatproof bowl and cover with boiling water. Leave for 30 seconds, then transfer to cold water and peel the skin away from the cross. Slice the tomatoes.

Arrange the onion slices on top of the chops and cover with a layer of sliced tomatoes. Season the tomatoes lightly. Pour on the remaining oil and bake for 1 hour.

Top with the potatoes, season lightly and brush with a little more oil. Bake for a further 30 minutes.

Serve hot with a green vegetable, salad and crusty bread.

✿ Variation: Add a sliced carrot to the dish with the onions, and a cup of shelled peas with the potatoes for a complete one-dish main course.

SKEMBE YAHNI

Tripe stew

SERVES: 4–5

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) tripe juice of 1 lemon

40 g (1½ oz) butter

1 large onion, chopped

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley, plus extra to garnish 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée) 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) dry white wine salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Wash the tripe well and drain. Cut into small squares or fingers and place in a dish. Add the lemon juice, stir and leave for 1 hour.

Place the tripe in a saucepan, add water to cover and bring to the boil. Drain off the water and remove the tripe to a plate.

Clean the saucepan and add the butter. Melt over medium heat and gently fry the onion until translucent.

Stir in the parsley and fry for 1 minute. Add the tomato paste, 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water and the wine. Season with salt and pepper and bring to a slow simmer.

Return the tripe to the pan. Cover and simmer gently for 2 hours, or until the tripe is tender. To test for tenderness, take out a piece and pull — if it breaks apart easily, the tripe is cooked.

Place in a serving dish, garnish with parsley and serve hot with pilaff and a tossed salad.

ARNI SOUVLAKI

Skewered lamb

SERVES: 6–8

**1 leg of lamb, about 2 kg (4 lb 6 oz), boned 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup)
dry white wine juice of 1 lemon**

2 teaspoons dried rigani or oregano

2 garlic cloves, crushed or chopped 3–4 bay leaves, torn

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season flat-leaf parsley, to garnish lemon wedges, to garnish

Cut the lamb into 4 cm (1½ inch) cubes and place in a glass or ceramic dish. Add the remaining ingredients, except the garnishes. Mix well to coat the meat. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for 12–24 hours, stirring the meat occasionally.

Lift the lamb out of the marinade and thread onto metal skewers, placing pieces of bay leaf between the lamb cubes.

Cook under a hot grill (broiler) or over glowing barbecue coals for 15 minutes, or until cooked to taste, turning and basting frequently with the marinade.

Place on a platter and garnish with parsley and lemon wedges. Serve hot.

YAHNI ME KOUKIA

Meat stew with broad beans

SERVES: 5–6

- 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) boneless beef or lamb stewing meat** **2 tablespoons olive oil, or 40 g (1½ oz) butter** **1 large onion, finely chopped**
2 garlic cloves, crushed
70 g (2½ oz/½ cup) chopped celery
1 carrot, sliced
250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes **60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée)**
60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) dry red wine
3 cloves
1 bay leaf

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

½ teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season **500 g (1 lb 2 oz) very young broad beans (fava beans); (see note) Trim the meat and cut into 3 cm (1¼ inch) cubes.**

Heat half the oil or butter in a heavy-based saucepan. Add a single layer of meat to the pan at a time and brown quickly on each side. Remove to a plate.

Reduce the heat and add the remaining oil to the pan. Gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the garlic, celery and carrot and fry for a few minutes longer.

Stir in the tomatoes, tomato paste, wine, cloves, bay leaf, most of the parsley and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water. Return the meat to the pan. Add the sugar and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 45 minutes for lamb, or 1¼ hours for beef.

Wash the broad beans well, then top and tail them, pulling off the strings at the same time. Cut into 8 cm (3¼ inch) lengths, then add them to the stew. Cover and simmer for a further 30–45 minutes, or until the meat is tender.

Sprinkle with the remaining parsley. Serve hot with a tossed salad and crusty bread.

✿ Note: Any one of the following vegetables can be used instead of broad beans. Use the same quantity unless otherwise specified.

- Green beans: Top, tail and string if necessary.
- Green peas: Shell 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) fresh green peas, or use 310 g (10¾ oz/2 cups) frozen peas.
- Celery: Omit celery from the basic recipe. Cut ½ bunch celery into 8 cm (3¼ inch) lengths and blanch in boiling salted water for 5 minutes.

- Zucchini (courgettes): Top and tail, then cut into 1 cm (½ inch) slices.
- Cauliflower: Break 1 small head of cauliflower into florets. Soak in salted water, drain and rinse.
- Potatoes: Peel 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) potatoes. Cut into quarters.
- **Okra**: Prepare as directed.



ARNAKI SE FILLO

Lamb in fillo

SERVES: 6

This is one of the ways in which a basic Greek recipe can be revamped to produce a really superb dish. Basically it is Ami Palikari (Lamb Bandit Style).

Traditionally, the food was wrapped in paper before cooking so that the cooking aromas would not betray the presence of the bandits. Nowadays foil has replaced the paper.

This recipe goes one step further and makes the individual parcel totally edible by using fillo pastry. Many Greek restaurateurs make use of fillo in this way in similar recipes.

6 boneless lamb leg steaks, about 2 cm (¾ inch) thick freshly ground black pepper, to season 40 g (1½ oz) butter, or 2 tablespoons oil 2 onions, sliced

1 garlic clove, crushed

12 sheets fillo pastry

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter, melted

salt, to season

3 tomatoes, peeled and sliced

1 teaspoon rigani or oregano

125 g (4 oz) feta cheese, cut into 6 slices flat-leaf parsley sprigs, to garnish

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Trim the steaks of most of the fat and shape them neatly — the trimmings can be used in a minced (ground) lamb dish. Season with pepper.

Heat the butter or oil in a large frying pan and brown the steaks quickly on each side — do not cook them through. Lift them out into a dish and leave until cool.

Add the onion to the pan and gently fry until translucent. Add the garlic and remove from the heat.

Brush a sheet of fillo pastry with the melted butter and place another sheet on top, brushing again with butter. Fold the sheet in half to make almost a square. Put it aside and cover with a dry tea towel (dish towel), then one dampened with warm water. Repeat with remaining fillo to give six squares.

Leaving the remaining pastry covered, take one square and brush the top with butter.

Place a lamb steak in the centre and season lightly with salt. Top with the onion mixture and cover with two tomato slices. Sprinkle with a little rigani or oregano and some salt and pepper. Place a slice of feta on top.

Bring up the ends of the pastry and double-fold them over the top. Fold in the ends as you would a package, then tuck the ends underneath; this is known as the 'chemist's (druggist's) fold'. Place the parcel on a greased baking tray. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Brush the tops and sides of the parcels lightly with more melted butter and bake for 15 minutes.

Serve immediately if possible, though they will survive in the oven with the heat turned off for about 10 minutes.

Garnish with parsley and serve with green beans or zucchini (courgette) dressed with olive oil and lemon juice.

* Note: Medallions of lamb cut from a trimmed loin can be used instead of the steaks. If cut from a small lamb, you will require 12, placing two in each package.

KOKORETSI TIS SOUVLAS

Skewered variety meats

SERVES: 6, MORE AS AN APPETISER

This is an everyday version of the kokoretsi prepared and cooked on Easter Sunday, using lamb innards. Normally other innards are added, but they are omitted here as they are not readily available.

250 g (9 oz) lamb sweetbreads 1½ lemons

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lamb liver

2 lamb hearts

2 lamb kidneys, cut in half sausage casings

Marinade

1 small onion, grated

juice of 2 lemons

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 4 bay leaves, each torn into 3 pieces 1 teaspoon dried rigani or oregano 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season Rinse the sweetbreads, place in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Add the juice of ½ lemon. Bring to the boil, then drain.

Place the liver, hearts and kidneys in a bowl. Cover with cold water and add the juice of 1 lemon. Soak for 30 minutes, then drain.

Remove the skin from the liver and trim the larger tubes from the liver and heart. Cut out the fatty core from the kidneys. Cut the meats and sweetbreads into 3 cm (1¼ inch) pieces and place in a glass or ceramic bowl.

Combine the marinade ingredients and pour over the meats. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours. Meanwhile, soak the sausage casings in cold water.

Thread the meats alternately onto six skewers, adding 2 bay leaf pieces to each skewer among the meats. Drain the sausage casings and wind a length of casing around the meats on each skewer, tucking the ends in to keep the casings in place.

Grill slowly over glowing barbecue coals for 15–20 minutes, turning the skewers frequently and brushing occasionally with the marinade. During this time, you may need to adjust the height of the barbecue grill or move the skewers to a cooler part of the fire so they cook slowly. Serve hot.

KREATOPITA

Lamb pie

SERVES: 6

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour **pinch of salt**

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter

1 small egg

1 tablespoon milk

sesame seeds, for sprinkling **Filling**

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter

1 large onion, finely chopped **1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) lean boneless lamb, from the leg, cut into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes** **salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season** **250 g (9 oz/1 cup) Mizithra or ricotta cheese** **75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) crumbled feta cheese** **3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley**

1 teaspoon chopped dill

Sift the flour and salt into a bowl and rub in the butter with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine crumbs. Sprinkle in 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) water and mix to a soft, workable dough. Knead until smooth, then cover and leave to rest while making the filling.

Melt the butter in a saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Increase the heat to high, add the lamb and stir for 5 minutes, or until the meat loses its red colour.

Reduce the heat to low. Stir in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) cold water and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 45 minutes. There should be little liquid left in the pan; if necessary, remove the lid and simmer until reduced.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Turn the lamb into a bowl and mix in the cheeses and herbs. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper.

Divide the pastry into two portions, one slightly larger than the other. Roll out the larger piece and use it to line a 23 cm (9 inch) greased pie plate. Spread the filling in the pastry.

Roll out the remaining pastry to fit the top. Moisten the edges of the pastry with water and lift it in place, over the top of the pie. Press the edges to seal, then trim the pastry and crimp the edge.

Beat the egg with the milk and brush it over the top of the pie. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and bake for 30 minutes, or until golden brown. Serve hot, cut into wedges.

YEMISTA ME LAHANO

Stuffed cabbage leaves

SERVES: 6

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 large onion, finely chopped

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) minced (ground) beef or lamb 75 g (2½ oz/⅓ cup) short-grain white rice 1 tomato, peeled and chopped

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

**1 teaspoon chopped dill or mint, plus extra to garnish ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season**

24 cabbage leaves

500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) hot stock or water

1 tablespoon butter

**1 tablespoon cornflour (cornstarch) 2 eggs, separated
juice of 1 lemon**

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until soft. Tip the onion into a bowl and add the meat, rice, tomato, herbs and cinnamon. Season with salt and pepper and mix well using your hands. Divide into 24 portions.

Blanch the cabbage leaves in a saucepan of boiling salted water for 5 minutes, or until softened. Drain until cooled. Cut out the thick centre of the larger leaves, and cut any very large leaves in half.

Working with one leaf at a time, place one portion of the meat mixture on the base of the leaf. Turn up the base, fold in the sides and wrap firmly into a neat roll. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Line a deep saucepan with the trimmings from the cabbage leaves. Pack the rolls in close together, seam side down. Add the stock and butter and season with salt and pepper.

Invert a heavy plate on top of the rolls and cover the pan tightly. Simmer gently for 1½ hours.

Carefully drain off the stock, into a small saucepan. Reduce the stock to 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) over medium–high heat. Mix the cornflour to a paste with a little cold water. Stir it into the stock and boil for 1 minute,

until thickened.

Beat the egg whites in a bowl until stiff. Add the egg yolks and beat thoroughly. Gradually beat in the lemon juice, then the boiling stock.

Return the sauce to the saucepan, place over low heat and stir constantly until the egg is cooked — do not allow to boil.

Arrange the rolls on a heated serving dish and spoon some of the sauce over them. Garnish with chopped dill or mint and serve the remaining sauce separately. Serve with mashed potatoes.

✿ Note: Grape vine leaves may be used instead of cabbage. You will need about 40, as they are smaller and will hold less filling.



KOLOKITHAKIA YEMISTA

Stuffed zucchini

Follow the recipe for Yemista Me Lahano (left), substituting 24 zucchini (courgettes) for the cabbage leaves. Cut off the stems, wash the zucchini and cut 1 cm (½ inch) off the stem end. Reserve the ends. Scoop out the centres with a small spoon or zucchini corer, then fill with the meat mixture. Use the reserved ends as corks and press one in each opening. Layer them in the saucepan and cook as directed.

MELOPITA

Honey pie

SERVES: 8–10

225 g (8 oz/1½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour **pinch of salt** **1 tablespoon caster (superfine) sugar** **90 g (3 oz/⅓ cup) butter, cubed** **1 egg, separated**

2 teaspoons lemon juice

ground cinnamon for dusting

Filling

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) Mizithra or ricotta cheese **175 g (6 oz/½ cup) honey** **1 tablespoon caster (superfine) sugar** **3 eggs**

2 teaspoons lemon juice

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Sift the flour, salt and sugar into a mixing bowl. Rub in the butter with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine crumbs.

Beat together the egg yolk, lemon juice and 2 tablespoons cold water. Add to the flour mixture and mix through using a knife. When the dough clings together, knead lightly until smooth. Cover and leave to rest for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

To make the filling, beat the cheese in a mixing bowl until smooth, then gradually beat in the honey and sugar. Beat in the eggs, lemon juice and cinnamon.

Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured work surface to a 30 cm (12 inch) circle. Line a greased 25 cm (10 inch) springform tin or pie plate with the pastry. Lightly beat the egg white and brush a little over the pastry.

Pour the filling into the pastry case and smooth the top. Transfer to the oven and bake for 15 minutes.

Reduce the oven temperature to 170°C (340°F/Gas 3) and bake for a further 30 minutes, or until the filling has set.

Turn off the heat and open the oven door slightly. Leave the pie in the oven until cool.

Dust with the cinnamon and serve cut into wedges, or in traditional diamond-shaped pieces.

Store in a covered container in the refrigerator and bring back to room temperature before serving.

GALATOBOUREKO

Milk pie

SERVES: 12

1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) milk 165 g (5½ oz/¾ cup) sugar 90 g (3 oz/¾ cup) fine semolina (farina) 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter grated zest of ½ lemon

1 piece of cinnamon bark

pinch of salt

5 eggs, lightly beaten 1 teaspoon vanilla essence

10 sheets fillo pastry

185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) unsalted butter, melted Syrup

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar 1 piece of cinnamon bark

2 teaspoons lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Mix together the milk, sugar, semolina, butter, lemon zest, cinnamon and salt in a heavy-based saucepan. Heat until thickened, stirring constantly. Let the custard bubble gently over low heat for 5 minutes.

Remove from the heat and remove the cinnamon. Cover the custard with a piece of buttered greaseproof (parchment) paper to prevent a skin forming. When cooled, mix in the eggs and vanilla.

Butter a 23 × 33 cm (9 × 13 inch) baking dish. Place half the fillo pastry sheets in the dish, brushing each sheet with the melted butter.

Pour in the custard and top with the remaining pastry sheets, again brushing each with butter as you place them in position. Brush the top with the remaining butter. Using a sharp knife or stanley knife, score through the top three sheets in 8 cm (3¼ inch) squares or diamonds. Sprinkle the top lightly with water and trim the edges.

Bake for 45 minutes, or until the pastry is golden brown and the custard is set when tested with a knife. Remove from the oven and leave to completely cool in the dish.

To make the syrup, dissolve the sugar in 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) water over low heat, then increase the heat to medium and bring to the boil. Add the cinnamon and lemon juice and boil for 10 minutes.

Cool the syrup to lukewarm before straining and pouring over the cool pie. Leave until cold before serving.

KATAIFI ME KREMAI

Shredded pastry with custard I SERVES: 8

Kataifi is made by pouring a batter through a perforated plate onto a hot surface. The resulting pastry strands dry sufficiently for handling and they are scooped off immediately. When cooked, Kataifi looks rather like shredded wheat. It is available from Greek and Lebanese delicatessens.

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) kataifi pastry 185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) unsalted butter, melted Custard

**1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) milk 90 g (3 oz/¾ cup) cornflour (cornstarch) 4 eggs, beaten
pinch of salt**

110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla essence

Syrup

440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar 1 thin strip of lemon rind 1 piece of cinnamon bark

3 teaspoons lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

To make the custard, combine the milk and cornflour in a heavy-based saucepan. Blend in the eggs and add the salt and sugar. Place over medium heat and stir constantly until thickened and bubbling. Remove from the heat and stir in the vanilla. Cover the top of the custard with buttered greaseproof (parchment) paper to prevent a skin forming.

Place the kataifi in a large bowl and gently separate the strands with your fingers.

Grease a 20 × 28 cm (8 × 11 inch) baking dish with some of the melted butter. Put half the kataifi in the base, pressing it down to make it compact. Drizzle 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) of the melted butter evenly over it.

Pour the custard filling over the kataifi, spreading it evenly. Top with the remaining kataifi. Spread evenly and pat down gently. Pour the remaining melted butter evenly over the top.

Bake for 45 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove from the oven and leave until cool.

To make the syrup, dissolve the sugar in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/ 1½ cups) water over medium heat. Add the lemon rind and cinnamon and bring to the boil. Add the lemon juice and boil over medium heat for 15 minutes, skimming when necessary. Do not stir once the syrup is boiling.

Strain the hot syrup over the cooled pastry and leave until cold. Cut into diamond shapes to serve.



KATAIFI ME KREMA II

Shredded pastry with custard II

SERVES: 8

The previous recipe is the traditional way in which this dessert is made. As the custard and syrup soften the kataifi, many good cooks use the following method for a crisp finish.

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5). Prepare the syrup as in the previous recipe and leave until cool.

Place the kataifi in a bowl and loosen the strands. Pour on 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) melted unsalted butter and mix with your fingers to coat the strands. Spread the kataifi in two buttered 20 × 28 cm (8 × 11 inch) straight-sided baking dishes and press down to make it compact. Bake for 20–25 minutes, or until golden, taking care it does not become too brown.

Remove from the oven and pour the cooled syrup evenly over the hot kataifi in each dish. Cover each dish with a tea towel (dish towel) so the kataifi softens slightly; otherwise it will be difficult to cut.

Make the custard as directed in the previous recipe. While it is still hot, pour the custard onto the kataifi in one dish. Invert the other dish of kataifi on top of the custard.

Leave uncovered until cool, then cut into diamond shapes to serve.

KATAIFI

Shredded nut pastries

MAKES: 40 PIECES

**500 g (1 lb 2 oz) kataifi pastry 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) unsalted butter, melted Nut filling
115 g (4 oz/1 cup) coarsely ground walnuts 100 g (3½ oz/1 cup) coarsely ground almonds 115 g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar**

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

**¼ teaspoon ground cloves
1 egg white, lightly beaten**

1 tablespoon brandy

Syrup

**440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar 1 thin strip of lemon rind 1 teaspoon lemon juice
4 cloves
1 piece of cinnamon bark**

1 tablespoon honey

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Take one-eighth of the pastry strands and spread them out on a board to make an 18 × 25 cm (7 × 10 inch) rectangle, with the strands running roughly lengthways. Using a pastry brush, dab some melted butter over the strands.

Combine the nut filling ingredients and spread about 2 tablespoons of filling along one narrow edge of the pastry strands. Roll up firmly into a neat roll. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Place the rolls close together in a 20 × 30 cm (8 × 12 inch) slab cake tin or baking dish. Brush the top with the remaining butter. Bake in the oven, one shelf above the centre, for 50–55 minutes, or until golden brown.

Meanwhile, make the syrup. Dissolve the sugar in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water over medium heat. Add the lemon rind and juice, cloves and cinnamon. Boil over medium heat for 10 minutes. Stir in the honey, then strain and cool.

Pour the cooled syrup over the hot pastries and place a folded cloth on top. Leave until cool.

Cut each roll diagonally into five pieces if desired.

✿ Note: For an alternative shaping, take a small handful of pastry strands and spread out fairly compactly on the board, with the strands running towards you as much as possible. Dab with melted butter. Mould a tablespoon of nut filling into a short sausage shape and place on one end. Roll up firmly into a neat roll and place in a baking dish. Repeat with the remaining ingredients. Make about 30 rolls, each about 5 cm (2 inches) long, then bake and finish with syrup as before.

THIPLES

Fried rosettes MAKES: 30

3 eggs

1 tablespoon caster (superfine) sugar pinch of salt

225 g (8 oz/1½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour, plus extra for dusting peanut or corn oil, for deep-frying warmed honey, for drizzling toasted sesame seeds, for sprinkling ground cinnamon, for dusting In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs until frothy, then add the sugar and salt and beat until thick. Sift the flour and gradually stir into the eggs with a wooden spoon — the dough should be slightly sticky. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured work surface, dust with flour and knead lightly.

Divide the dough into two balls. Place one ball of dough on a floured surface, dust the top with flour and roll out thinly as instructed [Homemade fillo pastry](#). Using a fluted pastry wheel or sharp knife, cut the dough into strips 2.5 cm (1 inch) wide and 50 cm (20 inches) long.

Working with one strip of pastry at a time, pinch the sides together at 2 cm (¾ inch) intervals to form little boat-shaped depressions. On a flat surface, shape the strip into a flat coil, beginning at the centre. Shape the coil loosely and pinch the pastry strip firmly together at intervals to hold the shape. Repeat with the remaining dough.

Meanwhile, heat your deep-frying oil to 200°C (400°F), or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 5 seconds, in a deep-fryer or heavy-based saucepan.

Fry the rosettes two at a time in the hot oil until lightly golden, placing them in the oil upside down and turning to cook evenly. Drain on paper towels.

Place a layer of pastries on a platter and drizzle the honey into the depressions, letting it fall off the end of a fork. Sprinkle with the sesame seeds and dust with cinnamon. Pile more pastries on top, finishing each layer with honey, sesame seeds and cinnamon. Serve warm or cold.

PASTELLI

Sesame and honey candies

MAKES: 30

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar 350 g (12 oz/1 cup) honey

310 g (10¾ oz/2 cups) sesame seeds Combine the sugar and honey in a heavy-based saucepan with 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) water. Stir occasionally over low heat until the sugar has dissolved.

Increase the heat to medium and bring to the boil. Allow to boil for about 15 minutes, until the mixture reaches the soft ball stage — when a small amount dropped into cold water forms a soft ball. If you have a sugar thermometer, cook to 115°C (240°F).

Stir in the sesame seeds and return to the boil. Allow to boil for 15 minutes, or until the seeds turn golden and a little of the syrup dropped into water forms a hard ball — 130°C (265°F) on a sugar thermometer. Take care not to overcook or the sesame seeds will brown too much, spoiling the flavour.

Pour into an oiled 18 × 28 cm (7 × 11 inch) slab cake tin, or onto an oiled marble slab, shaping the mixture into a rectangle of that size with a spatula.

When almost cool, cut into squares, triangles or fingers.

Cut again when completely cold and wrap pieces in waxed paper or cellophane.



BAKLAVA

Baklava

MAKES: 30 PIECES

185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) unsalted butter, melted

20 sheets fillo pastry

250 g (9 oz/2 cups) finely chopped walnuts 155 g (5 oz/1 cup) finely chopped almonds 55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) caster (superfine) sugar

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground cloves Syrup

330 g (11½ oz/½ cups) sugar 90 g (3 oz/¼ cup) honey thinly peeled strip of lemon rind 1 small piece of cinnamon bark 3 cloves

2 teaspoons lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 160°C (320°F/Gas 2–3).

Take a 23 × 33 × 5 cm (9 × 13 × 2 inch) baking dish and brush the base and sides with melted butter. Place nine sheets of fillo pastry one at a time into the dish, brushing each with melted butter.

Mix together the nuts, sugar and spices, then spread half the mixture over the pastry. Top with another two sheets of fillo, brushing each with butter. Spread the remaining nuts on top and finish with the remaining fillo, brushing each sheet as before.

Trim the pastry edges and brush the top with butter. Using a sharp knife, cut the baklava into diamond shapes, cutting through to the base. Sprinkle the top lightly with water to prevent the top layers curling upwards.

Bake on the centre shelf of the oven for 30 minutes. Move up one shelf and bake for a further 30 minutes. Cover with greased brown paper or foil if the top colours too quickly — the pastry must be allowed to cook thoroughly.

When the baklava goes into the oven, make the syrup. Place the sugar and honey in a heavy-based saucepan with 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water. Stir over medium heat until the sugar has dissolved. Add the remaining syrup ingredients, bring to the boil and boil for 15 minutes. Strain and cool.

Spoon the cooled syrup evenly over the hot baklava. Leave for several hours before cutting into serving portions.

HALVAS FOURNO

Semolina cake

SERVES: 8

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter 170 g (6 oz/¾ cup) caster (superfine) sugar grated zest of 1 lemon

3 eggs

185 g (6½oz/1½ cups) fine semolina (farina) 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 tablespoon baking powder

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) milk

80 g (3 oz/½ cup) finely chopped almonds, toasted blanched split almonds, for decorating Syrup

550 g (1 lb 3½ oz/2½ cups) sugar

2 tablespoons lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Cream the butter, sugar and lemon zest until light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs one at a time.

Sift the semolina, flour and baking powder twice, then fold into the butter mixture alternately with the milk. Mix in the chopped almonds.

Spread the batter into a buttered 18 × 28 cm (7 × 11 inch) slab cake tin. Arrange the split almonds in rows on top of the batter. Bake for 50 minutes, or until the cake is golden and shrinks slightly from the sides of the tin.

Meanwhile, dissolve the sugar in 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water over low heat. Add the lemon juice and bring to the boil. Boil over medium heat for 20 minutes, then leave until cool.

Pour the cooled syrup over the hot cake; the syrup will penetrate more evenly if the cake surface is pricked with a fine skewer before pouring the syrup over.

Leave in the tin until cool, then cut into squares or diamond shapes for serving.

KARITHOPITA

Walnut cake

SERVES: 8

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter 170 g (6 oz/¾ cup) caster (superfine) sugar 4 eggs, separated

225 g (8 oz/1½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour 1 tablespoon baking powder

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

pinch of salt

250 g (9 oz/2 cups) finely chopped walnuts Syrup

330 g (11½ oz/1½ cups) sugar 1 piece of cinnamon bark 1 teaspoon lemon juice

1 tablespoon brandy

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the egg yolks and beat in well.

In a separate bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff.

Sift the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt twice. Fold into the butter mixture, then mix in about one-third of the beaten egg white. Fold in the walnuts. Lastly, fold in the remaining egg white, using a metal spoon to combine the mixture evenly and quickly.

Spread the batter evenly into a buttered 23 × 30 cm (9 × 12 inch) baking dish. Bake for 45 minutes, or until a skewer inserted in the centre of the cake comes out clean.

Meanwhile, dissolve the sugar in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water over low heat. Add the cinnamon and lemon juice and bring to the boil. Allow to boil for 10 minutes, then remove from the heat. Stir in the brandy, cool and strain into a jug.

Pour the cold syrup evenly over the hot cake and leave until cool. Cut into squares or diamond-shaped pieces to serve. Delicious served with whipped unsweetened cream.

TAHINOPITA

Tahini cake

SERVES: 8–10

This cake is frequently made during Lent as it contains no animal products. Peanut butter — the smooth, creamy variety — may be used instead of tahini.

1 tablespoon vegetable margarine or peanut oil 270 g (9½ oz/1 cup) tahini

230 g (8 oz/1 cup) caster (superfine) sugar grated zest of 1 orange

185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) strained orange juice 335 g (11½ oz/2¼ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour, plus extra for dusting

3 teaspoons baking powder

**½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) ½ teaspoon ground allspice
pinch of salt**

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) finely chopped walnuts

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) sultanas (golden raisins) Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Grease a 20 cm (8 inch) tube tin (bundt tin) or a 20 × 30 cm (8 × 12 inch) slab cake tin with melted margarine or oil. Chill in the refrigerator until required.

Beat the tahini, sugar and orange zest in a mixing bowl for 10 minutes. Gradually beat in the orange juice.

Sift the flour, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda, allspice and salt twice, then fold into the tahini mixture. Mix in the walnuts and sultanas.

Dust the chilled cake tin with flour. Spoon the cake batter into the tin, spreading it evenly. Knock the base of the tin on the work surface to settle the batter.

Bake for 55–60 minutes if using a tube tin, or about 45 minutes if using a slab tin. When cooked, invert the cake in its tin onto a cake rack and leave for 2–3 minutes before lifting the tin from the cake.

Cool the cake and store in a sealed container. Cut into slices or squares to serve.



Copenhagen almond torte

MAKES: 28–30 PIECES

185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) butter 55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) caster (superfine) sugar grated zest of 1 orange

2 egg yolks

375 g (13 oz/2½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour pinch of salt

Almond filling

6 eggs, separated

115 g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar ¼ teaspoon almond essence

35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour ½ teaspoon baking powder

200 g (7 oz/2 cups) ground almonds pinch of salt

To finish

8 sheets fillo pastry

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) unsalted butter, melted 440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar 1 thinly peeled strip of orange rind 1 thinly peeled strip of lemon rind 2 teaspoons lemon juice

2 pieces of cinnamon bark

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Cream the butter and sugar with the orange zest until light and fluffy; beat in the egg yolks. Sift the flour and salt and stir into the butter mixture to form a soft dough.

Lightly grease a round 30 cm (12 inch) dish (a tarsi) or a 25 × 30 cm (10 × 12 inch) baking dish. Roll out the pastry on a floured work surface and place in the dish to line the base and sides. As this pastry moulds easily, any tears can be pressed together. An alternative is to put the pastry in the dish without rolling, and press it over the base and sides with your fingers; even it out by rolling over it with a straight-sided glass.

Bake for 15–20 minutes, or until lightly coloured. Remove from the oven and leave to cool.

Reduce the oven temperature to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

To make the almond filling, beat the egg yolks, sugar and almond essence until thick and light. Sift the flour

with the baking powder and mix in the ground almonds. Lightly fold the mixture into the beaten egg yolks.

Beat the egg whites and salt until stiff, but not dry, then lightly fold into the almond mixture. Pour into the pastrylined dish.

To finish, brush a fillo pastry sheet with melted butter. Top with another sheet and more butter. Continue until all the sheets are used, leaving the top sheet unbuttered. Lift the sheets over the almond filling and trim the fillo edges in line with the pastry crust, using kitchen scissors.

Brush the top with the remaining butter. Using a sharp knife or stanley knife, make slits through the top two or three sheets, running the length of the dish and about 4 cm (1½ inches) apart. Bake for 45 minutes, or until the top is golden and the filling set.

Meanwhile, dissolve the sugar in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water over medium heat. Add the fruit rinds, lemon juice and cinnamon and bring to the boil. Allow to boil for 10 minutes, then strain and leave to cool.

When the torte is cooked, cut through the slits in the pastry, down to the bottom crust. Pour the cooled syrup over the hot torte, and leave to cool. Cut diagonally to give diamond-shaped pieces for serving.

KOURABIETHES

Shortbread cookies or almond shortbreads

MAKES: 40

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) unsalted butter 3 tablespoons icing (confectioners') sugar, sifted 1 egg yolk

1 tablespoon brandy

80 g (3 oz/½ cup) finely chopped toasted blanched almonds 375 g (13 oz/2½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

To finish

40 cloves

250 g (9 oz/2 cups) icing (confectioners') sugar Preheat the oven to 160°C (320°F/Gas 2–3).

Melt the butter in a saucepan until the bubbles subside and the sediment is golden brown — do not allow to burn. Pour the butter and sediment into a mixing bowl.

When the butter has solidified, add the icing sugar and beat with electric beaters until light and fluffy. Add the egg yolk and brandy and beat well.

Stir in the almonds. Sift the flour and baking powder twice, then mix lightly into the butter mixture. Knead by hand until smooth.

Break off small pieces of the dough the size of large walnuts. Shape into crescents, or roll into balls. Place on a flat surface and pinch the tops twice, making four indentations, and at the same time flattening the cookies slightly.

To finish, insert a clove in the top of each cookie. Place on ungreased baking trays and bake for 20 minutes, or until lightly coloured but not browned. Leave to cool on the baking trays for 10 minutes.

Sift some icing sugar over greaseproof (parchment) paper and lift the warm cookies onto this. Sift more icing sugar over the top and sides.

When cool, transfer the cookies to a container and sift the remaining sugar over the top. Seal and store for 2 days before serving to improve the flavour.

✿ Note: The melting and light browning of the butter is not traditional, but it does give a delightful flavour to the cookies. Many excellent Greek cooks use this method, but omit this step if you wish.

KOULOURAKIA

Butter cookies

MAKES: 70

Every Greek home has a container of koulourakia on hand. They are dipped into the morning coffee and served up to any visitors who might drop in. My mother used to make hers shaped into rings and sprinkled with sugar. We would take a tin of them to school on cake sale days; we called them doughnuts (influenced by American movies — who would argue with us?) and they were a sell-out.

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) butter 230 g (8 oz/1 cup) caster (superfine) sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla essence

3 eggs, beaten

750 g (1 lb 10 oz/5 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

3 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon ½ teaspoon ground cloves

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) milk, plus extra for glazing 80 g (3 oz/½ cup) toasted sesame seeds Cream the butter and sugar with the vanilla until light and fluffy. Reserve 1 tablespoon of the beaten eggs for glazing the cookies; add the remainder gradually to the butter mixture, beating well.

Sift the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and cloves twice. Stir into the butter mixture alternately with the milk to form a soft dough. Knead lightly until smooth. If the dough is sticky, cover it and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Scatter the sesame seeds lightly over a work surface. Form pieces of the dough into thick pencil shapes and roll them over the sesame seeds to lightly coat. Double the dough over and twist, or form into rings, figure eights or coils.

Place on greased baking trays and glaze with the reserved egg, beaten with a little milk.

Bake for 15–20 minutes, or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack and store in an airtight container.

✿ Variation: Roll the dough in sugar instead of sesame seeds, and glaze lightly with milk.



MELOMAKARONA

Honey-dipped cookies

MAKES: 60

These are the most delicious of Greek cookies. You do not need to use the nut filling — in fact, when I make them now, I press a walnut quarter into the centre of each and reshape them into ovals.

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) butter 170 g (6 oz/¾ cup) caster (superfine) sugar grated zest of 1 orange

185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) corn or peanut oil 900 g (2 lb/6 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 tablespoon baking powder

185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) orange juice Nut filling, optional

1 tablespoon honey

1–2 teaspoons orange juice

1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon

185 g (6½ fl oz/1½ cups) finely chopped walnuts

2 drops of almond essence

Syrup

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar

90 g (3 oz/¼ cup) honey

1 piece of cinnamon bark

2 teaspoons lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Beat the butter and sugar with the orange zest until creamy. Gradually add the oil and continue beating until the mixture is very light and fluffy.

Sift the flour with the baking powder, then stir into the butter mixture alternately with the orange juice. Knead

the dough lightly with your hands for 1 minute.

To make the nut filling, thin the honey with orange juice and mix with the remaining nut filling ingredients.

Take a scant tablespoon of dough at a time and flatten it a little. Place a teaspoon of the nut filling in the centre and fold the dough over to enclose. Shape into ovals, pinching the ends to a point. Decorate the tops with tines of a fork, or by crimping the cookies diagonally across the top in three rows with a special crimper (see [note](#)).

Place on lightly greased baking trays and bake for 25–30 minutes, or until golden. Cool on wire racks.

To make the syrup, combine the sugar and honey in a saucepan with 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water and stir over low heat until dissolved. Bring to the boil, add the cinnamon and lemon juice, then boil for 10 minutes over medium heat.

Dip the cookies into the boiling syrup, four at a time, turning them once; only those that are to be served immediately should be dipped. Leave them in the syrup for 10 seconds in all, or a little longer if well-soaked cookies are preferred. Lift out onto a wire rack set over a baking tray and leave until cool. During dipping, the syrup becomes thick after a while, so thin it with a little water.

If not using the nut filling, sprinkle the tops with some crushed walnuts or toasted sesame seeds and cinnamon.

Store the undipped cookies in an airtight container and dip when required. The syrup can be kept in a jar in the refrigerator.

✿ Note: Icing crimpers will be familiar to many pastry cooks and cake decorators who work with icing (frosting). If you do not own a crimper, have the family handyman cut a piece of tin or aluminium plate, measuring 2.5 × 10 cm (1 × 4 inches). Bend the metal in half over a thin rod and cut six to eight evenly spaced saw-like teeth on the narrow edges. Curl the 'teeth' slightly inwards.

Semolina honey cookies

MAKES: 60

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter 115 g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar grated zest of 1 orange

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) corn or peanut oil 375 g (13 oz/2½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 tablespoon baking powder

185 g (6½ oz/1½ cups) fine semolina (farina)

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

pinch of ground cloves

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) orange juice toasted sesame seeds or chopped walnuts, for sprinkling Syrup

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar

175 g (6 oz/½ cup) honey

1 piece of cinnamon bark

2 teaspoons lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Cream the butter and sugar with the orange zest until light and fluffy. Gradually add the oil and continue to beat at high speed until the mixture thickens to a whippedcream consistency.

Sift the flour and baking powder twice, then combine with the semolina and spices. Gradually add to the butter mixture, alternately with the orange juice. When combined, knead with your hands to form a firm dough.

Shape tablespoons of the dough into ovals. Place them on ungreased baking trays and pinch the ends to form torpedo shapes.

Bake for 25 minutes, or until golden brown and firm. Cool on the baking trays.

To make the syrup, combine the sugar and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/ 1 cup) water in a saucepan and stir over low heat until the sugar has dissolved. Add the honey, cinnamon and lemon juice and bring to the boil. Allow to boil over medium heat for 10 minutes, then remove the cinnamon.

Dip the cookies into the boiling syrup, three at a time; only those that are to be served immediately should be dipped. Turn them over in the syrup using two forks, then transfer to a wire rack placed over a baking tray. Sprinkle

the dipped cookies with sesame seeds or chopped walnuts and serve.

Store the remainder in a sealed container for later dipping. The syrup can be kept in a jar in the refrigerator.

AMIGTHALOTA

Almond pears

MAKES: 30

Amigthalota are a speciality of the island of Hydra. Flavouring these almond delicacies with rose or orange flower water is a matter of taste. If you like these scented flavours, then omit the lemon zest from the recipe. Whatever flavouring is used, amigthalota make an excellent accompaniment for after-dinner coffee. Serve in petit-four cases.

butter, for greasing 300 g (10½ oz/3 cups) ground almonds

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) icing (confectioners') sugar 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) egg whites (about 2), lightly beaten

2 drops of almond essence

½ teaspoon grated lemon zest, optional

30 cloves

To finish

250 g (9 oz/2 cups) icing (confectioners') sugar rose or orange flower water, optional Preheat the oven to 160°C (320°F/Gas 2–3). Butter and flour a baking tray.

Combine the ground almonds and icing sugar. Add the lightly beaten egg whites, almond essence and lemon zest, if using. Mix to a firm dough with your hands.

Clean your hands and rub them with a little butter to stop the dough sticking while shaping. Break off small pieces of dough the size of walnuts and form them into pear shapes. Insert a whole clove in the top of each shape to resemble a stem, then place upright on the baking tray.

Bake for 20 minutes, covering the tops with brown paper if they begin to brown.

To finish, sift the icing sugar into a bowl and dip the hot amigthalota into it; you may brush a little rose or orange flower water onto the amigthalota before dipping them into the icing sugar. Place on a wire rack to cool.

Sift the remaining sugar from the bowl into a container and arrange the cooled almond pears upright in a single layer.

Sift more sugar thickly over the tops and sides. Seal and store for a day or two before serving to improve the flavour.

VASILOPITA

New Year bread

SERVES: 12

New Year bread is traditionally cut at midnight on New Year's Eve. After baking, a coin is inserted through a slit in the base. The person who finds the coin will have luck in the New Year. Long ago the coin was a gold one, and it was inserted into the dough before baking. Nowadays, because of the nickel content of coins, it is undesirable to bake a coin in the cake.

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) lukewarm milk 3 eggs, beaten

1½ teaspoons grated orange zest 170 g (6 oz/¾ cup) caster (superfine) sugar 675 g (1 lb 8 oz/4½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour ¼ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground masticha

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter, melted 1 egg, beaten, for glazing

blanched split almonds, for decorating Follow the same mixing, kneading and rising directions as for the Easter Bread recipe.

When the dough has doubled in size, punch it down and turn out onto a lightly floured work surface. Knead lightly and shape into a round loaf. Place on a large greased baking tray or in a greased 25 cm (10 inch) deep cake tin. Cover and leave to rise in a warm place until doubled — about 1½–2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Brush the bread with the beaten egg. Arrange the almonds in numbers on top, to denote the new year, pressing in lightly.

Bake for 45 minutes, or until the bread is golden brown and sounds hollow when tapped on the base. If it is browning too quickly, cover with a piece of greased brown paper.

Cool on a wire rack, then store in a sealed container.

PASKALINA AVGA

Red-dyed Easter eggs MAKES: 12

Dyeing eggs is a ritual in every Greek and Cypriot Greek Orthodox household on the day before Good Friday. This is performed without great attention to detail by many cooks, and the eggs can end up cracked, rendering them useless for the ritual game on Easter Sunday morning of who can crack whose eggs, a game children delight in. Also, uneven dyeing frequently occurs with the usual method of boiling the eggs in the dye bath, so I suggest hard-boiling them first, then giving them a brief boil in the dye.

12 eggs, at room temperature

½ teaspoon powdered red dye (from Greek food stores) 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) white vinegar oil, for rubbing

Carefully place the eggs in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Place over gentle heat and bring slowly to the boil so the eggs don't crack. Leave to boil, uncovered, over medium heat for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, place the dye in a heatproof bowl. Boil 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) water in a saucepan large enough to hold all the eggs in a single layer. Pour 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) of the boiling water over the dye and dissolve it, then pour it back into the saucepan. Add the vinegar and allow the dye to boil until the eggs are ready.

Lift the hot eggs into the dye bath using a slotted spoon. Increase the heat and let the eggs boil steadily for 2 minutes, stirring gently now and then so that the dye will take evenly.

Lift the eggs out with a slotted spoon and place them on folded paper towels to dry. Allow them to cool a little, then rub the eggs with an oil-soaked cloth to give a pleasant sheen.

✿ Note: Another six eggs may be dyed in the same dye bath — add 2 tablespoons extra vinegar to the dye mixture.

TSOUREKI TOU PASKA

Easter bread

SERVES: 10

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) warm milk 2 eggs, beaten

1 teaspoon grated lemon zest

115 g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar 525 g (1 lb 2½ oz/3½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour ¼ teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon ground mahlepi or allspice

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter, melted 1 egg, beaten, for glazing

sesame seeds, for sprinkling Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of the milk. Add the remaining milk, eggs, lemon zest and sugar.

Sift 450 g (1 lb/3 cups) of the flour into a warm bowl with the salt and spice. Make a well in the centre. Pour in the yeast mixture, then stir to mix in a little flour to make a thin batter. Cover and leave in a warm place for 15 minutes, or until bubbles begin to form. Gradually add the warm melted butter.

Mix the dough with your hands until it comes away from the side of the bowl. Turn out onto a floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic, adding the remaining flour as required. Knead for 10 minutes.

Place the dough in a clean bowl brushed with melted butter. Turn the dough over to coat the top with butter. Cover the bowl with a cloth or plastic wrap and leave to rise in a warm place until doubled in size.

Punch down the dough and turn out onto a floured work surface. Knead lightly, then tear into three equal portions. Roll each into a rope about 30 cm (12 inches) long. Press the ends together and plait (braid) them loosely; press the ends together and tuck them under the loaf.

Place the dough on a greased baking tray, cover with a cloth and leave to rise in a warm place until doubled in size — about 1–2 hours, depending on the ambient warmth.

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Brush the bread with the beaten egg and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the bread is golden brown and sounds hollow when tapped on the base.

Cool on a wire rack, then store in a sealed container.

✿ Variation: Proceed as above, but make each rope of dough about 50 cm (20 inches) long. Plait and shape them into a ring, pressing the two ends together. Place on a greased baking tray and press four Paskalina Avgas ([red](#)-

[dyed eggs](#);) at intervals into the braid. Leave to rise, then glaze and bake as directed; the sesame seeds may be omitted.



KYTHONI PELTES

Quince jelly

This method might seem complicated. Peels and cores are boiled separately to extract the pectin, which is necessary for setting. Of course, you can cook the quince together with the peels and cores with a lot less fuss, but the Greeks waste nothing: the pulp left after making the jelly makes a delightful confection called Kythonopasto ([quince paste](#);) — so it is worthwhile keeping the pulp free of peels and cores for this purpose.

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) quinces

sugar

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) lemon juice

2 unsprayed rose geranium leaves

Wash the quinces well to remove their fuzz, then peel and core them. Slice the quinces into a preserving pan and add 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water. Set aside, but do not be concerned if the quince discolours.

Place the peels and cores in a saucepan with another 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and boil for 30 minutes. Strain, then top the liquid up to 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) with more water. Now add this liquid to the sliced quinces in the preserving pan.

Bring to the boil and simmer gently for 1 hour, or until the quince flesh is very tender.

Scald a large piece of doubled muslin (cheesecloth), wring it out and drape it over a deep bowl.

Pour the quince and liquid into the cloth and gather up the ends. Tie with string and suspend over a bowl. Secure to a fixed object so that the juice can drip slowly into the bowl. Leave for 24 hours. Do not squeeze the bag to hasten dripping as this will make the jelly cloudy.

Measure the quince juice into a clean preserving pan. For each cup of juice, add 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar. Stir over medium heat until the sugar has dissolved. Add the lemon juice and washed geranium leaves and bring to the boil.

Boil rapidly for 25 minutes, skimming frequently. Remove the pan from the heat while you test the jelly, so it doesn't overcook. Test the jelly by dripping a teaspoonful onto a cold saucer. Leave to cool, then run your finger across the jelly: setting point is reached when the surface wrinkles.

When setting point is reached, remove the geranium leaves and ladle the hot jelly into hot [sterilised jars](#). Seal when cold.

KYTHONOPASTO

Quince paste

quince pulp from the Kythoni Peltes

sugar

bay leaves

caster (superfine) sugar

Purée the quince pulp by pressing it through a sieve or blending it in a food processor.

Measure the purée into a heavy-based saucepan. For each cup of pulp, add 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar and 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) water.

Place over medium–low heat and stir occasionally until the sugar has dissolved. Bring to the boil, then boil steadily for 60–80 minutes, stirring occasionally so that the paste cooks evenly. As the paste is thickening, it has a tendency to scorch, so watch it carefully.

When cooked, the paste will come away from the side of the pan and will be dark red in colour. While it is still hot, spread it into an oiled slab cake tin to a thickness of 2 cm (¾ inch). Leave it in the tin at room temperature for 2–3 days, lightly covered with muslin (cheesecloth).

When the paste is dry and firm, cut it into small diamond shapes with an oiled knife. Lift the pieces out and place them in a container with bay leaves between the layers. Seal tightly.

When serving, dip the tops lightly into caster sugar to give the pieces a fine coating.

Kythonopasto keeps indefinitely stored at room temperature, and is traditionally served in place of a spoon sweet, accompanied by a glass of iced water.

KYTHONI XYSTO

Grated quince preserve

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) quinces 880 g (1 lb 15 oz/4 cups) sugar

2 strips of thinly peeled lemon rind 1 piece of cinnamon bark, or 2 unsprayed rose geranium leaves

30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) blanched split almonds, toasted

2 tablespoons lemon juice

Wash the quinces well to remove their fuzz, then peel them, cut into quarters and remove the cores. Place the peels and cores in a saucepan with 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water. Boil, covered, for 30 minutes.

Grate the quince quarters into a heavy preserving pan. Pour in 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water and set aside until the peels are boiled. Do not be concerned if the quince discolours.

Strain the liquid from the peels into a measuring jug and top the liquid up to 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) with more water. Now add this liquid to the grated quince. Add the sugar, lemon rind strips and cinnamon or washed geranium leaves. Place over medium heat and stir occasionally with a wooden spoon until the sugar has dissolved.

Bring to the boil and allow to boil fairly rapidly for 1 hour, or until the mixture gels when tested on a cold saucer.

Remove the cinnamon or geranium leaves, stir in the almonds and lemon juice and boil for 1 minute longer. Ladle into hot, sterilised jars and seal when cold.

✿ Note: As the peel and core contain pectin — the setting ingredient for jellies and preserves — it is advisable that these be boiled to extract the pectin.

PORTOKALI GLACE

Glacé orange peel

4 large thick-skinned oranges

880 g (1 lb 15 oz/4 cups) sugar

2 tablespoons liquid glucose, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) light corn syrup Prepare the orange peel into strings of rolls as in the [Glyko Portokali recipe](#).

Dissolve the sugar in 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water over medium heat. Add the glucose or corn syrup and bring to the boil. Add the strings of rolls and return to the boil.

Boil gently for 10 minutes, skimming when necessary. Transfer to a bowl and leave for 24 hours so that the peel can absorb the sugar.

Drain the syrup back into a saucepan. Bring to the boil over medium heat and boil for 10 minutes.

Remove the threads from the rolls and pour the syrup over the rolls in the bowl. Invert a plate onto the rolls to keep them submerged in the syrup. Leave for a further 24 hours.

Drain the syrup back into a saucepan. Bring to the boil and boil for 5 minutes. Add the rolls, return to the boil and boil for a further 5 minutes.

Return the rolls to a bowl, submerging them as before. Leave for a further 24 hours.

Place a wire rack over a dish and place the rolls on the rack to drain. Leave to dry in a warm place for 48 hours. When dry, store in a sealed container.

GLYKO PORTOKALI

Preserved orange rolls

6 large, thick-skinned oranges
660 g (1 lb 7 oz/3 cups) sugar

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Lightly grate the entire surface of each orange. Deeply score the peel into six segments, from the stem end to the base. Carefully remove the peel.

Tightly roll up the peel, passing a needle and long thread through each roll, and tying the others to the first roll. When 12 rolls are threaded, tie the ends together to form a circle of rolls. Repeat with the remaining rolls.

Put the rolls in a saucepan of cold water. Bring to the boil and drain immediately. Repeat the boiling and draining process twice more to remove the bitterness from the peel.

Cover the rolls with more fresh cold water and return to the boil. Leave to boil gently for 45–60 minutes, or until tender. Drain and place on paper towels to dry.

In a clean saucepan, dissolve the sugar in 750 ml (25 fl oz/ 3 cups) water and bring to the boil. Add the lemon juice and boil the syrup for 5 minutes. Add the strings of orange rolls and boil for 10 minutes, timed from when the preserve returns to the boil. Skim when necessary.

Remove from the heat, cover and leave overnight.

Next day, bring the pan contents back to the boil and cook gently for 15–20 minutes, or until the syrup is thick when tested on a cold saucer.

Leave to cool a little, then remove the threads and place the rolls and syrup into [sterilised jars](#). Seal when cold and store in a cool place.

GLYKO KARPOUZI

Watermelon rind preserve

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) watermelon rind 660 g (1 lb 7 oz/3 cups) sugar

2 small pieces of cinnamon bark

1 strip of thinly peeled lemon rind 90 g (3 oz/1/4 cup) honey

2 tablespoons lemon juice

60 g (2 oz/1/2 cup) blanched split almonds, toasted Cut off all traces of pink from the watermelon rind. Peel off the green skin. Cut the firm white flesh into 2 cm (3/4 inch) cubes.

Place the white flesh in a preserving pan and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 1 hour, or until translucent. Drain.

Pour 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water into a saucepan. Add the sugar, cinnamon, lemon rind strip, honey and 1 tablespoon of the lemon juice. Stir over medium heat until the sugar has dissolved. Bring to the boil, skimming when necessary.

Add the drained watermelon, return to the boil and leave to boil gently for 15 minutes. Remove from the heat, cover and leave for 12 hours or overnight.

Return the mixture to the boil over medium heat. Boil until the syrup is thick when tested on a cold saucer. Remove the cinnamon and lemon rind.

Add the remaining lemon juice and toasted almonds. Boil for 1 minute, then ladle into warm, [sterilised jars](#). Seal when cold.

FRAPA GLYKO

Preserved grapefruit rolls

Substitute 4 thick-skinned grapefruit for the oranges in the [Glyko Portokali](#) recipe. After grating, cut the peel into sixths or eighths, depending on the size of the fruit. Follow the same cooking instructions, but this time be sure to boil the rolls four times, instead of three.

LEMONI GLYKO

Preserved lemon peel

Follow the recipe for [Glyko Portokali](#), substituting 6 thick-skinned lemons for the oranges. Cut the peel into quarters after grating, then cut each quarter in half, giving eight triangles of peel from each lemon. There is no need to roll and thread the lemon peels, but otherwise follow the method for Glyko Portokali.

Alternatively, if you want to make the rolls, boil and drain the quarters as they are peeled from the fruit. They will then be soft enough to roll up and thread.

FRAPA GLACE

Glacé grapefruit rolls

Follow the recipe for preparing Portokali Glacé [Glyko Karpouzi](#), using 3 grapefruit. Boil and change the water four times, before boiling the peel until tender. Then follow the remaining directions for the Portokali Glacé.

LEMONI GLACE

Glacé lemon peel

Follow the recipe for preparing Portokali Glacé [Glyko Karpouzi](#), using 4–6 thick-skinned lemons, depending on size. Leave in triangular segments as instructed in the Lemoni Glyko recipe [Glyko Karpouzi](#).



Cyprus





CYPRUS

With my parents hailing from the Greek island of Kythera, I have always felt an affinity with the people of Cyprus, as both Kythera and Cyprus, through legend, lay claim to the goddess Aphrodite. Legend has it that Aphrodite rose from the sea and went to Kythera, and then to Cyprus. The Cypriots tell it differently. For the romantic among you, Cyprus is regarded as the Island of Aphrodite, and for an island so endowed with beauty, there could hardly be a more appropriate symbol.

Before I visited Cyprus, I was under the mistaken impression that Cypriot and Greek cooking were much the same. I was proved wrong and pleasantly surprised. One of Cyprus's most interesting dishes would have to be afelia. The basic food can be either pork, new potatoes, mushrooms or globe artichoke hearts, and it is cooked with crushed coriander seeds and red wine. Irrespective of the food used in the dish, it is still called afelia, so I have numbered the variations later in this chapter and depend on the English translation to distinguish between them.

I was also pleased to find that stuffed vine leaf rolls were not called dolmathakia as they are in Greece. They go by the delightful name of koupepia — meaning little cigars.

Cypriot cooking seems to be a happy mixture of Greek, Lebanese–Syrian and Turkish cuisines, with an unmistakable mark that makes it Cypriot. Naturally with my heritage, Greek cooking is the best known to me and I was happy to be able to add more Greek recipes through the pages of Cyprus, although both Greece and Cyprus have a great variety of dishes, perhaps because of their history and proximity to Europe. Nevertheless, the recipes in this chapter are very much Cypriot in execution, as Cypriots have a great passion for certain ingredients, such as cinnamon and coriander (cilantro).

Perhaps to really experience the Cypriot cuisine and its adaptation of recipes from other countries, a visit to a taverna best proves the point. One we visited in Nicosia only serves meze (snacks or appetisers, known as mezethakia) — 25 in all. They came in steady procession throughout the course of the evening. Koupepia, koupes, feta and haloumi cheese, olives, tabbouleh, hummus, tahinosalata, talattouri, souvlakia, miala, lounza (cured pork fillet, grilled and topped with melting haloumi), stifatho, tavas, marides (fried small fish), panjaria salata, raw artichoke hearts, celery sticks, cucumber, tomato, octopus in wine ... We were informed that we could have a grilled fillet steak afterwards! You will find recipes for most of these mezethakia in various chapters as well as this in chapter. The description given should suffice for the remainder.

A trip to the local market in Nicosia gave me further insight into the uniqueness of Cypriot food. Our guide,

though claiming that she was not a good cook, filled me in on the preparation of vegetables. One that particularly intrigued me was kolokassi ([taro](#)) — more about that.

The Cypriot fondness for pork is evident in their meat markets. They make a ham called hiromeri, very similar to Italian prosciutto, and lounza, cured, smoked pork fillet. My previous description of lounza with haloumi cheese is virtually the recipe itself, and lounza is available at Greek and Cypriot food stores.

In the little village of Kakopetria I was told how to make Cypriot sausages. The village method calls for days of soaking the pork and spices in red wine — at room temperature! With regard to your health, the recipe I have given is one used by Cypriot butchers, which you can prepare with confidence.

The same cook gave me her recipe for making green walnut preserves. The process involved is lengthy, but well worth trying. A friend of ours recalls his boyhood days in Cyprus when he and his friends would be commandeered to peel the walnuts. They thought it great fun to go round for days with blackened hands. It happened to me — but I did not regard it as fun! Rubber gloves are strongly advocated.

Cypriot breads, though similar to Greek breads, have some interesting variations. [Haloumopsomi](#) is filled with chunks of haloumi. This cheese can be made in the home and I have given a recipe for making your own [Haloumi](#); however nowadays, such is its popularity that haloumi is widely available in supermarkets and delicatessens, as well as Greek and Cypriot food stores. The same cheese is combined with cheddar and edam cheeses as well as a few other ingredients and used as a filling for Flaounes ([Easter cheese pies](#)), the pie crust being a yeast dough. [Elioti](#) is another typically Cypriot bread, with onions and black olives baked in it.

THE FLAVOUR OF CYPRIOT FOODS

While olive oil is almost as widely used as in Greece, the Cypriot cook prefers corn oil for the preparation of many dishes. Butter is considered something of a luxury and is used only in the making of Greek pastries and cakes. Typical Cypriot cakes and cookies often use lard or corn oil, for example [Lokoumia Parayemista](#), similar to the [ma'amoul](#) of Lebanon, which are made in huge quantities, especially for pre-wedding festivities. In Cyprus these are made with lard, but expatriate Cypriots prefer to use butter, and so do I.

While cassia bark is widely used in Greece instead of cinnamon, in Cyprus the more delicately flavoured cinnamon bark is preferred. This is sold in sticks or quills, the kind generally used in Western cooking. A good Cypriot cook prefers to pound the bark to a powder rather than buy it already ground.

Coriander, native to southern Europe, is a most popular flavouring ingredient. Both the leaves and the dried seeds are used extensively.

The Cypriots take pride in being self-sufficient and in rural areas they prepare their own pourgouri (burghul), haloumi and anari cheese, ham and a pasta called trahana. The latter is made with soured milk and ground wheat. It is a lengthy process and ends up as small, square noodles. Trahana forms the basis of winter soups, cooked in chicken broth with perhaps a little tomato to flavour it, and with cubes of haloumi cheese stirred in just before it is removed from the fire. Trahana is also made in Greece, with semolina (farina) instead of the ground wheat. Trahana is readily available at Greek and Cypriot stores.

EATING CYPRIOT STYLE

With such a history, it is natural for the Cypriots to take their meals in a Western manner, though it is not served in separate courses. A meat, fish or poultry dish will form the basis of the meal, perhaps preceded by a soup. When fasting, a vegetable dish such as [Polypikilo](#), [Louvana](#) or [Louvia Mavromatika Me Lahana](#) could replace the meat or poultry. A salad — either a cooked green vegetable with an oil and lemon dressing, or a combination of raw vegetables — would be served as an accompaniment. Olives, cheese, pickles, bread, fresh fruit and wine complete the meal.

The Cypriot lifestyle is very similar to that of Greece and Turkey. One delightful custom practised in both Cyprus and Greece is the serving of glyko (spoon sweets). These delightful fruit preserves are lovingly prepared by Greek and Cypriot women, using fruits in season. When a visitor calls, the glyko is served in small glass or silver dishes with a spoon. It is accompanied by a glass of iced water — certainly necessary as they are very sweet — and after this formality, coffee is served, perhaps with a selection of sweet pastries.

COOKING METHODS

For Cypriot cooking, a Western kitchen needs little extra in the way of equipment, as any pot, pan or casserole dish can be used. In Cyprus the kitchen can be as up to date as your own, or a farm-style kitchen with an open hearth where sausages and hams can be smoked in the chimney, with large pots for preparing [Zalatina](#) and haloumi cheese, and talaria, woven baskets for draining the curds. In rural areas where they make their own pickles, breads, trahana, sweet preserves and cured olives, every kitchen would be equipped with large utensils and large storage jars, usually of glazed or unglazed pottery, depending on their use.

The tapsi, a round baking dish, is used for roasting meats and baking sweets; a tava, an unglazed terracotta casserole dish, is used for preparing a dish by the same name [Tavas](#); a saganaki, a two-handled frying pan for cooking mezes, can be taken directly to the table. Any baking dish, casserole or frying pan can be used instead.

For rolling pastry, a long length of dowel is a definite advantage, as the Cypriot cook prepares pastries in great quantities, and dowel makes the process so much simpler.

INGREDIENTS FOR CYPRIOT COOKING

The recipes are self-explanatory, and ingredients readily available. Burghul (bulgur), rice, pulses, pasta, semolina, cinnamon, coriander leaves and seeds, and haloumi are necessary ingredients. You can see it would not be difficult to prepare Cypriot food in your kitchen.

HALOUMI

Haloumi cheese

MAKES: 250 G (9 OZ)

Haloumi is a favourite cheese in Cyprus, Greece and Lebanon. In Cyprus it is frequently made in the home when plenty of milk is available. Sheep's milk is traditionally used, but cow's milk gives a satisfactory result. This is a typical Cypriot version and it is quite different to the haloumi available from supermarkets.

The Cyprus home cheese-maker uses reed baskets called talaria for draining the curds. A colander lined with muslin (cheesecloth) works just as well.

While the haloumi is draining, before its final heating and shaping, the whey is used for making cottage cheese, or [anari](#).

The quantity produced with 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) of milk is quite small for the effort entailed; however, if you have copious amounts of milk available, use one rennet tablet to each litre of milk, or four tablets to each imperial or US gallon.

For Lebanese-style haloumi, sprinkle the cheese with black cumin seeds instead of dried mint after salting.

3 rennet (junket) tablets

2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) whole milk

35 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) good-quality cooking salt, plus an extra 2 tablespoons salt

1 tablespoon dried mint

Crush the rennet tablets in a small bowl. Add 2 tablespoons cold water and stir to dissolve.

Place the milk in a large saucepan and warm to body temperature, or no more than 38°C (100°F). Add the dissolved rennet and stir gently for a few seconds only. Cover the pan and leave in a warm place, undisturbed, for 30 minutes, or until set.

Using a whisk, gently stir the set milk to break up the curds. Leave until the curds settle.

Line a colander with a doubled piece of muslin (cheesecloth) and set it over a deep bowl. Ladle the curds into the colander, collecting the whey in the bowl.

When well drained, lift the cloth with the curds onto a clean chopping board set on the sink top. Shape the curds by hand into a square about 2 cm (¾ inch) thick. Fold the cloth over the top and press gently with your hand. Raise one end of the board so that the remaining whey can drain. Leave for 1½–2 hours. Return the collected whey to the pan and put on to boil.

When the curd is well drained and compact, cut it into four pieces and carefully place them in the boiling whey. Cook until the cheese floats. Now remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Place the cooking salt on a plate. Crumble the mint into coarse flakes.

Lift out each piece of cheese with a spatula and place on a board. While still hot, press the pieces with your hand to flatten them a little. Dab dry with paper towels. Dip the pieces on each side in the salt, then sprinkle some

mint on one side. Fold each in three to enclose the mint and press with your hand to keep the cheese in shape. This step must be carried out while the cheese is warm and pliable.

Pack the cooled cheese into a [sterilised jar](#). Dissolve the 2 tablespoons salt in 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) of the whey, then pour over the cheese. Seal and store in a cool place.

The cheese may be eaten when freshly made, or allowed to mature in the salty whey for up to 6 weeks.

ANARI

Cottage cheese

whey from making Haloumi

1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) whole milk

1 tablespoon strained lemon juice

Prepare the whey from the Haloumi recipe (opposite). Bring to the boil and add the milk and lemon juice.

Return to the boil, stirring constantly with a whisk. Curds will form on top of the whey. If the milk does not develop curds, add a little more lemon juice. Remove from the heat and set aside for 10 minutes.

Strain through a colander lined with a doubled piece of muslin (cheesecloth), collecting the whey in a bowl.

When most of the whey has drained out, scrape down the curds from the sides of the cloth. Gather the ends and tie the cloth with string. Hang the bag over a sink for 2 hours or more to drain completely.

When well drained, turn the cheese into a bowl, cover and refrigerate. Use within 3 days.

You can now return the reserved whey to the saucepan and proceed with the Haloumi recipe. It may be necessary to skim fine milky curds from the top of the whey after making the anari and before returning the haloumi to the whey.

* Note: Anari is a whey cheese similar to Italian ricotta. In Cyprus, when haloumi is made at home, the whey is used for making anari while the haloumi is draining, before the final heating of the haloumi.

SALTSA TOMATA

Tomato sauce

MAKES: 500 ML (17 FL OZ/2 CUPS) 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) corn oil 1 large onion, finely chopped 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée)

1 teaspoon sugar

250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) stock or water 1 bay leaf

1 large piece of cinnamon bark

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Heat the butter or oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the tomatoes and cook them until soft.

Stir in the tomato paste, sugar and stock. Add the bay leaf and cinnamon and season with salt and pepper. Bring to a gentle simmer, then cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes.

Remove the lid and simmer for a further 10 minutes, so that some of the liquid can evaporate to thicken the sauce.

Remove the bay leaf and cinnamon.

Serve hot on boiled pasta, or as directed in recipes.

ELIES TSAKISTES

Cracked green olives

MAKES: 1 JAR OR SEVERAL SMALL JARS

When we were in our teens, my two sisters and I had the chore of cracking the olives so that our mother could preserve them. While olives would not grow in our semi-tropical climate, we would receive a case from an aunt who lived in the south of our state. Our olive oil would come from there as well, especially during the Second World War.

**fresh green olives rock salt — 105 g (3½ oz/⅓ cup) rock salt for every 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) water
grape vine leaves, washed**

lemon slices

For serving

juice of 1 lemon

1 garlic clove, crushed

25 g (¾ oz/¼ cup) coriander seeds, coarsely pounded 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil Crack the olives by hitting each one separately with a mallet or smooth stone. Only the flesh has to be cracked, so do not hit too hard as the seed should remain intact.

Place the cracked olives in a large jar (or jars) and cover with cold water. Keep the olives submerged using a small heavy plate or clean flat stone. Change the water every 24 hours. Do this four times in all.

Measure the last amount of water poured from the olives before discarding. Now measure the same amount of fresh water into a large saucepan and add 105 g (3½ oz/⅓ cup) rock salt to each litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) water. Stir over low heat until the salt has dissolved.

(When the brine is cool you can check the strength of it with a fresh egg. The right saltiness is reached when the egg floats, with an area about 2.5 cm (1 inch) in diameter breaking the surface of the water.) Transfer the olives to a **sterilised jar** or jars. Pour the brine over the olives, place the grape vine leaves and lemon slices on top and seal. Leave in a cool, dark place for at least 3 weeks; the olives may be kept like this for a few months.

When required, take out about 350 g (12 oz/2 cups) olives. Any growth on top is of no importance, so long as the olives are not soft and do not show signs of decay. If the olives are soft, discard them — it may be that only those at the top are affected. Remove any fungus.

Rinse the olives under cold water, drain well and place in a bowl. Sprinkle the lemon juice over the olives. Add the garlic, coriander seeds and oil. Stir well and leave for 1–2 hours for the flavours to develop.

Serve as an appetiser with bread, or as an accompaniment to meals.



SKORTHALIA

Garlic sauce

MAKES: 375 ML (12½ FL OZ/1½ CUPS) 4–5 garlic cloves, halved 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) white vinegar ½ teaspoon salt

125 g (4 oz) crustless stale white bread 50 g (2 oz/½ cup) ground almonds 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil

1 tablespoon lemon juice

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Soak the garlic in the vinegar for 10 minutes. Remove the garlic and place in a mortar; reserve the vinegar. Add the salt to the garlic and using a pestle pound it to a paste.

Soak the bread in cold water and squeeze dry. Crumble the bread into small particles and gradually blend into the garlic, adding a little of the reserved vinegar to smooth the mixture.

When well pounded and smooth, transfer the mixture to a bowl if the mortar is too small. Gradually beat in the ground almonds and oil alternately with the remaining vinegar.

Beat in the lemon juice and add salt and pepper to taste. If the mixture is very thick, beat in a little more oil or lemon juice, depending on the flavour balance. The mixture should be the consistency of stiff mayonnaise.

Turn into a serving bowl and serve with fried fish, squid, fried or boiled vegetables, or as directed in recipes.

✿ Note: If using a food processor or blender, soak the garlic as above. Process or blend all the ingredients except the oil until smooth, then gradually beat in the oil. Adjust the seasoning, flavour and consistency as above and blend until smooth. Do not overbeat, as the mixture could heat and curdle.

AGINARES OMA

Raw artichokes

In Cyprus the globe artichoke is enjoyed more often raw than cooked. Use young artichokes and remove three or four layers of leaves to expose the hearts. Cut off the top section of the leaves and trim carefully around the base to neaten. Cut into quarters and remove the choke with a spoon.

Drop the artichokes into a bowl of water, to which the juice of two lemons has been added.

When ready to serve, drain well and serve with crisp celery sticks as a meze.

Lemon wedges can be added for squeezing to individual taste, or the artichokes may be dipped into [Bakdounis Bi Tahini](#), a parsley and tahini sauce that in Cypress is known as tahinosalata.

MIALA ME LEMONI Marinated brains SERVES: 6

6 sets of lamb brains

2 tablespoons white vinegar

**1½ tablespoons salt 1 garlic clove, peeled but left whole Dressing
juice of 1 lemon 85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

Place the brains in a bowl and cover with cold water. Add 1 tablespoon each of the vinegar and salt. Soak for 15 minutes.

Drain and remove the skin if possible. This is difficult if the brains have been frozen, and it might be necessary to leave the skin on. Any veins should be removed.

Place the brains in a saucepan with fresh water to cover. Add the garlic clove and the remaining salt and vinegar. Bring to just below the boil, cover the pan and simmer gently for 15 minutes, or until the brains are tender. Do not allow to boil.

Drain the brains well, cut into cubes and place in a bowl.

Beat the dressing ingredients together and pour over the brains. Cover and leave to marinate in the refrigerator for 2 hours or longer.

Serve in the dressing, as a mezze.

MIALA TIGANITA

Fried brains SERVES: 6

Prepare and gently simmer the brains as directed in the Miala Me Lemoni recipe.

Drain the brains, dry well with paper towels and cut into 1 cm (½ inch) slices.

Dip them in flour to coat, then pan-fry in hot corn oil or butter until golden brown.

Serve hot with lemon wedges, as a meze.

KOUPEPIA

Stuffed grape vine leaves

SERVES: 8 AS AN APPETISER, 6 AS A MAIN COURSE

375 g (13 oz) preserved vine leaves, or 60 fresh leaves 2 tablespoons lemon juice

1 tablespoon butter

500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) light stock parsley sprigs, to garnish

lemon slices, to garnish

Filling

2 tablespoons corn oil

1 onion, finely chopped

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb 250 g (9 oz) finely minced (ground) veal 110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) short-grain rice 2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley 2 teaspoons finely chopped mint

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper

Egg and lemon sauce

40 g (1½ oz) butter

2 tablespoons plain (all-purpose) flour 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) chicken or lamb stock

2 eggs

1–2 tablespoons lemon juice

salt and freshly ground white pepper, to taste Rinse the grape vine leaves (fresh or preserved) in cold water. Add them to a saucepan of boiling water in three or four batches and blanch each batch for 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove the leaves to a basin of cold water, then into a colander to

drain.

To make the filling, heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until soft. Tip the onion into a mixing bowl, add the remaining ingredients and season with pepper. Mix lightly until well combined.

Place a vine leaf, shiny side down, on a work surface. Snip off the stem, if there is one. Place about 1 tablespoon of the filling near the stem end, fold the end and sides over the filling, then roll up firmly. Repeat with the remaining leaves and filling; the filling is sufficient for about 48 rolls. Reserve any damaged leaves for lining the pan.

Use six vine leaves to line the base of a heavy-based saucepan. Pack in the koupepi close together, in layers. Sprinkle each layer with a little of the lemon juice.

Cover the top of the rolls with the remaining vine leaves. Add the butter and the stock to the pan with any remaining lemon juice. Invert a heavy plate on top of the rolls so they keep their shape during cooking.

Cover the pan and place over medium heat. Bring to just below boiling, then simmer gently over low heat for 1½ hours.

To make the sauce, melt the butter in a small saucepan and stir in the flour. Cook for 2 minutes without browning, then stir in the stock. Stir constantly until the sauce thickens and bubbles.

Beat the eggs in a bowl until frothy, then beat in 1 tablespoon lemon juice. Gradually pour the hot sauce into the eggs, beating constantly. Return the sauce to the pan and stir over gentle heat for 2 minutes to cook the egg, taking care not to curdle the sauce. If this happens, sprinkle a little cold water into the sauce and beat with a balloon whisk.

Drain the cooked koupepi and arrange on a hot serving dish. Garnish with parsley and lemon slices. Serve the sauce in a separate sauceboat.

✿ Note: The koupepi may be served cold as an appetiser, without the sauce. Serve with a bowl of yoghurt on the side.



Koupes

Cigars (meat-filled burghul shells) MAKES: ABOUT 35

350 g (12 oz/2 cups) fine burghul (bulgur) oil, for deep-frying

Filling

1 tablespoon corn oil

250 g (9 oz) minced (ground) lamb or beef 1 large onion, finely chopped

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

pinch of ground cinnamon

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season It is not necessary to wash the burghul, but do so if you wish. If you've washed the burghul, drain it well in a fine sieve, then press with the back of a spoon to extract the excess moisture.

Place the burghul in a bowl with 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) boiling water. Stir well, cover and set aside for 2–3 hours.

Meanwhile, make the filling. Heat the oil in a frying pan, then add the meat and onion and stir over high heat until the juices evaporate and the meat begins to brown. Add the parsley and cinnamon and season with salt and pepper. Remove from the heat and leave to cool.

Knead the burghul well to form a coarse-textured dough. With moistened hands, break off a piece about the size of a walnut and squeeze the dough together, moulding it into an oval cigar shape. Wet a forefinger and push it into one end of the oval, to make a hole. Meanwhile, work the other hand around the outside of the dough to make the wall of the koupa as thin as possible. A long forefinger is a definite advantage!

Fill the hollow with about a teaspoon of the filling. Close the opening, moistening the dough with a little water to seal. Any breaks can be sealed by dabbing with water. Smooth the koupa with moistened hands and place on a tray. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Deep-fry six or eight koupa at a time in a saucepan of hot oil (180°C/350°F), or until a cube of bread dropped in the oil browns in 15 seconds, approximately 10 cm (4 inches) deep, for a minute or so before turning. Keep frying and turning each batch for 6–8 minutes, or until deep golden brown and crisp. Drain on paper towels.

Serve hot, as an appetiser.

TALATTOURI

Yoghurt and cucumber salad SERVES: 6

2 slender green cucumbers

3 teaspoons salt

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) thick drained [yoghurt](#)

2 garlic cloves, crushed 2–3 teaspoons dried mint, finely crushed 1–2 tablespoons olive oil mint sprigs, to garnish Peel the cucumbers and cut into quarters lengthways. Slice thinly and place in a bowl. Mix in the salt and leave to stand for 1 hour.

Drain the cucumbers well. Mix them into the yoghurt with the garlic, and mint to taste. Add salt to taste, if necessary.

Stir in the oil a little at a time, adding as much as needed to make a thick, creamy mixture. Chill well.

Serve in a deep bowl, garnished with mint sprigs, as a meze with [raw artichokes](#), crisp celery sticks, fried smelts and sardines, and crusty bread.

Talattouri also makes an excellent sauce for fried fish.

MOUNGRA

Pickled cauliflower

Moungra is traditionally prepared in the households of the devout for serving on Pure Monday, the first day of the 40-day Lenten fast, although it is also enjoyed during the year.

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

225 g (8 oz/1½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

1¼ tablespoons salt

1 cauliflower, about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz)

3 tablespoons white mustard seeds

Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water, then add 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) warm water.

Put the flour and 1 teaspoon of the salt in a large mixing bowl. Stir in the yeast mixture until combined, then beat until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap and leave for 3 days at room temperature to ferment.

Separate the cauliflower into florets and soak in cold salted water for 10 minutes. Drain.

Half-fill a large saucepan with water, add the remaining salt and bring to the boil. Add half the cauliflower, return to the boil, then lift the cauliflower out with a slotted spoon. Place immediately into a bowl of cold water to cool, then drain. Repeat with the remaining cauliflower.

Bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil. Cool a little, then gradually pour into the fermented dough, stirring well to form a thin, milky liquid.

Pound the mustard seeds just enough to crack them, then sprinkle a little in the base of a large stone crock or a [sterilised](#) glass jar. Place some cauliflower in the jar and sprinkle with more mustard seeds. Repeat until all the ingredients have been used.

Pour the milky liquid over the contents, covering the cauliflower completely. Cover with a lid or plastic wrap.

Each day, turn the cauliflower pieces with your hand (wash your hand and forearm well first). Do this for 8 days. The cauliflower is then ready for eating. Moungra will keep for 1 month if the cauliflower is turned every 2 days.

FLAOUNES

Easter cheese pies MAKES: ABOUT 30

These pleasant cheese pies are prepared in enormous quantities to be eaten on Easter Sunday morning. The recipe given to me by a good Cypriot cook began with 6 pounds (2.7 kg) cheddam, 3 pounds (1.35 kg) haloumi cheese and 3 or 4 dozen eggs. You can imagine the proportions of the rest of the recipe! She has a large family, and would certainly need some helpers to prepare the pies. I have scaled the recipe down considerably.

Cypriot cooks abroad find that 'cheddam' cheese — a combination of cheddar and edam cheeses — is a good substitute for the cheese used in Cyprus. Should this not be available, try the Greek kasseri cheese, or use a mild-flavoured cheddar combined with edam.

The flavouring of the cheese mixture also varies. Some cooks use the easily available dried mint, others insist on fresh mint, and others still substitute sultanas for the mint. I prefer the mint flavour.

900 g (2 lb/6 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) milk

1 teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons sugar

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) corn oil

1 tablespoon melted butter

1 egg, beaten

sesame seeds, for sprinkling

Cheese filling

250 g (9 oz) cheddam cheese (see introductory note) 125 g (4 oz) haloumi cheese

1 tablespoon fine semolina (farina)

1 teaspoon baking powder

4 eggs, lightly beaten

1 tablespoon crushed dried mint, or 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh mint Sift the flour into a mixing bowl and warm it in a low oven.

Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water, then add another 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) warm water, the milk, salt and sugar. Stir well.

Remove and reserve about 300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) of flour from the bowl. Pour the yeast mixture into the centre of the bowl and stir in a little flour from the side to thicken the liquid. Cover and leave for about 10 minutes, or until frothy.

Gradually stir in the rest of the flour in the bowl. Combine the oil and melted butter, then slowly add to the flour. Beat by hand, or using the dough hook of an electric mixer, for 10 minutes, gradually adding half the reserved flour.

Sprinkle a work surface with more of the remaining flour and turn out the dough. Knead for 5–10 minutes, using as much flour as the dough will take. When smooth and satiny, shape into a ball. Place in a lightly oiled bowl and turn to coat with the oil. Cover with plastic wrap and leave in a warm place for 1–1½ hours, or until the dough has doubled in size.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 220°C (430°F/Gas 7).

To make the filling, coarsely grate the cheeses into a bowl. Sift the semolina with the baking powder and work in with a wooden spoon to soften the cheese and mix the ingredients to a thick paste. Gradually stir in the eggs and mint, and mix to a fairly stiff paste; it may be necessary to hold back a little egg, as cheeses vary in moistness and the mixture must hold its shape.

Punch down the dough and turn out onto a lightly floured work surface. Divide into two and shape into balls. Roll out each ball of dough until 5 mm (¼ inch) thick, then cut into 10 cm (4 inch) rounds. Place the rounds on a cloth and keep covered until all the dough is shaped.

Place a generous tablespoon of filling in the centre of a round of dough, spreading it slightly. Pull the dough up at three points to make a triangle, or four points to make a square. About 2 cm (¾ inch) of dough should overlap the filling all around. Press the points of the triangles or squares to seal the edges, using your fingers or the tines of a fork. Brush the dough overlap with beaten egg and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Bake on greased baking trays for 12–15 minutes, until the filling is puffed and the flaounes are golden. Serve warm or cold.



SAGANAKI HALOUMI

Fried haloumi

SERVES: 4

250 g (9 oz) haloumi cheese flour, for coating, optional olive or corn oil, for pan-frying 1 lemon, cut in half, plus extra lemon wedges to serve crusty bread, to serve Cut the cheese into 5 mm (1/4 inch) slices and coat them with flour if desired.

Heat enough oil in a small, two-handled frying pan (saganaki) to cover the base to a depth of 5 mm (1/4 inch). Fry the cheese over medium – high heat for about 1 minute each side. Squeeze lemon juice to taste onto the cheese.

Place the pan on a heatproof plate and take immediately to the table. Serve with additional lemon wedges and eat with crusty bread dipped into the lemon-flavoured oil in the pan — a tasty meze that is very quick to prepare.

SAGANAKI ALA PEREA

Fried prawns and artichokes

SERVES: 2

Years ago I tried this delicious combination at the White Towers Restaurant in London, run by John Stais, a Greek Cypriot. This version is very close to the White Towers version, if my memory serves me well.

4 globe artichoke bases

250 g (9 oz) raw prawns (shrimps) 125 g (4 oz) small mushrooms

60 ml (2 fl oz/ ¼ cup) olive oil

1 tablespoon lemon juice

60 ml (2 fl oz/ ¼ cup) dry sherry salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 tablespoon finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

crusty bread, to serve

Prepare the [artichoke bases](#) as directed and cut them in half. Cook in a saucepan of boiling salted water for 15 minutes, or until tender. Drain well and leave until dry.

Shell and devein the prawns, then rinse and dry. Wipe and trim the mushrooms and leave them whole.

Heat the oil in a small, two-handled frying pan (saganaki) and add the artichokes. Quickly fry over medium–high heat until lightly browned on each side. Push the artichokes to one side of the pan and add the prawns, mushrooms and lemon juice. Fry, stirring continually, just until the prawns turn pink — do not overcook them.

Stir the artichokes into the prawn mixture and add the sherry. Reduce the heat to low, season with salt and pepper and simmer gently for 1 minute.

Sprinkle with the parsley and serve at once, taking the pan to the table on a heatproof plate.

Serve with crusty bread as an appetiser.

✿ Note: To serve more than two people, use a large frying pan to hold a larger quantity of ingredients. Serve in heated individual ramekins, placed on heatproof plates.

MAKES: 30

600 g (1 lb 5 oz/4 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour pinch of salt

185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) peanut oil or corn oil

3 teaspoons lemon juice

1 egg, beaten with a little milk, for glazing Pumpkin filling

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) diced butternut pumpkin (squash) 2 tablespoons coarse burghul (bulgur) 1 onion, chopped

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) peanut or corn oil ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon pinch of ground cloves 1½ teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season Start by making the filling. Peel the pumpkin, remove the seeds and cut the flesh into 5 mm (¼ inch) cubes. Weigh the diced pumpkin and place in a bowl. Add the remaining filling ingredients, stir to combine, then cover and leave for 12 hours, or overnight.

Sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl. Rub in the oil with your fingertips until distributed evenly. Add the lemon juice and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) cold water and mix to a firm dough. Knead lightly, then cover and leave to rest for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Roll out the dough thinly — about the thickness of a normal pie crust — and cut into 15 cm (6 inch) rounds. Take a round of pastry and moisten the edge with a little water. Place a good tablespoonful of filling in the centre, fold the pastry over and press the edges well to seal. Flute the edge with your fingers, or press with the tines of a fork. Repeat with the remaining pastry rounds and filling.

Place the pies on lightly greased baking trays and glaze the tops with the beaten egg. Bake for 10 minutes.

Reduce the oven temperature to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) and bake the pies for a further 20 minutes. Serve hot or cold.

RAVIOLES

Boiled cheese-filled pasta

SERVES: 6

It could well be that ravioles and [Kaloyrka](#) are Venetian legacies to Cyprus from the Venetian occupation of the island (1489–1571). Then again, somewhat similar pasta dishes are to be found in Armenia, Iran and Afghanistan.

The origin of pasta is shrouded by history, but can be traced back to China. My money is on the Mongol influence (in the 13th and 14th centuries), which could have filtered down from Persia or the Caucasus. The name, ravioles, could well be modern Italian influence in Cyprus as elsewhere, but the dish is as much a part of Cyprus cookery today as afelia, [Koloketes](#) and so on.

Dough

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 teaspoon salt

2 eggs, lightly beaten

Cheese filling

225 g (8 oz/1½ cups) grated haloumi cheese

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) [Anari](#) or ricotta cheese

2 eggs

1–2 teaspoons dried mint, crushed

To finish

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter, melted

grated haloumi or kefalograviera cheese, or a mixture

To make the dough, sift the flour and salt into a bowl. Add the eggs and about 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) cold water. Mix to a soft dough, adding more water if necessary. Turn out onto a floured work surface and knead for 10 minutes, or until elastic and smooth, adding a little flour if the dough still sticks. Cover and leave to rest for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, thoroughly combine the cheese filling ingredients, adding crushed mint to taste. The mixture should be fairly stiff.

Divide the dough into two equal portions and roll each one out thinly, as instructed [Homemade fillo pastry](#).

Cut the dough into strips 8 cm (3¼ inches) wide. Spread a strip on a work surface and place a teaspoon of cheese filling at 4 cm (1½ inch) intervals on one side of the centre of the strip.

Using a pastry brush dipped in water, lightly moisten the pastry around one side of the filling. Fold the pastry over the filling, pressing well between the mounds of filling and along the edge.

Cut the raviolas into crescents, using a 5 cm (2 inch) biscuit cutter. Press the edges again with the tines of a fork to seal well, then place on a cloth and cover. Repeat with the remaining ingredients, rolling out and using the pastry trimmings as well.

Cook 15 raviolas at a time in a large saucepan of boiling salted water for 15–20 minutes, or until tender. Remove each batch with a slotted spoon, to a colander set over simmering water to keep them warm while cooking the remainder.

When all raviolas are cooked, turn them into a dish and drizzle with the melted butter. Sprinkle with grated cheese and serve hot.

✿ Note: Cooked raviolas may be refrigerated in a sealed container and heated in a colander over boiling water before serving.



KANELLONIA

Meat-filled pancakes SERVES: 6–8

Pancakes

150 g (5 oz/1 cup) plain (all-purpose) flour ¼ teaspoon salt

4 eggs

375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) milk oil, for greasing

Meat filling

40 g (1½ oz) butter 1 small onion, finely chopped 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) beef or veal

1 tablespoon finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 1 tablespoon plain (all-purpose) flour 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) milk 1 egg, beaten

To finish

1 cup Saltsa Tomata

35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) grated haloumi or kefalograviera cheese To make the pancake batter, sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl. Break the eggs into the centre and gradually stir the flour into the eggs. When half the flour is blended in, add half the milk. Mix to a smooth batter and beat with a wooden spoon for a few minutes. Stir in the remaining milk, then cover the batter and leave to stand for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the filling. Melt half the butter in a saucepan and gently fry the onion until soft. Increase the heat to high, add the meat and stir until the juices evaporate and the meat is crumbly.

Reduce the heat and add the parsley, cinnamon and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes, or until the liquid evaporates. Set aside.

Melt the remaining butter in a small saucepan. Add the flour and stir over medium heat for 2 minutes, without allowing the flour to colour. Pour in the milk, stirring constantly until thickened and bubbling. Stir the sauce into the meat mixture, leave to cool a little, then blend in the beaten egg.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Heat a 15 cm (6 inch) frying pan or pancake pan and grease with a wad of paper towels dipped in oil. Using a jug, pour in 2–3 tablespoons of the pancake batter and tilt the pan to coat the base evenly. Cook until browned on the bottom, then turn and cook for a further minute. Remove to a plate. Cook the remaining pancakes and stack them on a plate.

Place about 2 tablespoons of the filling along the centre of each pancake and roll up. Place in rows in a greased baking dish and pour the Saltsa Tomata on top. Sprinkle with grated cheese and bake for 15–20 minutes, or until the cheese has melted.

Serve as a first course or as a light meal.

KOULOURA

Bread ring

MAKES: 1 LOAF

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) warm milk 1 teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons sugar

2 tablespoons oil

sesame seeds, for sprinkling Sift the flour into a mixing bowl and warm it in a low oven.

Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water, then add another 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water, the milk, salt and sugar. Stir well.

Remove and reserve about 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) of flour from the bowl. Pour the yeast mixture into the centre of the bowl and stir in a little flour from the side to thicken the liquid. Cover and leave for about 10 minutes, or until frothy.

Stir in the rest of the flour in the bowl, adding the oil gradually. Beat by hand using a wooden spoon for 10 minutes, or using the dough hook of an electric mixer for 5 minutes.

Knead in the reserved flour by hand, either in a bowl or on a board; only knead in enough flour to stop the dough sticking. Keep kneading for about 10 minutes, or until smooth and satiny. Shape into a ball.

Place in a lightly oiled bowl and turn to coat with the oil. Cover with plastic wrap and leave in a warm place for 1–1½ hours, or until the dough has doubled in size.

Punch down the dough and turn out onto a lightly floured work surface. Flatten out into a circle, then roll up firmly. Roll back and forth with the palms of your hands so that it forms a thick rope 50 cm (20 inches) long, tapering in at each end.

Lift onto a greased baking tray and form into a ring. Overlap the ends and tuck them under the loaf. Cover with a cloth and leave to rise in a warm place.

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Brush the dough with water and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Bake for 30 minutes, or until golden brown and cooked. Remove from the oven and cool on a wire rack.

✿ Note: This is also a popular Greek bread.

ELIOTI

Olive bread

MAKES: 1 LOAF

According to religious traditions, during periods of fasting, meat, eggs and dairy products should not be eaten. One way of adding interest to meals is to serve olive bread. It is so delicious you will want to make and serve it often, whether fasting or not — unless you are fasting to reduce weight.

1 quantity Kouloura dough

1 tablespoon olive oil, plus extra for brushing

1 onion, finely chopped

125 g (4 oz/1 cup) pitted black olives

oil, for glazing

Make the dough according to the directions [Kouloura](#), replacing the milk in the recipe with warm water if necessary. Leave to rise in a warm place until doubled in size.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the olives and leave until cool.

Punch down the dough and turn it out onto a lightly floured surface. Press it out to a rectangle about 1 cm (½ inch) thick.

Spread the onion and olive mixture over the dough, leaving the sides clear. Roll the dough up firmly from the longer side and shape into a loaf. Press the ends to seal.

Place on a greased baking tray and make four shallow diagonal slashes across the top with a sharp knife. Cover with a cloth and leave in a warm place until doubled in size.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Brush the top of the loaf lightly with some extra oil. Bake for 35–40 minutes, or until the loaf is golden and sounds hollow when tapped on the base. Cool on a wire rack and serve warm or cold.

HALOUMOPSOMI

Haloumi cheese bread

MAKES: 1 LOAF

**1 quantity [Kouloura](#) dough 250 g (9 oz) haloumi cheese, cut into 1 cm (½ inch cubes) milk or beaten egg, for glazing
sesame seeds, for sprinkling**

Make the dough according to the directions [Kouloura](#). Cover and leave to rise in a warm place until doubled in size.

Punch down the dough and turn out onto a lightly floured work surface. Press it out to a rectangle about 1 cm (½ inch) thick. Place the cheese cubes on the dough, leaving the sides clear. Roll the dough up firmly from the longer side and press the ends to seal, forming the loaf into an oval shape.

Carefully place the loaf onto a greased baking tray. Make four shallow, diagonal slashes across the top with a sharp knife. Cover with a cloth and leave in a warm place until doubled in size.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Brush the top and sides of the loaf lightly with milk, or an egg beaten with a little water. Sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Bake for 35–40 minutes, or until the loaf is golden and sounds hollow when tapped on the base. Cool on a wire rack and serve warm or cold.

PATCHA

Lamb's head soup

SERVES: 6

Patcha is not only a Cypriot dish; Turkey, Iraq and the Gulf States all have their versions, but they all use lamb feet. As these are not readily available in Western countries for hygiene reasons, only the Cypriot version is given. Again the head is not always available, so the recipe has been modified to overcome this problem, with the result being similar to the traditional dish.

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) lamb soup bones

6 lamb tongues

salt, to season

3 sets of lamb brains

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) vinegar To finish

**60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter 35 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour 1 small garlic clove, crushed
2 eggs**

2 tablespoons lemon juice

6 slices of dry toast

**1½ tablespoons white vinegar Put the lamb bones in a large saucepan and cover with cold water.
Scrub the tongues and add to the pan. Place over medium heat and bring to the boil, skimming
when necessary.**

When the liquid is well skimmed and boiling, season it with salt. Cover and simmer gently for 1½ hours, or until the tongues are tender when tested with a skewer inserted into the root end.

Meanwhile, soak the brains in the vinegar and enough cold water to cover for 30 minutes. Drain and remove the skin if possible. This is difficult if the brains have been frozen, and it might be necessary to leave the skin on. Any veins should be removed.

When the tongues are tender, add the brains to the pan. Cover and simmer very gently for 15 minutes, or until cooked; do not allow to boil.

Lift the tongues and brains from the stock. Skin the tongues and remove any gristle and the bone from the root end. Cut the tongues and brains into thick slices, place in a dish and spoon over a little stock to keep them moist. Cover the dish and keep warm.

Strain 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) of the stock into a measuring jug. Strain the remaining stock into a small saucepan and keep it at a simmer.

Melt the butter in a saucepan and stir in the flour. Cook for 2 minutes, without allowing the roux to colour. Add the garlic, cook for a few seconds, then pour in the stock from the jug, stirring constantly. Keep stirring until the sauce boils and thickens. Reduce the heat and let the sauce bubble gently while preparing the eggs.

Beat the eggs in a bowl until foamy, then gradually beat in the lemon juice. Pour the thickened stock onto the eggs, beating constantly. Return the mixture to the pan and heat for 2–3 minutes, or until the sauce begins to bubble. The flour will prevent the sauce curdling.

Place a slice of toast in each of six deep plates, then sprinkle with 1 teaspoon vinegar. Pour 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of the reserved hot stock onto each slice of toast. Arrange the sliced tongue and brains on the toast. Pour the hot egg and lemon sauce on top and serve immediately.

PSAROSOUPA AVGOLEMONO

Egg and lemon fish soup

SERVES: 6

2 kg (4 lb 6 oz) fish heads, backbones and trimmings

**2 small onions, peeled
4 small carrots, scraped and quartered
70 g (2½ oz/½ cup) chopped celery, including leaves
3 tablespoons coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley**

2 teaspoons salt

**freshly ground black pepper, to season
75 g (2½ oz/⅓ cup) short-grain white rice**

3 eggs

juice of 1 lemon

**extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
Wash the fish heads and trimmings in cold water and place in a large saucepan. Add 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water and bring to the boil, skimming when required.**

Add the onions, carrots, celery, parsley and salt. Season with pepper, then cover and simmer gently for 1½ hours.

Strain the stock into a bowl and discard all the vegetables. Return the stock to the cleaned saucepan, adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper and bring to the boil.

Wash and drain the rice, then stir into the soup. Boil, uncovered, for 20 minutes, or until the rice is tender.

Beat the eggs in a bowl until foamy, then gradually beat in the lemon juice. Ladle about 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) of the boiling stock into the egg mixture, beating constantly, then stir the mixture back into the gently boiling stock.

Keep stirring over low heat for 1 minute. Remove the pan from the heat, so the heat of the pan will not curdle the eggs, then stir for a further minute. Serve immediately with a drizzle of olive oil.

YOURVARLAKIA AVGOLEMONO

Meatball soup

SERVES: 6

**500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb 1 small onion, finely chopped 1 egg, beaten
75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) short-grain white rice 2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley, plus extra
to garnish 1 teaspoon finely chopped mint, optional salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season
plain (all-purpose) flour, for coating 1.25 litres (42½ fl oz/5 cups) light stock 1 tablespoon butter**

2 eggs

juice of 1 lemon

Mix the lamb in a bowl with the onion, egg, rice, parsley and mint, if using. Season with salt and pepper. Shape into meatballs the size of small walnuts and coat lightly with flour.

Bring the stock to the boil in a large saucepan. Season if necessary, then drop in the meatballs. Add the butter, cover and simmer gently for 1 hour.

In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs until light and foamy, then gradually beat in the lemon juice. Slowly add about 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) of the simmering stock, beating constantly.

Pour the egg mixture into the soup and stir constantly over low heat for 2 minutes to cook the egg. Remove the pan from the heat, so the heat of the pan will not curdle the eggs, then stir for a further minute.

Ladle the soup into deep soup plates and sprinkle with a little extra chopped parsley. Serve with crusty bread.

LOUVANA Split pea purée SERVES: 6

440 g (15½ oz/ 2 cups) yellow split peas 60 ml (2 fl oz/ ¼ cup) olive oil 2 onions, sliced

2 potatoes, peeled and cut into small cubes

salt, to taste

To serve

lemon wedges

olive oil, for drizzling black olives

crusty bread

Pick over the split peas, discarding any that are discoloured. Wash well in several changes of cold water. Place in a deep, heavy-based saucepan and pour in 1.25 litres (42½ fl oz/ 5 cups) water.

Bring to the boil over medium heat, skimming when necessary. Reduce the heat to low, then cover and simmer gently for 1 hour, without stirring.

Heat the oil in a small frying pan and gently fry the onion until lightly flecked with brown. Add the onion mixture to the split peas, along with the potato. Cover and simmer for 1 hour, or until the peas and potatoes are very soft. Do not stir during cooking as this causes scorching.

Stir in salt to taste. Beat until puréed, or process in small batches in a blender or food processor and reheat in the pan.

Serve in deep plates, with lemon wedges. Additional olive oil is usually poured onto the purée.

Serve with black olives and bread. Often a salad of tomatoes, cucumber, green or red capsicums (peppers) and onion is also served on the side.



FAKES XITHATI

Sour lentil soup

SERVES: 6

370 g (13 oz/2 cups) brown lentils 8 finely chopped spring onions (scallions) 3 tablespoons finely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves or flat-leaf parsley, or a mixture 85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil

1 garlic clove, crushed, optional

1 tablespoon plain (all-purpose) flour 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) vinegar, or to taste salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Wash the lentils in several changes of cold water, or place in a sieve and run water through them. Drain.

Place the lentils in a large saucepan with the spring onion, herbs, oil and garlic, if using. Pour in 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer over low heat for 1 hour, or until the lentils are soft.

Put the flour in a screw-top jar with 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) cold water. Seal and shake until thoroughly combined (this prevents lumps forming).

Gradually pour the flour mixture into the boiling soup, stirring constantly, until thickened slightly.

Add the vinegar, and salt and pepper to taste. Return to the boil, then allow to boil gently for 5 minutes before serving.

PANJARIA SALATA

Beetroot salad

SERVES: 6–8

6 beetroot (beets), with leafy tops 1 quantity Skorthalia, optional Dressing, optional 85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil

2 tablespoons wine vinegar

1 tablespoon finely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves, optional Wash the beetroot well. Cut off the tops, leaving about 3 cm (1¼ inches) attached to the beetroot. Reserve the tender, undamaged leaves of the beetroot, discarding the remainder.

Place the beetroot in a saucepan, with salted water to cover. Boil for 30–45 minutes, or until tender.

Meanwhile, boil the reserved tops in a separate saucepan of salted water for 15 minutes.

Peel the beetroot, then slice or dice into a salad bowl. Drain the tops and either add them to the bowl, or serve in a separate bowl.

Either serve at room temperature with the Skorthalia, or pour the combined dressing ingredients over the hot beetroot and leaves and allow to cool before serving.

LOUVIA MAVROMATIKA ME LAHANA Black-eyed beans with silverbeet SERVES: 6

Although a simple dish, the combination of black-eyed beans and silverbeet is delicious. Dressed with olive oil and lemon juice, it is often enjoyed as a main meal, served with crusty bread, some cheese and a glass of wine.

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) black-eyed beans 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) silverbeet (Swiss chard) salt, to taste

2 garlic cloves, optional

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil juice of 1 lemon

lemon wedges, to serve

Wash the dried beans well and place in a large saucepan. Cover with 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) water and bring to the boil.

Boil, uncovered, for 2 minutes, then remove from the heat. Cover and leave for 2 hours, or until the beans are plump.

Place the pan back over the heat and bring to a slow simmer. Cover and simmer for 1 hour, or until the beans are just tender.

Wash the silverbeet, changing the water several times. Trim the stems, then cut the stems into 1 cm (½ inch) pieces and add to the beans. Add salt to taste, then cover and cook for a further 10 minutes.

Shred the silverbeet leaves roughly and add to the beans. Cover and cook for a further 15 minutes, or until the beans and silverbeet are tender. Drain well and turn into a deep bowl.

If using the garlic, crush it with a little salt. Mix it into the combined oil and lemon juice and pour over the hot bean mixture. Toss well.

Serve hot or warm, with lemon wedges so diners can adjust the flavour to their individual taste.



POLYPIKILo

Vegetable potpourri

SERVES: 6

2 eggplants (aubergines) salt, for sprinkling

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) potatoes

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) zucchini (courgettes)

6 ripe tomatoes

185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) corn oil 40 g (1½ oz/½ cup) soft white breadcrumbs 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped 1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Wash the eggplants, remove the stems and cut into 1 cm (½ inch) slices. Sprinkle with salt and leave for 30 minutes. Rinse and dry well with paper towels.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 170°C (340°F/Gas 3).

Peel and slice the potatoes thinly. Cut the zucchini into 1 cm (½ inch) slices. Peel the [tomatoes](#) and slice them thinly.

Pour some of the oil over the base of a large baking dish. Add half the breadcrumbs, garlic and parsley.

Layer the eggplant, potatoes, zucchini and tomatoes in the dish, seasoning lightly with salt and pepper. Repeat the layers, finishing with the tomatoes.

Pour the remaining oil over the vegetables and add 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water. Season the tomatoes with salt and pepper and sprinkle the remaining garlic, parsley and breadcrumbs over the top.

Bake for 1½ hours, or until the vegetables are tender. Check during the latter part of cooking and add a little water if necessary – polypikilo should be fairly moist.

Serve hot or at room temperature.

POURGOURI PILAFI Burghul pilaff

SERVES: 6

60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) corn oil or butter

1 onion, finely chopped

810 ml (27 fl oz/3 1/4 cups) chicken stock or water 350 g (12 oz/2 cups) coarse burghul (bulgur) salt, to taste

yoghurt, to serve Heat the oil or butter in a deep saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the stock or water and bring to the boil.

Place the burghul in a sieve and wash quickly under cold running water. Add the burghul to the boiling stock, with salt to taste. Stir until boiling again, then reduce the heat, cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes, or until the liquid has been absorbed.

Remove from the heat, place a cloth or two paper towels over the rim of the pan and replace the lid. Allow to stand for 15 minutes.

Serve with yoghurt, as an accompaniment to [Afelia](#) dishes, mixed vegetable dishes, keftethes (meatballs), or any dish normally served with rice pilaff.

✿ Note: Often vermicelli is added for variety. Add 50 g (2 oz/1/2 cup) crumbled vermicelli noodles to the pan with the onion and fry until golden. Add an additional 250 ml (8 1/2 fl oz/1 cup) stock or water after frying the onion.

YEMISTA

Stuffed vegetables

SERVES: 6

6 long eggplants (aubergines) 6 green capsicums (peppers)

6 tomatoes

Stuffing

2 tablespoons corn oil

1 large onion, finely chopped

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb or beef 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) 110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) short-grain white rice

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 teaspoon dried mint, optional salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Tomato sauce

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes)

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) corn oil, or 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter ½ teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Wash the vegetables. Remove the stalks from the eggplants, cut off 2 cm (¾ inch) from the stem end and set aside. Scoop out the eggplant flesh, leaving a 5 mm (¼ inch) border of flesh. Place the eggplants in salted water and soak for 20 minutes. Rinse and drain.

Meanwhile, cut the tops off the capsicums and reserve. Remove the core, seeds and white membrane from the capsicums, then rinse and drain.

Cut the tops off the tomatoes (the stem end) and set aside. Scoop out the tomato pulp with a spoon and keep it separate. Drain the tomatoes.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

To make the stuffing, heat the oil in a large frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the meat

and stir constantly over high heat, until the meat is crumbly and the colour changes. Reduce the heat and add the remaining stuffing ingredients. Cover and simmer until the liquid has been absorbed.

Fill the vegetables with the stuffing, leaving a little room for the filling to expand, then replace the reserved tops. Arrange in rows in a large baking dish.

Place the reserved tomato pulp in a saucepan and cook until soft. Blend in the remaining sauce ingredients, then pour over the vegetables in the baking dish.

Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Remove the foil and baste the vegetables with the sauce.

Bake for a further 15–20 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender. Serve hot, with crusty bread and salad.

✿ Note: Zucchini (courgettes), silverbeet (Swiss chard) leaves, blanched cabbage leaves and artichokes may also be filled with the meat stuffing mixture. The zucchini may be oven baked, but the other vegetables are best cooked in a large saucepan on top of the stove, in a light stock instead of the tomato sauce. When prepared this way, the tomato passata in the stuffing mixture should be omitted and a little lemon juice added instead. Finish with an Egg and Lemon Sauce, following the directions given in the [Koupepia](#) recipe.

AFELIA I

Potatoes with coriander

SERVES: 6

The next three recipes are all called afelia, though the vegetable used differs in each one. Afelia is a Cypriot style of cooking vegetables or pork with coriander seeds and red wine. More detail is given later in this chapter, [Afelia](#).

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) small new potatoes, of an even size 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) corn oil 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) dry red wine salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

3 teaspoons crushed coriander seeds

Wash the potatoes well and dry with paper towels. Crack the potatoes by hitting each one sharply with a mallet.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan that has a lid to fit. Add the potatoes and fry over high heat to brown them lightly, turning the potatoes frequently by shaking the pan.

Reduce the heat. When the potatoes are cooking less vigorously, add the wine and season the potatoes with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently over low heat for 20–25 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender, shaking the pan occasionally.

Sprinkle the coriander seeds over the potatoes. Cover and simmer for 2 minutes longer.

Serve hot, as a vegetable accompaniment to grilled or roast lamb, pork, veal or chicken.



AFELIA II

Mushrooms with coriander

Follow the recipe at left, substituting 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) mushrooms for the potatoes. Trim the mushrooms and wipe them clean with a dry cloth — do not wash.

Fry the whole mushrooms in the oil until the juices evaporate. Reduce the heat, add the wine, and salt and pepper to taste. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the coriander seeds, then cook for a further 2 minutes and serve.

AFELIA III

Artichoke hearts with coriander Substitute 12 [artichoke hearts](#) for the potatoes, preparing them as instructed.

Drain and dry well, then cut each heart into quarters. Fry in the oil until lightly browned.

Reduce the heat, add the wine and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for 15–20 minutes, or until tender. Add the coriander seeds and cook a little longer. Serve hot.

KALAMARIA PARAYEMISTA

Stuffed squid

SERVES: 4 AS A MAIN, OR 5–6 AS AN APPETISER

**1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) small squid, with hoods about 10–12 cm (4–5 inches) long coarse salt, for rubbing,
optional 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) corn oil**

1 onion, finely chopped

**110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) short-grain white rice 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) tomato passata (puréed
tomatoes) 1 small piece of cinnamon bark**

2 cloves

**salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) dry white wine To clean the
squid, pull off the heads and attached tentacles. Cut out the eyes and beaks and discard. Clean the
dark skin from the head and tentacles by pulling it off, or rubbing it off with a cloth dipped in
coarse salt.**

Clean out the hoods (bodies) and remove the transparent backbone from inside the hoods. Pull or rub off the skin. Rinse well, drain and dry.

Chop three or four squid into small pieces and reserve. Set the rest aside.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the rice and stir for 2 minutes.

Add the passata, cinnamon, cloves, chopped squid and 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) water. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer over low heat for 10 minutes, or until the liquid has been absorbed. Remove the cinnamon and cloves.

Fill the squid hoods with the rice mixture, packing it in loosely, as the rice will expand and the hoods will contract during cooking. Close the tops of the hoods with wooden cocktail sticks, or sew together with strong thread.

Heat the remaining oil in a deep saucepan and fry the squid rolls until lightly coloured, turning them frequently.

Reduce the heat and add the wine. Cover and simmer gently over low heat for 1 hour, or until the squid is tender. Add a little water to the pan if necessary during cooking.

Serve hot or warm, as a main dish or a mezze.

OKTAPOTHI STIFATHO

Braised octopus and onions

SERVES: 6

1 octopus, about 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) corn oil 1 onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) dry red wine 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) wine vinegar 2 cloves

1 large piece of cinnamon bark

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) small whole onions Pull the tentacles from the octopus and set aside. Remove and discard the intestines, ink sac, eyes and beak. Wash the head and tentacles and pull the skin off the head.

Place the head and tentacles in a saucepan. Cover and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes, or until the juices have exuded. Drain, cool and cut into small pieces.

Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the chopped onion until translucent. Add the garlic and chopped octopus and fry over medium heat for 5 minutes.

Add the passata, wine, vinegar, cloves and cinnamon. Season with salt and pepper, then cover and simmer over low heat for 30 minutes.

Peel the small onions, then cut a cross in the root end of each onion so the centres don't pop out during cooking. Add them to the pan. (If desired, the peeled onions may be blanched in boiling water for 5 minutes, then drained, before adding them to the octopus.) Cover and cook for a further 1 hour, or until the octopus is tender. Remove the cloves and cinnamon, then adjust the seasoning to taste.

Serve with a plain rice pilaff.

PSARI STO FOURNO

Baked fish

SERVES: 6

2 whole baking fish, each about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) juice of 1 lemon

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) corn or olive oil 40 g (1½ oz/½ cup) soft white breadcrumbs 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

3 large tomatoes, peeled and sliced

2 large potatoes, peeled

Clean and scale the fish if necessary. Wipe them dry, then rub each one inside and out with the lemon juice and some salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate for 1–2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Oil a baking dish large enough to accommodate the fish. Sprinkle the breadcrumbs over the base, then top with the garlic and most of the parsley.

Place the fish in the baking dish and drizzle with a little of the oil. Arrange the tomato slices over the fish.

Peel the potatoes and cut into thick finger-length chips. Place them around and between the fish. Season the tomatoes and potatoes with salt and pepper, then pour the remaining oil over all the ingredients in the dish.

Cover with foil and bake for 15 minutes. Remove the foil and bake for a further 20–25 minutes, or until the fish and potatoes are cooked.

Serve hot, sprinkled with the remaining parsley.

PSARI SAVORO

Fried fish with rosemary and vinegar SERVES: 6

In both Cyprus and the Greek islands, an abundance of fish is prepared with vinegar-based sauces, which are used as marinades to preserve fried fish for a few days. This recipe, Psari Savoro, has a simple sauce of garlic, rosemary, vinegar and wine; Psari Marinato (right) adds the ubiquitous tomato, plus a few more herbs. Both sauces are well worth trying.

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) small whole fish, fish fillets or fish steaks, suitable for pan-frying salt, for sprinkling plain (all-purpose) flour, for coating olive or corn oil, for pan-frying 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 teaspoon fresh or dried rosemary

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) brown vinegar 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) dry white wine salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Clean and scale the fish if necessary. Rinse and pat dry. Sprinkle with salt, then cover and leave for 20 minutes.

Coat the fish with flour.

Pour oil into a frying pan to a depth of 5 mm (½ inch) and place over medium–high heat. Fry the fish in the hot oil until golden brown on both sides and cooked through. Drain and arrange the fish on a platter.

Pour all but 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of the oil from the pan. Add the garlic and rosemary to the pan and cook for a few seconds. Sprinkle in 3 teaspoons flour and stir over medium heat until lightly coloured.

Remove from the heat and pour in the vinegar — take care as vinegar sizzles. Stir in the wine and return to the heat, stirring until bubbling. Add salt and pepper to taste, then pour the sauce over the fish.

Serve hot, or cover and refrigerate until cold.



PSARI MARINATO

Fish with tomato herb sauce SERVES: 6

Ingredients as for Psari Savoro Additional sauce ingredients

1 bay leaf 2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

**125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
½ teaspoon sugar Prepare and fry the fish as directed in the Psari Savoro recipe, placing the fish in a dish.**

Drain the oil from the pan, then clean out the pan. Return 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of oil to the pan, or more if necessary. Add the garlic and 2 tablespoons flour and stir over medium heat until the flour colours.

Stir in the vinegar, wine and rosemary as before, but this time also adding the additional bay leaf, parsley, passata and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water.

Bring to the boil, stirring constantly. Let the sauce bubble gently over low heat for about 5 minutes.

Add the sugar and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper. Pour the sauce over the fish and serve hot or cold.

GALLOS YEMISTOS

Roast stuffed turkey

SERVES: 8–10

1 turkey, about 4 kg (8 lb 12 oz)

1 lemon

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) corn oil or melted butter

2 small pieces of cinnamon bark

Stuffing

40 g (1½ oz) butter

1 onion, finely chopped

70 g (2½ oz/½ cup) chopped celery 250 g (9 oz) minced (ground) veal 1 turkey liver, chopped

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) short-grain white rice 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) dry white wine 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) chicken stock 75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) currants 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) blanched slivered almonds ½–1 teaspoon ground cinnamon salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Wipe the turkey inside and out with paper towels. Cut the lemon into quarters and rub the cavities with the cut lemon. Sprinkle the turkey lightly with salt and pepper.

To make the stuffing, melt the butter in a saucepan and gently fry the onion and celery for 10 minutes. Add the veal and liver and stir for 5 minutes. Stir in the rice, wine and stock, then cover and cook for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and mix in the remaining stuffing ingredients.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Fill the turkey neck and body cavities with the stuffing. Secure the openings with a trussing needle or skewer and truss the rest of the turkey (wings and legs).

Place the turkey in a roasting tin and drizzle with the oil or melted butter. Add the cinnamon and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water to the roasting tin.

Cover the turkey with foil and roast for 3 hours, basting every 30 minutes with the pan juices.

Remove the foil to allow the turkey to brown. Roast for a further 1 hour, basting with the pan juices halfway through.

Transfer the turkey to a warm platter. Skim the pan juices and strain into a sauceboat to serve on the side.

Lamb casserole with pasta

SERVES: 6

**6 lamb leg or shoulder chops (cutlets), cut about 4 cm (1½ inches) thick
60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) corn oil or melted butter
1 large onion, finely chopped**

**250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes)
250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes
3 cloves**

1 large piece of cinnamon bark

**salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season
1–1.25 litres (34–42½ fl oz/4–5 cups) boiling stock or water
440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) orzo or kritharaki (rice-shaped pasta)
25 g (¾ oz/¼ cup) grated kefalograviera or parmesan cheese
70 g (2½ oz/½ cup) diced haloumi or feta cheese
Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).**

Place the lamb chops in a baking dish and drizzle the oil or melted butter on top. Bake for 20 minutes.

Add the onion to the dish and bake for a further 10 minutes.

Add the passata, chopped tomatoes, cloves and cinnamon and season with salt and pepper. Baste the lamb with the tomato mixture and cook for a further 1 hour, or until the lamb is tender, adding a little of the boiling stock if necessary.

When the lamb is tender, add the boiling stock and stir in the pasta. Bake for a further 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, and adding a little more liquid if the mixture looks dry.

When the pasta is tender, sprinkle the cheeses over the pasta and bake for a further 5 minutes to melt the cheese.

Serve immediately.

Note: This is a popular restaurant dish in Greece, Cyprus and Egypt. After the initial cooking, the ingredients are transferred to individual casserole dishes before the cooking is completed. In the home I suggest dividing the meat and pasta after it is cooked, and just before adding the cheese. Return to the oven to melt the cheese.

TAVAS

Lamb and cumin casserole

SERVES: 6

This dish is named after the dish in which it is cooked. A tava is made of unglazed terracotta, with a snug-fitting lid. Before the advent of the home oven, the tava was placed on glowing embers in a hole in the ground, with earth packed around and on top of the dish. The lamb is cooked slowly to mouthwatering tenderness. Though you might not find a Cypriot tava, numerous terracotta casseroles are now available.

In Cyprus the tava is never washed in detergent suds — just wiped clean, rinsed with hot water, dried and left to air in the cupboard until next time.

Only this particular dish is prepared in the tava.

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) boneless lamb shoulder or leg

3 large onions, sliced

750 g (1 lb 10 oz/3 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes

2 teaspoons cumin seeds, plus extra pounded cumin seeds, to serve salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

Pourgouri Pilafi, to serve Preheat the oven to 150°C (300°F/Gas 2).

Cut the lamb into 3 cm (1¼ inch) cubes. Place in a deep casserole dish, preferably one made of unglazed terracotta. Add the onions and tomatoes.

Crush the cumin seeds using a mortar and pestle and sprinkle into the dish with salt and pepper to season. Stir well, then add 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water.

Cover tightly and bake for 2½–3 hours, or until the lamb is tender and the sauce is thick. After 1½ hours, check the dish and add more water if required, though this should not be necessary — it depends on how tightly the lid fits.

Serve at the table from the dish, with Pourgouri Pilafi and additional pounded cumin seeds to add according to individual taste.

KALOYRKA

Boiled meat-filled pasta

SERVES: 6

1 quantity [Ravioles](#) dough 1 quantity [Saltsa Tomata](#)

Meat filling

2 tablespoons corn oil

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb or beef 1 large onion, finely chopped

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Prepare the dough as directed in the [Ravioles](#) recipe, to the point of dividing it into two equal portions.

To make the filling, heat the oil in a frying pan, add the meat and onion and stir over high heat until the meat changes colour and is crumbly. Reduce the heat, add the parsley, salt and pepper to taste and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes, or until the liquid evaporates. Remove from the heat and leave to cool.

Prepare the [Saltsa Tomata](#) as directed in the recipe and keep it hot.

Meanwhile, roll out the dough, then cut, fill and shape the kaloyrka as directed in the Ravioles recipe.

Cook the pasta in a large saucepan of boiling salted water, 15 at a time, for 15–20 minutes, or until tender. Remove to a colander set over simmering water, using a slotted spoon. Cook the remaining kaloyrka in the same way.

Turn into a serving dish and cover with the hot Saltsa Tomata. Serve immediately.

Grated cheese may be served on the side if desired.

ARNI PSITO

Roast lamb

SERVES: 6

1 leg of lamb, about 2 kg (4 lb 6 oz)

2 garlic cloves

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) potatoes juice of 1 lemon

2 large onions, sliced 375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 1 bay leaf

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) stock or water 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) red or white wine 40 g (1½ oz) butter

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Dry the lamb with paper towels and cut slits in the surface. Cut the garlic into slivers and insert them into the slits. Season the lamb with salt and pepper and place in a roasting tin. Roast for 1 hour, then drain off the fat.

Peel the potatoes, halve them lengthways, then cut partway down through the rounded side of each half. Arrange the potatoes around the lamb, with the rounded sides up. Sprinkle with the lemon juice and more salt and pepper. Top the potatoes with the onion and tomatoes.

Add the bay leaf, cinnamon, stock and wine to the dish. Dot the lamb with the butter and roast for a further 1½ hours, turning the lamb occasionally to brown evenly. Remove the lamb to a carving platter and keep it warm.

Skim the excess fat from the roasting tin. (Reserve this fat for mixing through hot spaghetti.) Carve the lamb and serve with the potatoes, the sauce from the roasting tin and a side salad or green vegetable.

HIRINO ME MELITZANES

Pork with eggplant

SERVES: 5–6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) pork stewing meat, from the shoulder 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) corn or peanut oil 1 large onion, chopped

1 garlic clove, crushed

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 2 eggplants (aubergines)

finely chopped flat-leaf parsley, to garnish Preheat the oven to 170°C (340°F/Gas 3).

Trim the pork and cut into fairly large cubes, reserving some of the pork fat.

Grease a heated frying pan with some of the reserved pork fat and brown the pork on all sides. Transfer to a casserole dish and drain off the fat from the pan.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in the pan and gently fry the onion and garlic until the onion is translucent. Add the tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Stir well to dissolve the browned sediment and bring to the boil.

Pour the mixture over the pork. Cover with a lid and bake for 1½ hours.

Meanwhile, wash the eggplants, remove the stems and cut lengthways into quarters. Place in a colander and sprinkle the cut surfaces liberally with salt. Leave for 30 minutes. Rinse and dry with paper towels.

Heat the remaining oil in a clean frying pan and brown the eggplant pieces on all sides.

Skim the fat from the casserole and place the eggplant on top of the pork. Cover and bake for a further 1 hour. Sprinkle with parsley and serve from the casserole dish, with mashed or fried potatoes and a tossed salad.

LOUKANIKA

Pork sausages

MAKES: ABOUT 1 KG (2 LB 3 OZ) 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) boneless pork, from the shoulder (see [note](#)) 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) port wine

1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

½ teaspoon ground black pepper 1½ teaspoons ground coriander ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon ¼ teaspoon whole cumin seeds

2 teaspoons salt

**2 garlic cloves, crushed
grated zest of 1 orange
sausage casings**

Cut the pork into cubes, leaving on a good deal of the fat. Process the pork in short bursts in a food processor, so that it is not chopped too finely. Alternatively, pass it through a meat grinder using a coarse screen.

Place the pork in a glass or ceramic mixing bowl and add the wine, spices, salt, garlic and orange zest. Mix until thoroughly combined. Cover and leave in the refrigerator for 1 day, stirring occasionally.

Place the sausage casings in cold water to loosen them. Remove each length as required.

Fill the casings using a meat grinder and a special attachment, or use a large funnel with a long nozzle, pushing the skin onto the nozzle and easing it off as it fills. Push the meat through the casings using the handle of a wooden spoon. Knot the end of the skin just as the meat begins to come through the nozzle.

When filled, twist the sausages into 15 cm (6 inch) lengths, twisting the first one way, the second in the opposite direction and so on. Knot the other end.

Cover the sausages loosely and store in the refrigerator until required.

To serve, fry the sausages in a little pork fat until cooked through. The cooked sausages can also be served as an appetiser, cut into small pieces and skewered with cocktail sticks.

✿ Note: The pork should have about 20 per cent fat. If the pork is purchased with the skin (rind) on, use a little more pork than the amount specified, as the rind must be removed.



SHEFTALIA

Barbecued sausages

MAKES: 50

The essential ingredient for these tasty sausages is panna, the caul fat from a pig (the outer covering of the paunch). When purchased, caul fat looks like long strips of creamy pink pork fat. Opened out, it is attractively patterned with lacy threads of fat on very fine membrane, finer than sausage casings.

The simply flavoured meat mixture is wrapped in pieces of panna, forming small sausages.

Sheftalia must be cooked over glowing charcoal — once cooked, the only evidence of the covering is the delicious flavour imparted to the contents.

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) fatty pork 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) veal or lamb 1 large onion, finely chopped or grated 1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 250 g (9 oz)

panna

(the caul fat from a pig) Combine all the meat in a mixing bowl with the onion, parsley, salt and a generous grinding of black pepper.

Dip the panna into a bowl of warm water for a minute or two. Remove and carefully open out a piece at a time, laying it flat on a work surface. Cut with kitchen scissors into pieces about 10 cm (4 inches) square.

Take a good tablespoonful of the meat mixture and shape it into a thick sausage about 5 cm (2 inches) long. Place it towards one edge of a piece of panna, fold the end and sides over the meat, then roll up firmly. Repeat with the remaining panna and meat mixture.

Thread the sausages onto flat, sword-like skewers, leaving space between them. (The number of sausages on each skewer will depend on the length of the skewers.) Cook over glowing charcoal, turning frequently. Do not place them too close to the heat — sheftalia must cook fairly slowly, so that the inside is well cooked and the outside nicely browned, without being burnt. The panna melts during cooking, keeping the meat moist and adding flavour.

Excessive flaring of the fire can be controlled with a sprinkle of water on the coals.

Serve sheftalia as an appetiser or main course.

ZALATINA

Brawn

MAKES: 16–20 SLICES

Traditionally this is made with a pig's head. As this part of the animal is not often available, and if the thought of cooking one is intolerable, you can make a perfectly good brawn with other parts of the carcass. Trotters or veal shanks will supply the necessary gelatinous properties, as will the rind (skin) and bones of the pork shoulder.

2 veal shanks, cracked 2 pig's trotters (knuckles), cracked 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) fresh pork shoulder, cut into 4–5 pieces 2–3 pig or lamb tongues

1 teaspoon cracked black peppercorns

1 large piece of cinnamon bark

2–3 fresh or dried hot chillies

3 teaspoons salt

85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) white vinegar 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) lemon juice salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Wash the meats, place in a large saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring slowly to the boil, skimming when necessary. When well skimmed and boiling, add the peppercorns, cinnamon, chillies and salt. Cover and simmer gently for 3 hours, or until all the meat is very tender.

Remove the meat and trim. Discard the bones, fat and skin. Cut the meat into small cubes and set aside. Skin the tongues and cut into cubes.

Boil the stock until about 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) remain, skimming as required. Strain through a sieve lined with muslin (cheesecloth), into a clean saucepan. Add the cubed meat and tongue, the vinegar and lemon juice. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper.

Bring back to the boil, then pour into two loaf tins or moulds. Cover and refrigerate until set.

To release the brawn, dip the moulds in fairly hot water for a few seconds. Run a knife around the inside of the moulds to loosen the brawn. Place a flat plate over each mould, then invert the moulds and shake downwards to free the brawn.

Slice and serve as part of a cold buffet, or as an appetiser.

✿ Note: You can garnish the brawn with bay leaves, herb sprigs, sliced hard-boiled eggs, red and green capsicum (pepper) strips or sliced olives, alone or in combination. Pour a little of the cooled stock into the base of each mould, set in a dish of iced water. When thickened, arrange the selected garnish in a pleasing pattern and spoon a little more stock on top. Leave in iced water until set, then carefully fill with the cooled brawn mixture.

AFELIA

Cypriots say if a dish has coriander seeds in it, then it is Cypriot. Many would disagree, but it is true Cypriots are inordinately fond of this spice. Coriander (cilantro) is native to southern Europe and the Mediterranean, its use dating back to 1552 BCE.

Afelia is a name applied to pork and vegetable dishes that feature cracked coriander seeds. Whether it is pork with coriander, mushrooms with coriander or a combination, the dish is still called afelia. Pork afelias follow here; you will also find vegetable [afelias](#).

To Cypriot tastes, I might be a little conservative with my quantities of coriander — add more if you so desire.

AFELIA I

Fried pork with coriander

SERVES: 4

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) boneless pork shoulder, leg or loin 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) dry red wine

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 2 tablespoons corn oil, or 40 g (1½ oz) butter 2–3 teaspoons crushed coriander seeds [Pourgouri Pilafi](#), to serve Cut the pork into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes, removing any skin if present, but leaving the fat. Place in a glass or ceramic bowl and add the wine, salt and a good grinding of pepper. Mix well, then cover and marinate in the refrigerator for several hours, stirring occasionally.

Drain the pork, reserving the marinade. Heat the oil or butter in a heavy-based frying pan and fry the pork over high heat, stirring frequently, until browned and just cooked through. Remove to a plate.

Cook the marinade in the pan until reduced to about 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup). Add the pork, sprinkle with the coriander seeds and toss until heated through. Serve immediately, with Pourgouri Pilafi and a tossed salad or green vegetable.

AFELIA II

Braised pork with coriander SERVES: 4–5

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) pork fillet, leg or loin pork 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) new potatoes, peeled 250 g (9 oz) small mushrooms, trimmed and wiped clean 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) red wine salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

2 teaspoons crushed coriander seeds

Cut the pork into 3 cm (1¼ inch) cubes, leaving some fat on the meat as this is desirable.

Heat half the butter in a heavy-based saucepan and brown the potatoes all over. Remove to a plate.

Add the remaining butter and brown the pork on all sides, then push the pork to the side of the pan. Add the mushrooms and quickly fry them in the pan, next to the pork. Stir to combine, then reduce the heat to low.

Pour in the wine and season with salt and pepper. Place the potatoes on top and sprinkle with the coriander seeds. Cover and simmer over low heat for 45 minutes, or until the pork and potatoes are tender.

Serve with a tossed green salad.

HIRINO ME KOLOKASSI

Pork with taro

SERVES: 6

When I was introduced to kolokassi in Cyprus I did not recognise it. The locals informed me kolokassi was Cyprus sweet potato and only available there — and indeed it does look like a very large sweet potato. As it happens the Egyptians use it also, but it is unknown elsewhere in the region.

The preparation of kolokassi is accompanied by a certain amount of ritual. Scrub the root, dry it well, peel, do not wet once peeled — if you do happen to wet it, dry it well again.

Chip off pieces — do not chop into it. To do this, slice into the root at an upwards angle, then break pieces off in thin wedges. As the root is large in circumference, work your way around it, ending up with pieces rather like apple wedges.

This is all to stop the taro becoming slimy during cooking.

The whole matter of the kolokassi intrigued me, until I found out that it was the taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) native to the Pacific Islands — a long way from home!

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) boneless stewing pork 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) corn oil

1 large onion, chopped

185 g (6½ oz/1½ cups) thickly sliced celery 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes)

2 teaspoons salt

**freshly ground black pepper, to season 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) taro (kolokassi)
juice of ½ lemon**

Cut the pork into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes, leaving some fat on the meat.

Heat half the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and brown the pork over medium–high heat, removing each batch to a plate.

Reduce the heat and add the remaining oil. Gently fry the onion and celery until the onion is translucent. Add the passata and bring to the boil, stirring to dissolve the browned sediment from the base of the pan.

Return the pork to the pan. Season with the salt and a good grinding of pepper. Cover and simmer for 45 minutes.

Scrub the taro, dry well with paper towels and peel. If the taro is soiled during peeling, rinse it and dry well. Chip off pieces as described in the introduction to the recipe.

Place the taro on top of the pork and sprinkle with the lemon juice. Tilt the pan so that liquid runs over the taro, adding a little water if necessary.

Cover tightly and simmer for a further 30–45 minutes, or until the pork and taro are tender. Do not stir once the

taro has been added.

Tilt the pan and skim off the excess fat. Adjust the seasoning and serve.

KOLOKASSI VRASTO

Boiled taro

The large taro root is simply scrubbed and boiled in its skin until tender. When cooked, peel off the skin, cube the flesh and combine it in a bowl with sliced celery, lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper. Serve warm.

POULLES TIGANITES

Fried taro shoots

The taro grown in Cyprus produces small torpedo-shaped offshoots. These are simply scrubbed and peeled, again keeping the root dry, except for a final rub with lemon juice. The shoots are then fried slowly in hot oil until golden brown and tender. Lemon juice and salt are sprinkled on at the table.

They are delicious served with [Skorthalia](#), and are often served alongside boiled beetroot (beets).

THAKTILA KYRION

Ladies' fingers

MAKES: ABOUT 48

Pastry

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour ¼ teaspoon salt

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) corn oil or peanut oil Nut filling

155 g (5 oz/1 cup) finely chopped almonds 2 tablespoons caster (superfine) sugar ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon Syrup

330 g (11½ oz/1½ cups) sugar 2 teaspoons lemon juice

2 tablespoons honey

1 teaspoon orange flower water, optional To finish

500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) corn or peanut oil, for deep-frying chopped toasted almonds, to serve To make the pastry, sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl. Stir the oil into the flour, then rub in with your fingertips to distribute the oil evenly. Add 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) cold water and mix to a soft dough. Knead until smooth, then cover the pastry and leave to rest for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, make the syrup. Put the sugar and 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat and stir occasionally to dissolve the sugar. Add the lemon juice and honey and bring to the boil. Allow to boil rapidly, without stirring, for 5 minutes. Stir in the orange flower water, if using, then leave the syrup to cool.

Combine the nut filling ingredients in a mixing bowl.

Knead the pastry lightly on a floured work surface and divide into three. Roll out one portion very thinly, then cut into 8 cm (3¼ inch) squares.

Place a teaspoon of the nut filling along one edge of the pastry, keeping the filling away from the sides. Fold over three times, then press the join and press each end firmly to seal. Press the ends with the tines of a fork to decorate them. Place the finished pastries on a cloth-lined tray and keep them covered. Repeat with the remaining pastry and filling.

To cook the pastries, heat the oil in a deep saucepan to 160°C (320°F), or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 30–35 seconds, and deep-fry a few pastry fingers at a time for 1–2 minutes, turning them to brown evenly. Cook until golden, lift out with a slotted spoon and place immediately in the cold syrup. Turn the pastries in the syrup, leave for 1 minute, then lift out onto a wire rack to drain. Repeat with the remaining pastries.

Sprinkle the cold pastries with chopped toasted almonds.

The pastries keep well in a sealed container in a cool place.



BOUREKIA TIS ANARIS

Fried cheese pastries

MAKES: ABOUT 72

Pastry

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour ¼ teaspoon salt

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) corn oil or peanut oil Cheese filling

375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) soft curd cottage cheese, such as ricotta, Anari, or Mizithra

55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) caster (superfine) sugar

1 egg, lightly beaten

1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon To finish

corn oil, for deep-frying sifted icing (confectioners') sugar, for sprinkling To make the pastry, sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl. Pour the oil into the centre, then gradually work in the flour until the mixture is crumbly, using your fingertips to rub the oil evenly into the flour. Add 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) cold water and mix to a soft dough. Knead until smooth, then cover the pastry and leave to rest for 1 hour.

To make the filling, cream the cottage cheese with the sugar and gradually blend in the beaten egg and cinnamon.

Roll out half the pastry as thinly as possible, using a rolling pin, or better still, a 60 cm (24 inch) length of wooden dowelling — an authentic and very effective Cypriot and Greek method.

Cut the pastry into 8 cm (3¼ inch) rounds using a pastry cutter. Roll and cut the remaining pastry, as well as the pastry trimmings. Stack the rounds and cover with a cloth.

Moisten the edge of a pastry round with water. Place a teaspoon of cheese filling in the centre, fold over, then press around the edge with a fork to seal. Place on a cloth-lined tray and repeat with the remaining dough rounds and filling.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan to 180°C (356°F), or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 20 seconds.

Fry the pastries a few at a time, turning to brown evenly — they should cook in about 2 minutes. Lift out with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

Serve warm, sprinkled with sifted icing sugar.

Any pastries not required immediately should be refrigerated in an airtight container and reheated in a 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) oven for 5 minutes before serving.

KAFES

Cypriot Coffee

Somehow precise measures sound odd for the Cypriot and Greek way of making coffee, so I have departed from my usual style.

You will require a briki (a long-handled coffee pot, wide at the base and tapering in at the top) or a small saucepan, and demitasse or small espresso cups.

To each demitasse cup of cold water measured into the pot, add 1 heaped teaspoon of powdered (not instant) coffee, and sugar to taste.

For sweet coffee (glykos) add the same amount of sugar; for moderately sweet coffee (metrios) add a level teaspoon of sugar; or no sugar, if that is your preference (sketos).

Stir over the heat only until the sugar has dissolved and bring to the boil. The coffee forms a creamy froth on top called kaimak. As the froth turns in from the sides and the coffee begins to rise in the pot, remove from the heat at once. Pour a little into each cup to distribute the froth, then fill your cups.

GLYKO KARITHI

Green walnut preserve

The first requirement for this preserve is a walnut tree. Though the preparation is lengthy, the preserve is well worth trying, as it is superb. Incidentally, a similar preserve, but flavoured with cardamom, is made in Iran, where it is called morabaye gerdu.

The walnuts must be picked very early in the summer when the green fruit are not yet full size and the inner shell is still soft. Test a nut by pricking it deeply in several places with a darning needle, paying particular attention to the long crease on one side; this indicates the join of the forming shell and is the part of the shell that hardens first. If there is no hint of resistance, cut the nut in half to check again. You will see the thick outer green covering progressing to white. The actual nut meat should be apparent — if it is clear and gelatinous, then the nuts are ready for the preserving pan. If the nut meat is not visible, try again in a few days.

2 kg (4 lb 6 oz) green walnuts (about 50 nuts)

½ cup slaked lime (food-grade pickling lime)

1.32 kg (2 lb 14 oz/6 cups) sugar

thinly peeled rind of 1 lemon

1 large piece of cinnamon bark

3 cloves

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice

90 g (3 oz/¼ cup) honey

It is advisable to wear rubber gloves when preparing the walnuts as they contain iodine, which stains the hands black — a stain that is very stubborn to remove, though it does wear off eventually.

Peel the walnuts thinly with a sharp knife, placing them in a bowl. Cover with cold water and leave for 8 days, changing the water daily.

Put the slaked lime in 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and stir to dissolve. Add the drained walnuts and sufficient cold water to cover. Stir, then leave for 4 hours.

Drain the walnuts and rinse well, changing the water several times. Tip the walnuts into a colander and run cold water through them to remove all traces of lime. This treatment firms the outer covering on the nuts; otherwise they will disintegrate during cooking.

Place the walnuts in a preserving pan and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil and leave to boil gently, uncovered, for 1–1½ hours, or until tender. Test with a needle, as described in the recipe introduction.

Drain the walnuts. Wearing rubber gloves for protection, pierce each walnut in several places so that the syrup can penetrate into them.

Layer the walnuts in a clean preserving pan, sprinkling 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) of the sugar over each layer. Cover with water and leave for 2 hours, so the sugar can dissolve slowly.

Add the lemon rind, cinnamon and cloves to the pan. Heat gently, shaking the pan to help dissolve the remaining sugar crystals. Bring to the boil, then add the lemon juice and allow to boil for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat, cover and leave for another 24 hours.

Add the honey to the pan and return to the boil. Allow to boil over medium heat for 10 minutes without stirring. Skim when necessary. When the syrup is very thick — the consistency of honey when a little is cooled on a cold saucer — the preserve is ready.

Remove the lemon rind, cinnamon and cloves. Ladle into hot [sterilised jars](#) and leave until cold before sealing. Store at room temperature.

LOKOUMIA PARAYEMISTA

Nut-filled semolina cookies

MAKES: ABOUT 45

560 g (1 lb 4 oz/4½ cups) fine semolina (farina) 375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) butter, either salted or unsalted, melted 1 large piece of cinnamon bark

2 teaspoons orange flower water

Nut filling

150 g (5 oz/1½ cups) coarsely ground almonds 55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) caster (superfine) sugar 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon

To finish

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) orange flower water icing (confectioners') sugar, for sprinkling Put the semolina in a mixing bowl, add the melted butter and mix well with a wooden spoon, until the butter is distributed evenly. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and leave for 6–8 hours, or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Put the cinnamon in a small saucepan with 250 ml (8½ fl oz/ 1 cup) water and bring to the boil. Remove the cinnamon and pour the boiling water onto the semolina. Add the orange flower water and mix until well blended. Leave for a few minutes to cool down, then knead until smooth. The dough should be firm; if crumbly, add a little more water.

Combine the nut filling ingredients in a mixing bowl.

Break off pieces of dough the size of large walnuts and mould each piece into an oval shape. Make a hole with your forefinger through the centre from one end, then enlarge the hole by turning the dough in your hand and working your finger inside the dough. Fill with a generous teaspoon of filling and close the end. Alternatively, press the dough flat in the palm of your hand, put the filling in the centre and close the dough around the filling, then remould the dough into an oval shape.

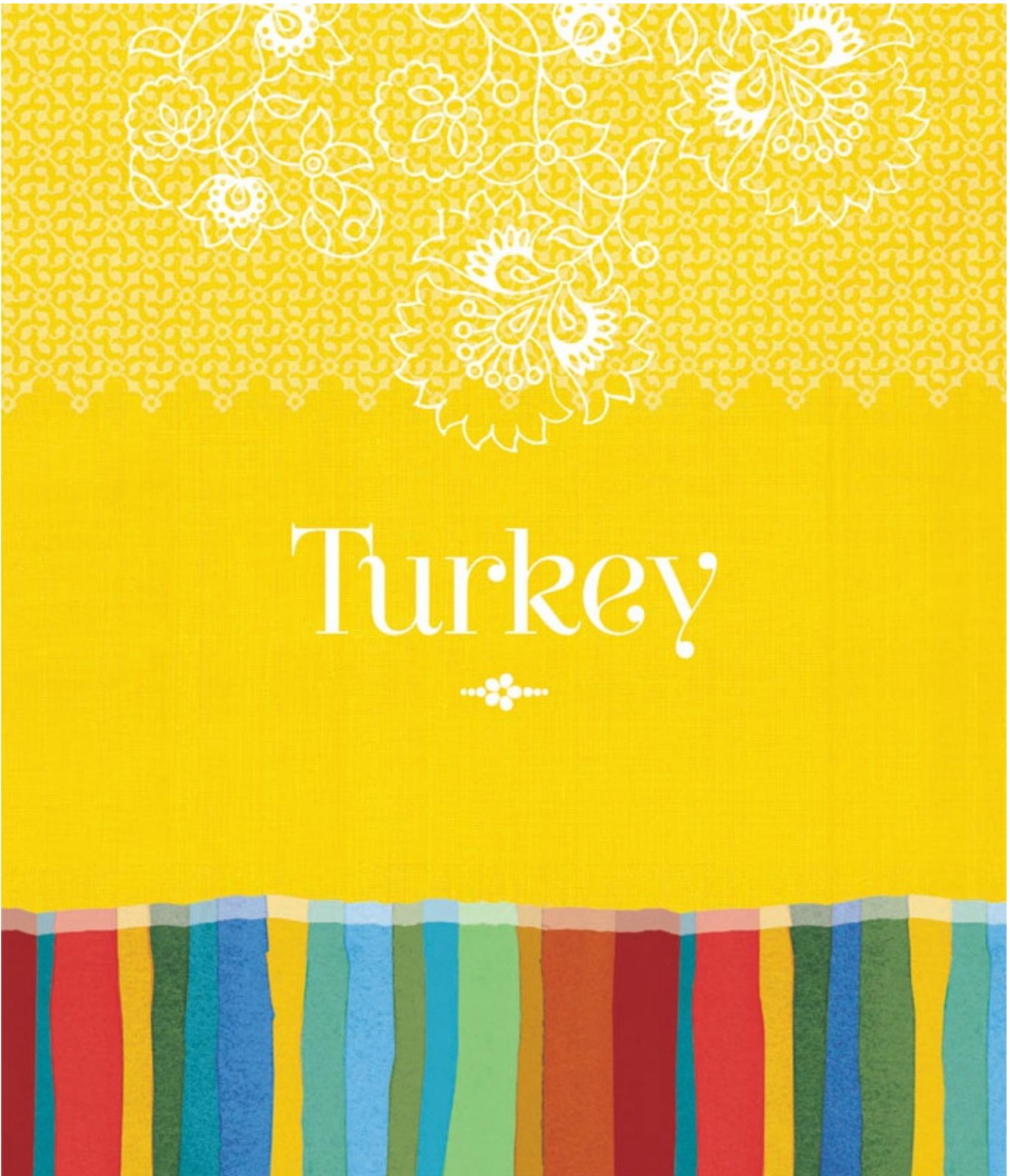
Place the cookies on ungreased baking trays and bake for 20–25 minutes, or until cooked but only lightly coloured.

As the hot cookies are removed from the oven, finish them off by brushing them with orange flower water.

Sift icing sugar onto a large piece of greaseproof (parchment) paper and place the hot cookies on the icing sugar. Sift more icing sugar thickly over the tops and sides and leave until cold. Store in a sealed container.

When serving the cookies, sift more icing sugar over the top to give a smooth finish.







TURKEY

Istanbul stands majestically astride Europe and Asia, symbolic of the nature of Turkish cuisine. Two bridges straddle the Bosphorus, linking two culinary heritages, though each has in itself evolved through centuries of history.

In the 1920s, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk determined to Westernise all that is Turkey, including the country's cuisine. I am so glad that he did not complete this part of his project, though fried pastries using a choux pastry base and dondurmas (water ices) certainly suggest attempts were made.

A tour of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, once the home of sultans, princes, their wives and concubines, gives further insight into Turkish cooking. Just a look at the names of the recipes emphasises the romantic, exotic era when Turkey's cuisine was being developed: Hünkâr Beğindi (ladies' navels), Kadin Budu (ladies' thighs), Dilber Dudağı (dainty fingers), Imam Bayıldı (swooning Imam).

The sea and its gifts play a large part in the lifestyle and food of Turkey. One favourite dish, [Kılıç Şış](#) (skewered swordfish), is a Turkish delicacy long remembered by visitors. The aroma of fish cooking over glowing charcoal or by other means permeates the air around the shores of the Bosphorus — Sardalya Sarması ([sardines in grape vine leaves](#)), Midye Dolması ([stuffed mussels](#)), Balık Plaki ([baked fish](#),) and many more. A favourite sauce served with many seafoods is tarator, a delectable combination of ground nuts, garlic, olive oil and vinegar. Though hazelnuts are generally used, almonds, pine nuts and walnuts are sometimes substituted.

DONER KEBAP

This famous Turkish speciality is found throughout Turkey and other countries of the region, though it is definitely Turkish in origin. As it is impractical for home preparation, a description will have to suffice.

Even-sized rounds of boneless lamb, taken from a whole carcass, are marinated for 24 hours in a mixture of olive oil, vinegar, onion, parsley, thyme, oregano or other combinations of herbs. A long, very heavy spit is loaded with the meat, layers interspersed with slices of fat from the tail of the lamb. The bottom of the spit is fitted with a disc to keep the meat in place, and the top is finished with a whole green capsicum (pepper) and a tomato for colour. The loaded spit is then placed before a vertical fire of charcoal or electrically heated elements. It is motor-driven so that the kebab revolves to cook evenly. As the lamb cooks on the outside, it is deftly sliced off into a

special pan and served immediately in pide (flat bread) with salad. The doner kebab (or 'doner kebab') is now prepared in many Western cities by ethnic groups, since it is as popular in Lebanon, Syria, Greece and Iraq as it is in its native Turkey. It is called chawarma in Lebanon and Syria, grass in Iraq and gyros in Greece.

THE FLAVOUR OF TURKISH FOOD

Turkey's cuisine, coloured by its history, is a mixture of Oriental and Byzantine influences, with the subtlety of Western cuisine softening the impact. Yoghurt would have to be one of the most important elements, its use stretching back into pre-history. While mostly enjoyed in its simplest form, with perhaps a dash of salt or a sprinkling of sugar, it is added to soups, becomes a sauce with little effort, and imparts a delicious flavour to cakes and desserts.

Perhaps the next pillar of Turkish cooking would be pilavlar (pilaff), renowned in world cuisine and worthy of its place. In researching, writing and testing the recipes I became aware that no matter how they were formulated, there would be some cooks who would agree and others who would strongly disagree with my methods. This is the beauty of Turkish cooking; a dish is a reflection of the cook, their love of food, and dedication to its preparation for the pleasure of the family.

Herbs are subtly used in Turkish cooking, predominantly parsley, dill, mint, bay leaves and, to a lesser extent, thyme and oregano. In spicing, pepper, bahar (allspice), cinnamon and paprika are the most widely used. A favourite Turkish garnish for foods is paprika steeped in oil. Çerkes Tavüğü ([Circassian chicken](#),) goes one step further: a dedicated cook will painstakingly extract the oil from walnuts to blend with paprika for the garnish. It is without doubt one of the most delicious chicken dishes I have ever tasted.

Turkey produces a wide variety of fruit and vegetables, all excellent in their season, but tomatoes in summer are a special joy. A good Turkish cook would prefer to use fresh tomatoes rather than tomato paste (concentrated purée), but certainly uses the latter when tomatoes are out of season.

The lemon is almost as popular in Turkey as it is in Greece and Cyprus; indeed many Turkish recipes using lemon juice are similar to Greek recipes, particularly when combined with egg.

Terbiye, terbiyeli tavuk suyu and terbiyeli kofte are similar to the egg and lemon sauce, soup and meatball soup of Greece and Cyprus.

Olive oil and butter are favoured for cooking above all other oils and fats, though peanut or corn oil can be used for general frying, particularly for pastries. Olive oil is essential for vegetable dishes, not only for its flavour, but also because such dishes are often eaten cold and other oils coagulate on cooling.

EATING TURKISH STYLE

The early days of the Ottoman Empire saw Istanbul (then called Constantinople) as a cosmopolitan city of Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Bulgars, Circassians, Venetians, Genoese, Jews, Serbs and Arabs. With such a beginning, is it any wonder that confusion exists as to what is Turkish and what is not?

The point is that Turkish cuisine, as with most cuisines, has been shaped by its history, but the people of the country through ensuing generations have marked it indelibly so that it is now a cuisine with its own national character.

Perhaps Istanbul today is the epitome of all that is Turkish. The streets are thronged with vendors selling *şiş* kebaps and kofta in pide (Turkish flat bread) with crisp cucumbers, capsicums (peppers) and tomatoes or simit, crusty bread rings smothered with sesame seeds; with lemonade and visine (sour cherry drink) vendors, laden with highly polished glass tanks with brass ornamentation strapped to their backs or slung across their bodies; and with the typical Turkish coffee vendor, a gleaming brass urn on his back, a pile of handle-less cups in his hand which he continually flings up and down, their jingling and his cry heralding his presence.

If a Turk wants refreshment, whether bought from an itinerant vendor or from a shop or store, the opportunity is ever present.

The coffee house is a favourite meeting place, a predominantly male domain, with coffee drinking an extremely popular pastime. Coffee was introduced to Turkey by the Arabs, and Turkey in turn introduced it to Europe.

The pastry shops are a delight to the eye and a threat to the waistline. Lokum ([Turkish delight](#),) is made in huge quantities with an unbelievable assortment of flavours, varying from the typical pink-coloured and rosewater-flavoured confection to one so filled with chopped nuts and dried fruit that the lokum in the mixture just serves to hold the gelatinous mass together.

One feature of entertaining in a Turkish home is the serving of an assortment of mezes. These are served en masse on the one table, called a raki table. Of course raki, a potent aniseed-flavoured spirit of Turkey, is always served at such a gathering. And though the occasion might appear at first to resemble a Western cocktail party, it could continue until the early hours of the morning, with an ever-changing assortment of hot and cold mezes being served.

While the serving of Turkish meals differs from house to house and between the city and rural dweller, it is basically the same. Meals are served Western style at a table, with all the dishes for the meal placed on the table at the same time. Meat or chicken is generally combined with vegetables for a casserole or baked dish; if kebap or a kofta is prepared, a separate vegetable accompaniment would be served. A salad, either an elaborate assortment or a simple combination of one or two ingredients, plus pickles and yoghurt and the inevitable pilaff, are always present. Cheese, bread and fresh fruit complete the meal. The beverage is usually ayran (yoghurt drink), particularly in summer.

When a Turk wishes to entertain in a grand manner, the range of recipes is such that a banquet to delight any gourmet can be prepared. It is not unusual to find Turks entertaining in such a way, particularly those who have a high social status.

COOKING METHODS

While the household might have a modern stove, cooking on a charcoal fire is still very much preferred. The Western barbecue, of whatever type, will serve you most satisfactorily. For food preparation, the mortar and pestle is an essential item of kitchen equipment. Cooking saucepans and pans are either tin-lined copper or aluminium, with a variety of pottery dishes for oven cooking. Any Western cooking utensil can be used for Turkish cooking, with the addition of a food processor or blender to replace the mortar and pestle, though using the latter does give the cook a great deal of satisfaction.

For making Turkish coffee a small, long-handled coffee pot, called a jezve, is essential, and these are readily available in Middle Eastern stores. A small saucepan really does not give the same results.

INGREDIENTS FOR TURKISH COOKING

There are few, if any, ingredients used in Turkish cooking which are difficult to obtain. Cosmopolitan influences have been felt in most Western countries and such foods are commonplace. One vegetable, the eggplant (aubergine), which is so much a part of Turkish cooking, is now widely available; however, recipes using this vegetable detail the Turkish methods for its preparation. The preferred variety of eggplant is the long purple fruit, but as this particular eggplant is only available during the summer, you will have to choose the smallest possible oval eggplants at other times to produce dishes such as Imam Bayildi ([swooning Imam](#)).

The introductory chapter and Glossary give further details on foods for Turkish cooking and the recipes are self-explanatory.

PRONUNCIATION

The Arabic script was discontinued in the 1920s. The written language of Turkey now includes accents. A guide to assist you with pronunciation of recipe names follows.

Â/â as in 'past' (used only in words originating from the Ottoman Turkish)

A/a as in 'past'

E/e as in 'egg'

I/i as the second vowel in 'valid'

İ/i as in 'pit'

Ö/ö as the vowel in 'err'

O/o as in 'over'

Ü/ü as in 'unit'

U/u as in 'put'

Ç/ç as 'ch' in 'chair'

Ş/ş as 'sh' in 'ship'

Ğ/ğ is a soft, slightly aspirate 'g', always between vowels

The Turkish alphabet contains no Q, W or X.

YOGURT SALÇASI Yoghurt sauce
MAKES: 250 G (9 OZ/1 CUP) **1–2** garlic cloves **½** teaspoon salt

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) yoghurt Pound the garlic and salt using a mortar and pestle. Alternatively, use a garlic press and combine the garlic with salt.

Mix the garlic into the yoghurt, then cover and refrigerate until required.

Serve with fried vegetables, kebabs, and as directed in recipes.

TARATOR

Hazelnut sauce

MAKES: 600 G (1 LB 5 OZ/2 CUPS) 140 g (4¾ oz/1 cup) hazelnuts 80 g (3 oz/1 cup) soft white breadcrumbs 3 garlic cloves, crushed

250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) olive oil 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) white wine vinegar

1 teaspoon salt

Blanch the hazelnuts if desired. Place in a bowl, cover with boiling water and leave for 5 minutes. Drain and peel off the skins. (This is not necessary, but I find it improves the flavour and appearance of the sauce.) Grind the hazelnuts in a blender, food processor or nut grinder, or pound in a mortar and pestle. If using a grinder or mortar and pestle, transfer the nuts to a bowl as they are pulverised.

Add the breadcrumbs, garlic and 1 tablespoon water. Process or beat by hand while adding the oil in a thin stream. Gradually add the vinegar, beating well until smooth. Stir in the salt. The blender gives the smoothest sauce; other methods give a textured sauce.

Transfer to a serving bowl, then cover and chill.

Serve with seafood, fried vegetables and plain cooked vegetable salads, or as directed in recipes.

✿ Note: Although the true Turkish tarator is almost always prepared with hazelnuts, walnuts are sometimes used, as well as blanched almonds or pine nuts, in which case add lemon juice instead of vinegar.

HAMOUR

Shortcrust pastry MAKES: 500 G (1 LB 2 OZ) 375 g (13 oz/2½ cups) plain (all-purpose)
flour ½ teaspoon salt

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) cold butter

1 egg yolk

Sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl. Cut the butter into small pieces and rub into the flour using your fingertips, until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.

Beat the egg yolk lightly and add to the flour mixture with 85 ml (3 fl oz/⅓ cup) cold water. Mix to a soft dough, then knead lightly until smooth.

Cover and leave to rest for 20–30 minutes, before using as directed in recipes.

BÖREKLER

Savoury pastries

These delicate pastries are filled and shaped in various ways. Though you might like to try your hand at making your own pastry, the readily available fillo pastry (yufka in Turkish) is the ideal pastry as nothing can match its crisp, light flakiness. However, you will need homemade pastry for certain böreks.

Fillings are listed separately from the final shaping, as the shape of the börek, rather than the filling, determines the name.

The role of the börek in Turkish cuisine is not merely as an appetiser or first course; they are often served as an accompaniment to light soups, and the more substantial versions containing meat or chicken fillings are served as main courses. You will find the latter in the Meat and Poultry sections of this chapter.

KIYMA

Meat filling MAKES: ABOUT 600 G (1 LB 5 OZ) 40 g (1½ oz) butter

1 large onion, finely chopped

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb or beef

1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Heat the butter in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Increase the heat, add the meat and stir frequently until the meat is crumbly. Fry until the juices evaporate and the meat begins to brown.

Remove the pan from the heat, add the parsley and season with salt and pepper. Use as directed in recipes.

BEYAZ PEYNİR

White cheese filling 250 g (9 oz) feta cheese 1 egg, lightly beaten

1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

freshly ground black pepper

Crumble the cheese into a bowl using your fingers or a fork. Mix in the egg, parsley and a good grinding of black pepper.

Use as directed in recipes.

IS PANAK

Spinach filling 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) fresh spinach, or 250 g (9 oz) packet of frozen chopped spinach

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 onion, finely chopped 75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) crumbled feta cheese 1 egg, beaten

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste If using fresh spinach, clean it well, removing any discoloured leaves, roots and any coarse or damaged stems. Wash well in several changes of water and shake the leaves to remove the excess moisture. Chop coarsely. If using frozen spinach, thaw it according to the packet instructions.

If using fresh spinach, place it in a large saucepan, then cover and cook over medium heat for 7–8 minutes, tossing occasionally. Cook only until wilted.

Place the wilted or thawed spinach in a sieve and press with the back of a spoon to extract the moisture. Transfer to a bowl.

Heat the oil in the saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the mixture to the spinach, along with the cheese, egg and parsley. Combine thoroughly, seasoning to taste with salt and pepper. Use as directed in recipes.

PATLICAN KIZARTMASI

Eggplant fritters SERVES: 6

3 long eggplants (aubergines), each about 250 g (9 oz) salt, for sprinkling 1 quantity Beer Batter oil, for pan-frying For serving

Yogurt Salçasi or Tarator

Remove the stems from the eggplants and wash well. Peel off 1 cm (½ inch) strips lengthways at intervals to give a striped effect. Cut the eggplants lengthways into 5 mm (¼ inch) slices and spread on a tray. Sprinkle liberally with salt and leave for 30 minutes. Dry with paper towels.

Make the Beer Batter as directed.

Dip each eggplant slice into the batter and pan-fry over medium-high heat in hot oil until tender and golden brown on both sides. The slices cook in about 3 minutes. Drain on paper towels.

Serve hot with Yogurt Salçasi or Tarator as an appetiser, or as a side dish to main meals.



HAVUÇ KIZARTMASI Carrot fritters Substitute 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) large carrots for the eggplants in the Patlican Kizartmasi recipe (left). Scrape the carrots, then slice diagonally into 5 mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) pieces.

Cook the carrot slices in boiling salted water for 5 minutes, or until just tender. Drain and dry, then dip in the batter and fry as directed in the recipe.

KABAK KIZARTMASI

Zucchini fritters Substitute 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) zucchini (courgettes) for the eggplants in the Patlican Kizartmasi recipe (left).

Trim the zucchini and cut into 5 mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) slices lengthways or diagonally, depending on how they are to be served. Salt them if you like, but this softens them and they are better if slightly firm when cooked.

Pat dry, then dip in the batter and continue as directed.

PIRASAPİDE

Leek pie

SERVES: 6–8

1 quantity Hamour pastry 4–5 leeks

1 tablespoon salt

150 g (5 oz/1 cup) crumbled feta cheese

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

¼ teaspoon ground hot chilli or chilli pepper 85 ml (3 fl oz/⅓ cup) olive oil

4 eggs

milk, for brushing

Make the pastry as directed [Yoghurt sauce](#). Cover and set aside.

Remove the roots and discoloured leaves from the leeks. Cut off most of the green tops, leaving about 8 cm (3½ inches). Halve the leeks lengthways and wash well to remove the soil between the leaves.

Cut out the root core, then slice the leeks fairly thinly. If the leeks are small, measure them, as you will require 600–700 g (1 lb 5 oz — 1 lb 9 oz/6–7 cups) sliced leeks. Prepare more if necessary.

Place the leeks in a colander and wash again to ensure all the soil has been removed. Drain well, then sprinkle with the salt, rubbing it through the leeks with your hands. Leave for 15–20 minutes, until the leeks are limp. Now press the leeks well so that the moisture drains out.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 220°C (430°F/Gas 7).

Combine the leeks in a mixing bowl with the feta, parsley, chilli and oil. Beat the eggs, set 2 teaspoons of the egg aside, and add the remainder to the leek. Stir well to combine.

Divide the pastry in two, making one piece slightly larger than the other. Roll out the larger piece on a floured work surface and place in a 30 cm (12 inch) round baking dish, or a 25 × 30 cm (10 × 12 inch) baking dish.

Spread the leek filling in the pastry and moisten the pastry edges with water. Roll out the remaining pastry and place over the top. Press the edges to seal well, then trim and crimp around the edge.

Beat the reserved egg with a little milk and brush the top of the pastry. Cut small slits into the top of the pie, to allow steam to escape. Bake for 30 minutes, or until golden brown.

Allow the pie to stand for 10 minutes, before cutting into serving portions.

* Note: Instead of the Hamour pastry you can use 10 fillo pastry sheets. Line the dish with five sheets, brushing each with melted butter. Add the filling and top with the remaining sheets, again brushing each with butter. Trim the edge and butter the top sheet. Score the top layers lightly in serving portions, using a sharp knife or stanley knife. Sprinkle the top lightly with water to stop the pastry curling during baking.

SARDALYA SARMASI

Sardines in grape vine leaves SERVES: 6

24 fresh sardines

salt, for sprinkling

24 fresh or preserved grape vine leaves 85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil freshly ground black pepper, to season lemon wedges, to serve

Twist the heads off the sardines, gut them and rinse under cold running water. Drain and dry with paper towels.

Spread the sardines on a dish and sprinkle each side with salt. Cover and leave for 20–30 minutes.

Rinse the vine leaves in cold water, then drain and pat dry with paper towels. Remove any stems if present.

Spread a vine leaf on a work surface, shiny side down, and brush with olive oil. Lay a sardine across the base of the leaf, sprinkle the sardine with pepper and dab with a little oil. Roll up firmly and place on a hinged barbecue grill basket. Repeat with the remaining sardines and vine leaves.

Close the grill basket and brush the outside of the rolls with oil. Cook over glowing charcoal for 2–3 minutes each side.

Arrange on a platter and serve immediately, with plenty of lemon wedges.

The sardine is unwrapped and lemon juice squeezed on to taste. The vine leaves are not eaten — they are used to impart a pleasing and unusual flavour to the fish.

* Note: If no hinged grill basket is available, you can cook the rolls under a hot grill (broiler). Secure the leaves with wooden cocktail sticks that have first been soaked in cold water for 30 minutes.

CİĞER TAVASI

Fried liver bits

SERVES: 10–12

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lamb or calf liver plain flour, for coating olive oil, for pan-frying salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 4 spring onions (scallions), chopped

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

Soak the liver in salted water to cover for 30 minutes. Remove the fine skin and larger tubes and cut the liver into 2 cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ inch) cubes. Drain well.

Toss the liver cubes in flour to coat.

Pour oil to a depth of 5 mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) into a frying pan and heat well over a high heat. Adding only a single layer of diced liver to the pan at a time, fry the liver quickly, browning on all sides, and turning the liver with tongs. Take care not to overcook it.

Remove each batch to a warm serving dish with a slotted spoon, then sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Garnish the hot liver with the spring onion and parsley and serve immediately, providing cocktail sticks for convenience.

SIGARA BÖREĞİ

Fried cigarette pastries

MAKES: 75

20 sheets fillo pastry

**1 quantity meat, cheese or spinach filling
oil, for deep-frying**

Open out the pastry sheets and place them in an even stack on a board. Using a stanley knife and a ruler, cut the stack into three strips, each about 14 cm (5½ inches) wide and 28 cm (11 inches) long.

Stack the strips on a dry cloth, folding the cloth over the top of the pastry, then covering with another folded dry cloth so they don't dry out as you work with them.

Place a strip of pastry on a work surface with the narrow edge towards you. Thinly spread 2 teaspoons of filling towards the edge, keeping a 2 cm (¾ inch) border. Turn the end of the pastry over the filling, then fold in the sides, pressing the fold along the length of the pastry. Brush the folded sides and the top edge of the pastry lightly with water. Roll up firmly, so that the finished pastry is as slender as possible.

Repeat until all the ingredients have been used, placing the pastries on a cloth-lined tray, seam side down.

Deep-fry the pastries a few at a time in a saucepan of hot oil, approximately 10 cm (4 inches) deep, for 4 minutes or until golden, turning to brown evenly. Lift out with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

Serve hot as an appetiser, or as an accompaniment to light soups.

* Note: The finished pastries may be reheated in a moderate oven (180°C/350°F/Gas 4) if necessary.



BURMA BÖREK

Baked pastry rolls MAKES: 30

10 sheets fillo pastry

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter, melted 1 quantity meat, cheese or spinach filling

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Open out the pastry sheets and cut each sheet into strips as directed in the Sigara Böreggi recipe (left). Stack them and cover with a cloth.

Take a strip of pastry and brush it lightly with melted butter. Spread a generous tablespoon of filling towards the narrow edge, keeping the filling clear of the sides. Fold in the sides and roll up. Repeat with the remaining ingredients, placing the finished rolls on a buttered baking tray, seam side down.

Brush the rolls lightly with butter and bake for 20 minutes, or until golden. Serve hot.

✿ Note: Smaller cocktail-sized rolls may be made by cutting pastry sheets into quarters. Use less filling and the yield is greater.

PIYAZ

White bean salad

SERVES: 6–8

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) dried haricot (navy) beans, or other white beans salt, to taste
1 garlic clove

2 small onions

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice

1 tablespoon white vinegar

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil **60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) good salad oil** **3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley** **1 teaspoon chopped mint**

2 teaspoons chopped dill

To finish

1 green capsicum (pepper), diced

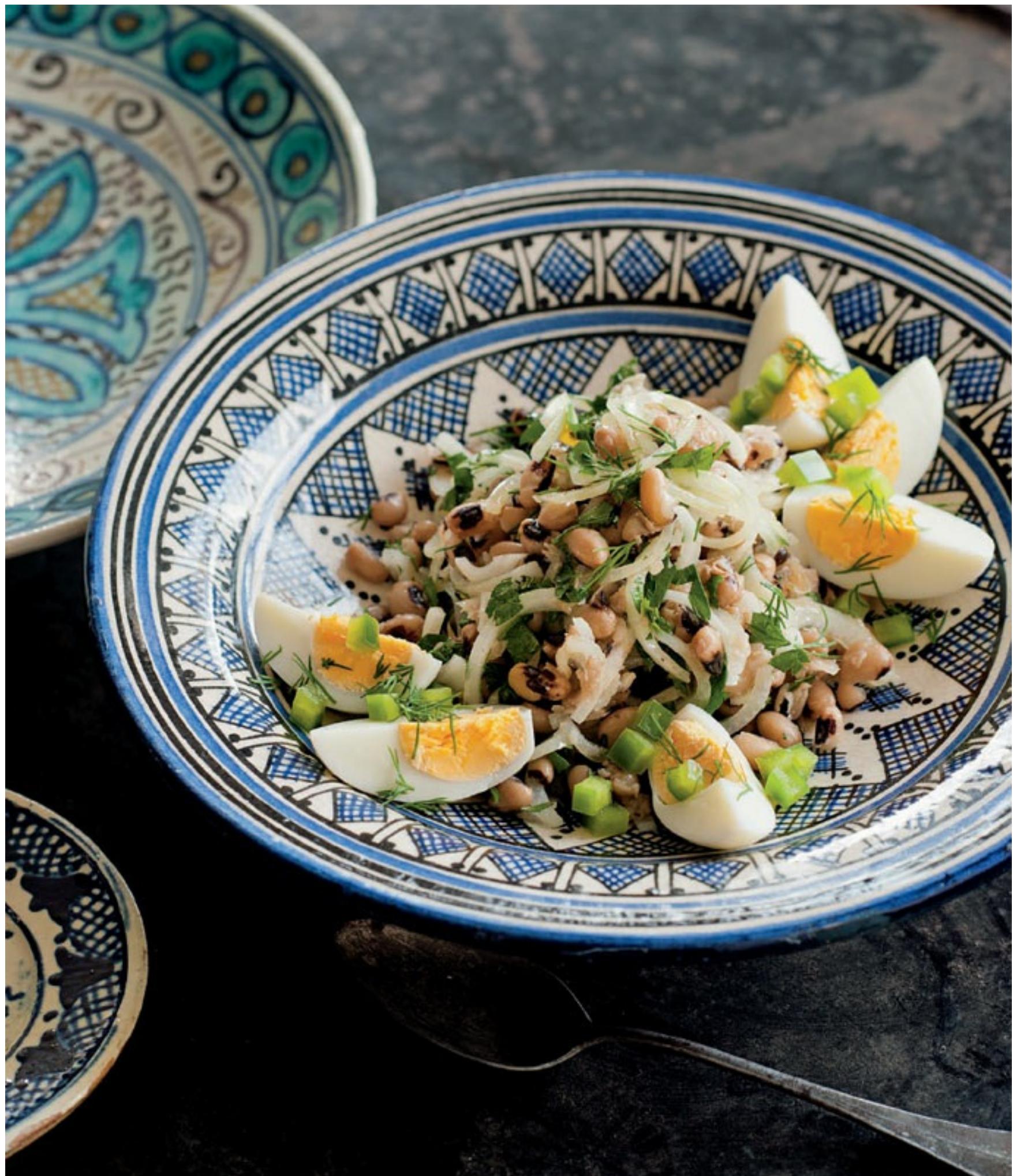
3 hard-boiled eggs

Wash the beans in several changes of cold water and place in a large saucepan. Cover with 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) cold water and bring to the boil. Allow to boil for 2 minutes, then remove from the heat. Cover and leave for 2 hours, or until the beans are plump. (Alternatively, soak the beans in cold water overnight, in the refrigerator if the weather is warm.) Return the beans to the boil in their soaking water. Cover and simmer gently over low heat until tender, but still intact. The cooking time will vary according to the bean used, but about 2 hours should be sufficient. After 1½ hours cooking, add salt to taste. When tender, drain well and put the beans into a bowl.

Crush the garlic with a little salt. Cut the onions in half from top to bottom, then slice each half into semi-circles. Add to the hot beans with the lemon juice, vinegar and combined olive and salad oils. Leave until cool.

Gently mix in the chopped herbs and chill for 1–2 hours.

Serve in a deep bowl garnished, with the capsicum and sliced or quartered hard-boiled eggs.



DOMATES SALATASI

Tomato salad

SERVES: 6–8

4 firm tomatoes

2 long, young cucumbers 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) lemon juice

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) olive oil 1 teaspoon finely chopped mint

1 tablespoon finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste black olives, to serve Peel the tomatoes if desired

Kefalotiri. Slice them fairly thinly and arrange in two rows on an oval platter.

Peel the cucumbers and score the flesh with the tines of a fork. Slice thinly and arrange on one side of the tomatoes.

Beat together the lemon juice, vinegar, oil and herbs, then add salt and pepper to taste. Pour the dressing over the tomatoes and cucumbers. Cover and chill until required.

Just before serving, place the drained olives on the other side of the tomatoes.

This salad accompanies most meals, particularly in summer, when tomatoes are at their best.

İŞKEM BE ÇORBASI

Tripe soup

SERVES: 5–6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) tripe 1 small onion, quartered 1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground white pepper

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) butter 35 g (1 1/4 oz/1/4 cup) plain (all-purpose) flour 125 ml (4 fl oz/1/2 cup) milk 2 egg yolks

2 tablespoons lemon juice 2 teaspoons paprika

1 tablespoon oil

3–4 garlic cloves, crushed 85 ml (3 fl oz/1/3 cup) white vinegar Wash the tripe and place in a saucepan. Cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Pour off the water, then add 1.25 litres (42 1/2 fl oz/5 cups) fresh cold water. Add the onion, salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 2 hours, or until tender.

Remove and discard the onion. Lift out the tripe, reserving the liquid, and cut it into small strips.

Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Stir in the flour and cook gently for 1 minute, without allowing the flour to colour. Stir in the milk and 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) of liquid from the tripe. Stir constantly until thickened and bubbling, then leave over a low heat to simmer gently.

Beat the egg yolks in a heatproof bowl, then beat in the lemon juice. Pour in the thickened sauce, stirring constantly.

Return the tripe to the tripe cooking liquid remaining in the saucepan. Pour in the egg mixture, stirring constantly. Still stirring, cook over gentle heat until the soup bubbles gently. Adjust the seasoning and remove from the heat.

Mix the paprika into the oil and set aside. Combine the garlic and vinegar.

Serve the soup in bowls, with a little paprika oil floated on top as a garnish. Diners can add the garlic vinegar mixture according to individual taste.

DÜĞÜN ÇORBASI

Wedding soup

SERVES: 6–8

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) boneless lamb stewing meat 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lamb soup bones 1 onion, quartered 1 carrot, quartered salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 90 g (3 oz/½ cup) butter 75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour

3 egg yolks

2–3 tablespoons lemon juice 2 tablespoons melted butter

2 teaspoons paprika

Place the lamb meat and bones in a large saucepan and pour in 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water. Add the onion and carrot. Bring to a slow simmer, skimming when necessary. Season with salt and pepper, cover and simmer gently for 1½ hours, or until the meat is tender.

Remove and discard the bones. Lift out the meat and cut it into small pieces. Strain the stock, return it to the pan and let it simmer gently.

Melt the butter in a large saucepan. Stir in the flour and cook gently for 2 minutes, without allowing the flour to colour. Gradually add the hot soup stock, stirring constantly. When smooth and bubbling, leave it to simmer gently.

Beat the egg yolks in a heatproof bowl and gradually add the lemon juice, holding a little back. Gradually beat in about 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) of the thickened stock, then pour the mixture into the soup. Stir over gentle heat and add the lamb meat. Heat gently, still stirring, until the egg is cooked.

Adjust the flavour with lemon juice and add more salt if necessary. Remove from the heat.

Combine the melted butter and paprika. Serve the soup in deep bowls, with a little paprika butter floated on top of each as a garnish.

PİLAV

Pilaff

The pilavlar of Turkey have an established place in world cuisine; even so we have only been exposed to a few variations. The possible permutations and combinations of the pilav are endless. The recipes given here are indicative of the various ways in which pilav is prepared; once you have mastered pilav cooking you can devise your own variations.

The Turkish cook soaks rice in hot, salted water for 10–30 minutes; with the rices available today, this is not necessary. However, washing is necessary if you are to achieve the right result. Place the rice in a bowl, add cold water and stir. Pour off the water, then add fresh water. Do this until the water runs clear. Another method is to place the rice in a sieve.

Move the grains constantly with your fingers so that the starch is released as the cold water runs through.

As rice grains vary in hardness according to the variety, you may find the directions given need slight modification for the type you are using. You might require more or less liquid, and the cooking time may need to be extended or reduced. Make a note of any alterations necessary for that particular brand of rice.

To serve pilav, either fluff it up with a fork and pile it on a serving dish, or press the hot pilav into an oiled mould and turn it out onto a serving dish. A little of the sauce from the accompanying food may be spooned on top as an additional garnish.

İC PILAV

Liver pilaff

SERVES: 6

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) long-grain white rice 250 g (9 oz) chicken or goose livers 90 g (3 oz/1/3 cup) butter

40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts

8 spring onions (scallions), white part only, chopped ¼ teaspoon ground allspice

3 tablespoons currants

750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) chicken stock

2 teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to taste 3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley or dill Wash the rice until the water runs clear, then leave to drain well.

Clean the livers, then slice finely or dice.

Heat half the butter in a small frying pan and fry the pine nuts until golden. Remove to a plate using a slotted spoon.

Add the spring onion to the pan and fry gently until translucent. Add the liver and stir over medium heat until the colour changes; do not overcook. Stir in the allspice and set aside in the pan.

Heat the remaining butter in a deep, heavy-based saucepan. Add the drained rice and stir over medium heat until the grains change from translucent to opaque, without colouring. Stir in the currants, then add the stock, salt, and pepper to taste. Stir occasionally until boiling, then reduce the heat to low. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

Remove the lid and add the reserved pine nuts, liver mixture, and the parsley or dill. Gently stir through the rice with a wooden spoon.

Place two paper towels over the rim of the pan and fit the lid on tightly. Cook over low heat for a further 10 minutes.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 10 minutes before serving. This pilav is an excellent accompaniment for roast poultry or lamb.

PATLICANLI PILAV

Eggplant pilaff

SERVES: 6

2 oval eggplants (aubergines), about 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) in total salt, for sprinkling

85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil

**1 large onion, cut in half lengthways, then sliced 500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes
1½ teaspoons salt**

freshly ground black pepper, to season 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 teaspoons chopped mint

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) long-grain white rice 625 ml (21 fl oz/2½ cups) light stock or water yoghurt, to serve

Cut the eggplants into large cubes, leaving the skin on. Place in a colander, sprinkle liberally with salt and leave for 30 minutes. Rinse and dry with paper towels.

Heat 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and fry the eggplant in batches until lightly browned. Remove to a plate.

Add the remaining oil to the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the tomatoes, salt, pepper, herbs and fried eggplant. Bring to the boil.

Wash the rice until the water runs clear. Drain and place on top of the eggplant mixture. Pour in the stock or water, then bring to the boil without stirring.

Reduce the heat, cover and leave to simmer gently for 20 minutes. Turn off the heat, place a cloth or two paper towels over the rim of the pan and fit the lid on tightly. Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Stir gently and turn into a heated dish. Serve with yoghurt.

TÜRKİSTAN PİLAVI

Turkistan carrot pilaff SERVES: 5–6

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) long-grain white rice 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter 310 g (10¾ oz/2 cups) coarsely grated carrots ½ teaspoon whole black peppercorns

1 teaspoon sugar

875 ml (29 fl oz/3½ cups) chicken stock salt, to taste

Wash the rice until the water runs clear. Drain well.

Melt the butter in a heavy-based saucepan. Add the carrot and peppercorns and fry over medium heat for 3 minutes, stirring often. Sprinkle in the sugar towards the end of frying.

Add the rice and fry for a further 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Pour in the stock and add salt to taste. Stir until boiling, then reduce the heat to low. Cover and cook for 25 minutes.

Turn off the heat, place a cloth or two paper towels over the rim of the pan and fit the lid on tightly. Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Excellent with roast chicken or the [Tavuk Yufka İçinde recipe](#).

BEYAZ PILAV

White pilaff

SERVES: 6

**400 g (14 oz/2 cups) long-grain white rice 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter 875 ml (29 fl oz/3½ cups)
chicken stock salt, to taste**

Wash the rice until the water runs clear. Drain well.

Melt the butter in a heavy-based pan and add the drained rice. Stir over medium heat for 5 minutes.

Add the stock and salt to taste, stirring occasionally until boiling. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Test a grain to gauge when the rice is cooked — the grain should be firm to the bite, but evenly tender.

Turn off the heat, place a cloth or two paper towels over the rim of the pan and fit the lid on tightly.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for at least 10 minutes before removing the lid. The pilav may be left for as long as 30 minutes without spoiling, depending on the quality of the grain.

Fluff up the rice with a fork and serve, or spoon into an oiled mould, press firmly and turn out onto a serving dish.

DÜĞÜN PİLAV

Wedding pilaff

Use the same ingredients and method as for the Beyaz Pilav recipe (left), with the addition of 40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts or blanched pistachio nuts, and substituting meat stock for chicken stock. Fry the nuts with the rice and continue the recipe as directed.

DOMATESLİ PİLAV

Tomato pilaff

Use the same ingredients and method as for the Beyaz Pilav recipe (left), adding 375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes halfway through frying the rice. Chicken or meat stock may be used, reducing the quantity to 625 ml (21 fl oz/2½ cups) if tinned tomatoes have been used. Add salt and pepper to taste.

YUFKALI PILAV

Pilaff in pastry

SERVES: 8–10

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) long-grain white rice **60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) butter**

60 g (2 oz/1/2 cup) slivered almonds

1 large onion, finely chopped

155 g (5 oz/1 cup) coarsely grated carrot **250 g (9 oz) lean boneless lamb, cut into 1 cm (1/2 inch) cubes** **185 g (6 1/2 oz/1 cup) chopped dried apricots**

1 teaspoon ground allspice

1½ teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season **875 ml (29 fl oz/3½ cups) light stock or water** **100 g (3½ oz/1 cup) crumbled vermicelli noodles** To finish

6–8 sheets fillo pastry, or 1 quantity Hamour pastry **90–125 g (3–4 oz/½–1½ cup) butter, melted**
Wash the rice until the water runs clear. Leave to drain.

Melt half the butter in a deep saucepan. Fry the almonds until golden, then remove to a plate with a slotted spoon.

Add the remaining butter to the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the carrot and fry for 5 minutes longer. Increase the heat and add the lamb. Stir until the lamb changes colour, then add the apricots, allspice, salt and a good grinding of pepper.

Stir in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) of the stock or water. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer gently for 15 minutes.

Add the remaining liquid and return to the boil, then stir in the vermicelli and rice. Bring back to the boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cover and reduce the heat to low. Cook slowly for 20 minutes, or until the liquid is absorbed and the rice is just tender. Set aside with the lid on.

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5). Brush a 2 litre (68 fl oz/8 cup) pudding basin or square casserole dish with melted butter.

Brush a sheet of fillo pastry with melted butter and place another on top. Set aside and butter the remaining pastry sheets in pairs in the same way. You will need three pairs of buttered sheets for a pudding basin, four for a casserole dish.

Place one pair of pastry sheets in the dish, positioning it across the base and up the sides, with the ends hanging well over the edge. Butter the pastry in the dish, then arrange the remaining pastry in the same way, so that the dish is covered with pastry, with a generous overlap. If you are using Hamour pastry, roll it out to fit the basin or dish, with enough overlap to cover the finished pie.

Stir the almonds through the pilaff and place in the dish, spreading evenly. Pour 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) of melted butter over the pilaff, then fold the pastry across the top to cover, buttering the top of each layer as it is put into

place. Brush the top with butter.

Bake for 30 minutes. Invert onto a serving platter and cut the pie into wedges. Serve as a light meal, as part of a buffet, or as a first course.



HÜNKÂR BEĞĞENDİ

Sultan's delight

SERVES: 6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) small eggplants (aubergines)

1 tablespoon lemon juice

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) butter

35 g (1 1/4 oz/1/4 cup) plain (all-purpose) flour 185 ml (6 1/2 fl oz/3/4 cup) milk

40 g (1 1/2 oz/1/2 cup) soft white breadcrumbs, optional 60 g (2 oz/1/2 cup) grated kashkaval or kasseri cheese salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste finely chopped flat-leaf parsley, to garnish Tas Kebap, to serve Grill the eggplants over glowing charcoal, or impale on a fork and hold over a gas flame. Alternatively, place on an electric hotplate set to medium heat. Turn frequently until soft to the touch and the skin is charred to a certain degree. Another alternative is to char the skin only, then bake the eggplants at 200°C (400°F/Gas 6) for 10–20 minutes, depending on size.

Rinse off any burnt skin under cold water, then peel off the remaining skin. Purée the flesh in a blender or food processor, adding the lemon juice to keep it light in colour.

Melt the butter in a heavy-based saucepan. Stir in the flour and cook gently for 2 minutes, without letting it colour. Add the milk, stirring constantly until thickened and bubbling.

Add the eggplant purée and leave over gentle heat for 20 minutes, or until reduced a little and very thick, stirring occasionally. If desired, fine breadcrumbs may be stirred into the purée to thicken it further. Remove from the heat.

Stir in the cheese and beat well until smooth, then add salt and pepper to taste.

Pile the purée around the edge of a serving dish and sprinkle with chopped parsley. Fill the centre with Tas Kebap, or serve hot with roast lamb or chicken dishes.

✿ Note: You can cook the eggplant in a microwave oven. Char the eggplant as described, pierce the skin in several places with a fine skewer, then microwave for 3–5 minutes, depending on size.

KARNIBAHAR KIZARTMASI Fried cauliflower

SERVES: 6

1 cauliflower

juice of ½ lemon

2 teaspoons salt, plus extra to season

2 eggs

freshly ground white pepper, to season fine dry breadcrumbs, for coating oil, for deep-frying Yogurt Salçasi or Tarator, to serve Break the cauliflower into florets, cover with salted water and leave for 10 minutes to release any insects. Rinse well.

Bring 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) water to the boil in a saucepan with the lemon juice and the 2 teaspoons salt. Drop the cauliflower florets in the boiling water and boil rapidly, uncovered, for 8–10 minutes, or until just tender.

Drain the cauliflower and spread out on paper towels to dry.

Beat the eggs and season with salt and white pepper. Dip the florets in the egg, then roll in breadcrumbs to coat completely. Place on a tray until all the florets are prepared.

Deep-fry a few at a time in a saucepan of hot oil, approximately 10 cm (4 inches) deep, for 4 minutes or until golden, turning to brown evenly. Lift out with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

Serve hot as an appetiser with Yogurt Salçasi or Tarator, or as a vegetable accompaniment.

ZEYTİNYAĞLI PIRASA Braised leeks

SERVES: 6

6 leeks

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 1 onion, sliced 2 tablespoons tomato paste (concentrated purée) 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) light stock or water ½ teaspoon sugar

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

**salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season juice of
½ lemon**

1 teaspoon chopped dill

**extra parsley or dill sprigs, to garnish lemon slices, to garnish Remove the coarse outer leaves from
the leeks. Trim the roots while leaving the base intact so that the leeks hold together. Cut off most
of the green tops. Cut the leeks in half lengthways, then wash well to remove all traces of soil. Set
aside to drain.**

Heat the oil in a deep frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the tomato paste, mixed with the stock or water. Add the sugar and half the chopped parsley. Season with salt and pepper and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low, then cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Add the leek and lemon juice, then spoon the liquid over the leeks. Cover and simmer gently for 15–20 minutes, or until the leek is tender.

Remove to a serving dish and sprinkle with the remaining parsley and the chopped dill. Serve at room temperature or chilled, garnished with herb sprigs and lemon slices.

HAVUC PLAKISI

Braised carrots SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) carrots

2 onions

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil 1 teaspoon sugar

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

1 teaspoon lemon juice

Wash and scrape the carrots, then cut diagonally into 5 mm (¼ inch) slices. Cut the onions in half from top to bottom, then slice each half into semi-circles.

Heat the oil in a deep frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the carrot and fry for a further 5 minutes, stirring frequently.

Add 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water, the sugar and half the parsley. Season with salt and pepper, cover the pan tightly and simmer over low heat for 15–20 minutes, or until tender. Add the lemon juice and transfer to a dish.

Leave to cool at room temperature, or chill if preferred. Serve sprinkled with the remaining parsley.

Serve as a vegetable accompaniment.

GÜVEÇ or TÜRLÜ

Vegetable casserole

SERVES: 6

There is some confusion about the name of this dish. To the Turks, türlü is a vegetable casserole containing lamb or chicken. In other countries of the region, türlü is prepared as an all-vegetable casserole, with cooks admitting to it being a Turkish dish. Güvec, on the other hand, is a casserole of meat or poultry and vegetables, or vegetables on their own.

2 long eggplants (aubergines) or 1 oval eggplant salt, for sprinkling

4 small zucchini (courgettes)

3 small green capsicums (peppers) 250 g (9 oz) okra, optional

250 g (9 oz) green beans

4–5 small ripe tomatoes, peeled 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 3 small onions, sliced

2 garlic cloves, crushed

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

1 handful chopped flat-leaf parsley

Remove the stems from the eggplants and wash well. Peel off 1 cm (½ inch) strips of skin lengthways at intervals to give a striped effect. Cut long eggplants into 1 cm (½ inch) slices; an oval eggplant should be quartered lengthways, then cut into chunky pieces.

Spread the eggplant on a tray and sprinkle liberally with salt. Leave for 30 minutes, then pat dry with paper towels.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Trim the zucchini and cut into 4 cm (1½ inch) pieces. Quarter the capsicums and remove the stem, seeds and white membrane. If using okra, prepare them as directed. String the beans if necessary and slit in half (French cut). Slice the tomatoes.

Heat half the oil in a frying pan and fry the eggplant until lightly browned. Remove the eggplant to a plate and reserve the oil.

Add the remaining oil to the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the garlic, cook for 1 minute, then remove the pan from the heat.

Place a layer of eggplant in the base of a casserole dish. Top with some of the zucchini, capsicum, okra, if using, and beans. Spread some onion mixture on top and cover with tomato slices. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and some of the parsley. Repeat until all the ingredients have been used, reserving some tomato slices and parsley.

Place the prepared okra on top, if using, and cover with the last of the tomato. Sprinkle with the remaining parsley and some salt and pepper. Pour in 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water and the reserved oil drained from the

eggplant.

Cover and bake for 1–1½ hours, or until the vegetables are tender. Serve from the casserole dish as an accompaniment to roasted or grilled meats and poultry.

This dish is often served as a light meal on its own, with bread and feta cheese.



İSPANAKLI YUMURTA

Spinach and eggs

SERVES: 2 AS A LUNCHEON DISH, 4 AS A FIRST COURSE

**300 g (10½ oz) fresh spinach, or 250 g (9 oz) packet frozen spinach 40 g (1½ oz) butter
1 onion, finely chopped salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 50 g (2 oz/⅓ cup) coarsely crumbled feta cheese**

4 eggs

If using fresh spinach, clean it well, removing any discoloured leaves, roots and any coarse or damaged stems. Wash well in several changes of water and shake the leaves to remove the excess moisture. Shred the leaves.

Frozen spinach may be heated in a covered saucepan over low heat. Turn the spinach occasionally until thawed.

Melt the butter in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the shredded spinach, if using, and stir over medium heat until the leaves wilt and the liquid runs out. Continue to cook until there is just enough liquid to cover the base of the pan.

Alternatively, add the thawed spinach to the onion and bring to a simmer.

Season the spinach mixture with salt and pepper and stir in the cheese. Make four depressions in the mixture and break an egg into each.

Cover and cook over medium heat until the eggs have set. Serve immediately.

✿ Note: To serve attractively as a first course, divide the spinach mixture among four individual ovenproof dishes and heat in the oven. Add an egg to each dish, drizzle a little melted butter over each and bake until set.

FASULYE PLAKISI

White bean stew

SERVES: 6–8

**400 g (14 oz/2 cups) dried haricot (navy) beans, or other small white beans
125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil
2 large onions, chopped
2 garlic cloves, chopped
155 g (5 oz/1 cup) diced carrot
125 g (4 oz/1 cup) sliced celery, including leaves
60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée)
½ teaspoon sugar**

pinch of ground hot chilli or chilli pepper juice of ½ lemon

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt, to taste

Wash the beans in several changes of cold water and place in a large saucepan. Cover with 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) cold water and bring to the boil. Allow to boil for 2 minutes, then remove from the heat. Cover and leave for 2 hours, or until the beans are plump. (Alternatively, soak the beans in cold water overnight, in the refrigerator if the weather is warm.) Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the garlic, carrot and celery and fry for 5 minutes, stirring often. Set aside.

Return the beans to the boil in their soaking water. Cover and boil gently for 30 minutes. Stir in the fried vegetables, tomato paste, sugar and chilli. Cover and simmer for a further 1½ hours, or until the beans are tender, but still intact.

Add the lemon juice, half the parsley, and salt to taste. Cook for 10 minutes longer.

Serve in a deep bowl, sprinkled with the remaining parsley. May be served hot or cold.

MENEMEN

Vegetable omelette

SERVES: 4

1 green capsicum (pepper) 1 red capsicum (pepper)

1 large onion

**60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) butter, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) oil 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season**

6 eggs

75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) crumbled feta cheese

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

Halve the capsicums and remove the stem, seeds and white membrane. Cut the flesh into short strips.

Cut the onion in half from top to bottom, then slice each half into semi-circles.

Heat the butter or oil in a large frying pan and gently fry the capsicum and onion until the onion is translucent, stirring often.

Stir in the tomatoes, season with salt and pepper and bring to the boil. Simmer gently for a few minutes, until the vegetables are soft.

Beat the eggs lightly, then pour into the pan. Gently stir into the vegetable mixture until creamy.

Combine the cheese with 2 tablespoons of the parsley, add to the eggs and fold in gently.

Serve immediately, sprinkled with the remaining parsley.

İMAM BAYILDI

Swooning Imam

SERVES: 4–8

8 long eggplants (aubergines)

3 onions

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil

4 garlic cloves, chopped

3 tomatoes, peeled and chopped

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

2 tablespoons lemon juice

pinch of sugar

Remove the stems from the eggplants and wash well. Peel off 1 cm (½ inch) strips lengthways at intervals to give a striped effect. On one side of each eggplant, cut a deep slit lengthways, stopping short of the top and base. Place the eggplants in a large bowl of cold, well-salted water and leave for 30 minutes. Drain, squeeze out the moisture and dry with paper towels.

Halve the onions lengthways, then cut into slender wedges. Heat half the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute, then transfer the mixture to a bowl. Mix in the tomatoes and parsley, and salt and pepper to taste.

Heat the remaining oil in the pan and fry the eggplants over high heat until lightly browned, but still rather firm. Remove the pan from the heat and turn the eggplants so that the slit faces up.

Spoon the vegetable mixture into the slits, forcing in as much filling as possible. Spread the remaining filling on top. Add the lemon juice, sugar and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water and cover the pan tightly.

Cook over gentle heat for 45 minutes, or until the eggplants are tender. Add more water only if necessary, as eggplants release a lot of moisture.

Leave to cool to room temperature. Serve as an appetiser or as a light meal with bread, or chill and serve as a salad accompaniment.

BALIK PLAKI

Baked fish

SERVES: 6

6 fish steaks

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

2 onions

85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped 70 g (2½ oz/½ cup) chopped celery, including leaves 80 g (3 oz/½ cup) thinly sliced carrot 375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes lemon slices, to garnish

chopped flat-leaf parsley, to garnish Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Season the fish with salt and pepper, then cover and set aside while preparing the vegetables.

Cut the onions in half from top to bottom, then slice each half into semi-circles.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion with the garlic, celery and carrot until the onion is translucent. Add the tomatoes, 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water, and salt and pepper to taste. Cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes.

Spoon some of the tomato mixture into the base of a baking dish. Add the fish steaks and top with the remaining tomato mixture. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

Serve hot or cold, garnished with lemon slices and parsley.

BALIK KÖFTESİ

Fish balls

SERVES: 8–10 AS AN APPETISER

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) white fish fillets **2 spring onions, finely chopped** **3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley**

1 teaspoon chopped dill

120 g (4 oz/1½ cups) soft white breadcrumbs, plus extra if needed **1 egg**

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season **To finish**

plain (all-purpose) flour, for coating **oil, for deep-frying**

lemon wedges, to serve Remove any skin from the fish fillets and also remove any bones. Chop the fish roughly and combine in a bowl with the spring onion, parsley and dill.

Pass the fish mixture through a food grinder using a fine screen, or process to a paste in two batches in a food processor, using a steel blade.

Turn the mixture into a bowl. Add the breadcrumbs, egg and salt and season with pepper. Mix to a firm paste, adding some more breadcrumbs if necessary; the quantity depends on the type of fish used.

Using moistened hands, shape the mixture into balls the size of walnuts. Cover and chill until firm.

Coat the fish balls with flour and deep-fry eight at a time in a saucepan of hot oil, approximately 10 cm (4 inches) deep, for 3–4 minutes, turning to brown evenly.

Drain on paper towels and serve hot, with lemon wedges.

HAMSI KIZARTMASI

Fried brislings or sprats SERVES: 6 AS AN APPETISER

**500 g (1 lb 2 oz) brislings, sprats or other tiny fish salt, for sprinkling
plain (all-purpose) flour, for coating 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) oil For serving
flat-leaf parsley sprigs, to garnish lemon slices, to garnish Limon Salçasi**

Wash and drain the fish; there is no need to clean the insides unless you wish to. Leave the fish intact. Drain, sprinkle with salt and leave for 10 minutes.

Coat the fish with flour. Take four or five fish, moisten the tails with water, then press the tails together to form a fan, dusting the tails again with flour.

Heat the oil in a frying pan over medium–high heat. Fry the fish in batches for about 1 minute each side, or until golden brown and crisp. Drain on paper towels.

Serve hot, garnished with parsley and lemon slices, and with a bowl of Limon Salçasi on the side.

MİDYE DOLMASI

Stuffed mussels

SERVES: 8–10

40 large mussels

250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) fish stock or water flat-leaf parsley sprigs, to garnish lemon wedges, to serve

Tarator, to serve Filling

85 ml (3 fl oz/⅓ cup) olive oil 1 large onion, finely chopped

3 tablespoons pine nuts

135 g (4½ oz/⅔ cup) long-grain white rice, washed

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

½ teaspoon ground allspice

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) fish stock or water salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste To make the filling, heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the pine nuts and fry for 2 minutes. Stir in the rice, parsley, allspice, tomatoes and stock. Add salt and pepper to taste, then cover and simmer gently for 15 minutes, until the rice has absorbed the liquid.

Prepare the mussels as directed in the [note](#).

Place a generous teaspoon or two of filling in each mussel and close the shell as much as possible. Arrange in a heavybased saucepan in even layers. Invert a heavy-based plate on top to keep the mussels closed.

Pour in the stock, bring to a simmer, then cover and simmer gently for 30 minutes. Turn off the heat and leave the mussels in the pan until cool.

Lift out the mussels and wipe dry with paper towels. For a glossy appearance, you can rub the shells with a cloth dipped in oil. The mussels may be served chilled or at room temperature, so refrigerate them if not needed immediately.

Serve on a platter, garnished with parsley and lemon wedges, with a bowl of Tarator on the side.

KILIÇ ŞİŞ

Skewered swordfish

SERVES: 6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) swordfish fillets, cut 3 cm (1¼ inches) thick **Beyaz Pilav**, to serve Marinade

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 small onion, sliced 1 teaspoon paprika

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 2 bay leaves, crumbled Limon salçası 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup)

olive oil 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Remove the skin from the swordfish, if present, and cut the fillets into 3 cm (1¼ inch) cubes.

Combine the marinade ingredients in a glass or ceramic bowl. Add the fish, turn to coat with the marinade, then cover and refrigerate for 1–2 hours, turning the fish occasionally.

Thread the fish onto six metal skewers and cook over glowing charcoal for 10–12 minutes, turning the skewers frequently and brushing occasionally with the marinade.

Combine the Limon Salçası ingredients in a screw-top jar, seal and shake until combined.

Serve the hot fish skewers with Beyaz Pilav, with the Limon Salçası served separately.

✿ Note: Limon Salçası (lemon sauce) is used as a dressing for grilled, fried, boiled and baked fish, as well as salads and vegetables.



MİDYE TAVASI

Fried mussels

SERVES: 6

40 mussels

plain (all-purpose) flour, for coating oil, for deep-frying Beer batter 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 teaspoon salt

185 ml (½ fl oz/¾ cup) beer, approximately For serving

lemon wedges

chopped flat-leaf parsley Tarator

To make the beer batter, sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl. Pour in the beer and mix to a smooth batter, adding a little more beer if necessary.

If the mussels are in their shells, prepare them as directed below. Release the mussels from their shells with the point of a knife. Drain the mussels on paper towels.

Toss the mussels in flour to coat them lightly. Dip them in the batter and deep-fry a few at a time in a saucepan of hot oil, approximately 10 cm (4 inches) deep, turning to brown evenly. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

Serve hot, garnishing the platter with lemon wedges and parsley, with the Tarator in a separate bowl. Provide cocktail sticks for convenience.

✿ Note: To prepare the mussels, scrub them well with a stiff brush, scraping the shells with a knife to remove any marine growth. Tug the beards towards the pointed end and remove them. To open the mussels easily, place them in warm salted water. As each one opens, insert the point of a knife between the two shells and slide it towards the pointed end, to sever the fine white ligament near the hinge. For stuffing, take care not to separate the shells; the shells may be separated if removing mussel meat for other recipes.



TAVUK YUFKA İÇİNDE

Chicken in pastry

SERVES: 6

90 g (3 oz/½ cup) butter 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) chicken breast fillets

4 small onions

1 large ripe tomato, peeled and chopped salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste To finish

12 sheets fillo pastry

**90 g (3 oz/½ cup) butter, melted
flat-leaf parsley sprigs, to garnish**

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Melt half the butter in a frying pan and brown the chicken over medium heat, turning frequently. Cook for 10 minutes, or until just cooked through. Remove to a plate.

Cut the onions in half from top to bottom, then slice each half into thin semi-circles. Heat the remaining butter in the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent.

Add the tomato and salt and pepper to taste. Stir in 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) water and cook gently until the moisture evaporates. The mixture should look oily.

Cut the chicken breasts into strips about 5 cm (2 inches) long, then stir gently into the tomato mixture. Remove from the heat.

Brush a sheet of fillo pastry with melted butter. Top with another sheet, butter it, then fold the pastry in half, to form almost a square shape. Brush again with butter.

Place one-sixth of the filling towards the centre and slightly towards one corner. Fold this corner over the filling, then fold the adjacent corners on top and finish like a parcel, tucking the last corner underneath the package. Place on a lightly buttered baking tray. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Brush the top of each pastry parcel lightly with butter, then bake for 15 minutes, or until golden.

Serve immediately, garnished with parsley. [Turkistan Pilavi](#) is a good accompaniment.

ÇERKES TAVÜĞÜ

Circassian chicken SERVES: 6

1 chicken, about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) 1 large onion, quartered 1 carrot, quartered

2 flat-leaf parsley sprigs

1½ teaspoons salt

freshly ground white pepper, to taste 3 slices of stale white bread, crusts removed 170 g (6 oz/1½ cups) finely ground walnuts ½ teaspoon paprika

1 garlic clove, crushed, optional For serving

½ teaspoon paprika

1 tablespoon walnut oil (see note) finely chopped flat-leaf parsley, optional Place the chicken in a saucepan with the onion, carrot, parsley sprigs and 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) cold water. Bring to a slow simmer, skimming when necessary. Add the salt, and white pepper to taste. Cover and simmer gently for 1½ hours, but do not allow to boil, as this makes the flesh stringy.

Allow to cool a little, then remove the chicken from the pan. Strip off the flesh and reserve. Return the skin and bones to the pan, then boil the stock with the bones and skin until reduced by half. Strain and reserve the stock.

Cut the chicken meat into 5 cm (2 inch) strips and place in a bowl. Moisten with 2 tablespoons of the stock, then cover and refrigerate.

Soak the bread in a little chicken stock, then squeeze and crumble into a bowl. Mix in the walnuts, paprika and garlic, if using. Pass the mixture through a food grinder using a fine screen, or process in a food processor or blender using a steel blade.

Slowly beat in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) of the warm chicken stock, skimmed of any fat, adding a little more if necessary to make a smooth, thick sauce. Adjust the seasoning with salt and white pepper.

Gently mix one-third of the walnut sauce into the chicken. Shape the chicken mixture into a neat mound on a shallow dish and spread the remaining walnut sauce over it. Cover lightly with plastic wrap and chill.

To serve, steep the paprika in walnut oil for 10 minutes or longer, and drizzle over the chicken just before serving.

Garnish with chopped parsley if desired. Serve cold, with salad accompaniments.

✿ Note: Walnut oil is available from some health food stores and is usually very expensive. See [Turmeric](#) for details on how to prepare your own.

İZMİR KÖFTESİ

Meatballs in tomato sauce SERVES: 5–6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb or beef 1 garlic clove, crushed

1 small onion, finely grated 2 thick slices of stale white bread 1 egg

1 teaspoon ground cumin

2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season plain (all-purpose) flour, for coating 60 g (2 oz/ ¼ cup) butter, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/ ¼ cup) oil Tomato sauce

375 g (13 oz/ 1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 80 g (3 oz/ ½ cup) finely chopped green capsicum (pepper) ½ teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste In a mixing bowl, combine the meat, garlic and onion.

Soak the bread in cold water, squeeze dry and crumble into the bowl. Add the egg, cumin and parsley and season with salt and pepper. Mix thoroughly to a smooth paste.

Using moistened hands, shape tablespoons of the meat mixture into oval, sausage-like shapes. Coat them lightly with flour.

Heat the butter or oil in a deep saucepan. Fry the meatballs in batches until lightly browned on all sides, removing each batch to a plate with a slotted spoon.

To make the tomato sauce, add the tomatoes and capsicum to the pan and stir over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add the sugar and salt and pepper to taste, then stir in 125 ml (4 fl oz/ ½ cup) water. Bring to the boil and return the meatballs to the pan. Bring to a slow simmer.

Cover and simmer gently for 1 hour, until the meatballs are tender and the sauce is thick. Serve with pilaff.



ŞİŞ KEBAP

Skewered lamb and vegetables SERVES: 6

**1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) boneless lamb, from the leg
juice of 1 large lemon 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil 1
onion, thinly sliced 1 bay leaf, crumbled**

½ teaspoon dried thyme freshly ground black pepper To finish

12 small onions

1 red capsicum (pepper) 1 green capsicum (pepper) salt, to season

**Beyaz Pilav, to serve Cut the lamb into 3 cm (1¼ inch) cubes and place in a glass or ceramic bowl.
Add the lemon juice, oil, onion slices, bay leaf and thyme. Season with pepper, but do not add salt
until after cooking, as it tends to draw out the meat juices.**

Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for 4–6 hours, turning the meat occasionally.

Peel the whole small onions and parboil in a saucepan of salted water for 5 minutes. Drain.

Wash the capsicums and remove the stems, seeds and white membrane. Cut into 3 cm (1¼ inch) squares. Lift the lamb from the marinade and thread onto six long skewers, alternating with the onions and capsicum pieces.

Cook over glowing charcoal for 10–12 minutes, turning frequently and brushing with the marinade when required. After sealing the meat, remove the skewers to a cooler part of the fire or raise the grill, otherwise the vegetables will burn.

Serve hot, on a bed of Beyaz Pilav. The rice may be coloured with ½ teaspoon turmeric, added when frying the rice in the butter.

TAS KEBAP

Braised lamb

SERVES: 6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) boneless lamb stewing meat

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) butter

2 onions, finely chopped

40 g (1½ oz/1/4 cup) chopped green capsicum (pepper), optional

375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes, or 60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée)

½ teaspoon ground allspice

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

For serving

Hünkâr Beğendi, or Beyaz Pilav

Trim the meat and cut into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes.

Melt half the butter in a heavy-based saucepan. Working in batches, brown the meat quickly on each side, transferring each batch to a plate.

Melt the remaining butter in the pan and gently fry the onion and capsicum, if using, until the onion is translucent.

Add the tomatoes or tomato paste. Pour in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water if using tomatoes, and more if using tomato paste. Stir well to dissolve any browned sediment. Add the allspice, most of the parsley, and salt and pepper to taste.

Return the lamb to the pan. Cover and simmer gently for 1½ hours, or until the lamb is tender and the sauce has thickened.

Pile in the centre of a dish of Hünkâr Begendi; if serving with Beyaz Pilav, press the cooked pilaff into an oiled ring mould and turn it out onto a serving platter. Spoon some of the sauce over the rice and place the meat in the centre of ring.

Sprinkle the meat with the remaining parsley and serve hot.

TALAŞ KEBAP

Lamb in pastry

SERVES: 4

**750 g (1 lb 10 oz) boneless lamb, from the shoulder 40 g (1½ oz) butter
1 small onion, finely chopped 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes**

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

8 sheets fillo pastry

90 g (3 oz/½ cup) butter, melted Trim the lamb and cut into 1 cm (½ inch) cubes.

Melt the butter in a heavy-based saucepan. Add the lamb and brown over high heat, stirring often. Reduce the heat to medium, add the onion and cook with the lamb for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Stir in the tomatoes and parsley and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 1 hour. Remove the lid and increase the heat to reduce the liquid to a thick sauce if necessary. Remove from the heat.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Brush one sheet of fillo pastry with melted butter and place another sheet on top. Brush the top with more butter and fold the pastry in half, to give almost a square shape. Cover with a cloth and assemble the remaining pastry similarly.

Take one lot of pastry and brush the top with butter. Spread one-quarter of the lamb mixture towards one end, leaving the sides clear. Fold the end of the pastry over the filling, roll once, fold the sides in, then roll up. Place on a buttered baking tray, seam side down. Repeat with the remaining pastry and lamb.

Brush the top of the pastries with more butter. Bake for 30 minutes, or until puffed and golden. Serve immediately.

✿ Note: Commercial puff pastry may be used instead of fillo; 375 g (13 oz) is sufficient. Roll out thinly, then cut into four 15 × 20 cm (6 × 8 inch) rectangles. Moisten the sides and press to seal, instead of folding the sides over the filling. Bake at 230°C (450°F/Gas 8) for 10 minutes, then at 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) until puffed and golden.

DÜĞÜN ETİ

Wedding meat

SERVES: 6

Another wedding feast dish. Ingredient quantities have been scaled down considerably — even the Turks don't wait for a wedding just to prepare this spicy lamb dish.

6 lamb shoulder chops, cut 4 cm (1½ inches) thick 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter 2 onions, chopped 375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon ½ teaspoon whole allspice, crushed

3 cloves

**salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season For serving
grilled tomato slices Düğün Pilav**

Trim the chops if necessary. Melt half the butter in a heavybased saucepan and brown the meat on each side, in batches if necessary. Remove to a plate.

Melt the remaining butter in the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the tomatoes, spices and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water, stirring well to dissolve the browned sediment. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat.

Return the lamb to the pan and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer over low heat for 1½ hours, or until the meat is tender. Remove the cloves if desired.

Arrange the lamb on a warm platter, with the grilled tomato slices around the lamb. Pour the sauce over the meat and serve hot, with Düğün Pilav.

KADIN BUDU

'Ladies' thighs' croquettes

SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) finely minced (ground) lean lamb or beef 185 g (6½ oz/1 cup) boiled long-grain white rice 1 onion, finely chopped

75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) crumbled feta cheese 3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley 1 teaspoon finely chopped dill

2 large eggs

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season oil, for pan-frying

plain (all-purpose) flour, for coating Combine the meat, rice, onion and cheese in a mixing bowl. Pass the mixture through a meat grinder using a fine screen, or process in a food processor using a steel blade.

Add the herbs and 1 lightly beaten egg; season with salt and pepper. Mix by hand to a smooth paste.

Using moistened hands, take a generous tablespoon of the mixture and form it into an elongated egg shape, wider at one end than the other, or into a simpler torpedo shape. Place each one in a dish, side by side, as each one is finished.

Pour oil into a frying pan to a depth of 1 cm (½ inch). Heat the oil over high heat. Meanwhile, beat the remaining egg well and pour over the croquettes, then turn them over in the dish to coat them evenly with a film of egg. Place about 75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) flour on a plate.

Roll the croquettes in the flour, one at a time, placing them into the hot oil as they are coated. Use one hand for rolling them in the flour; keep the other hand dry for moving them to the pan.

Fry over high heat until golden brown, turning the croquettes frequently with tongs so they keep their shape. Drain on paper towels.

Serve hot, with a vegetable or salad accompaniment.

MAKES: 20

20 sheets fillo pastry

185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) unsalted butter, melted Syrup

550 g (1 lb 4 oz/2½ cups) sugar thinly peeled rind of ½ lemon juice of ½ lemon, strained

Nut filling

235 g (8½ oz/1½ cups) finely chopped blanched almonds 65 g (2¼ oz/½ cup) finely chopped blanched pistachio nuts 2 tablespoons caster (superfine) sugar To make the syrup, put the sugar and 375 ml (12½ fl oz/ 1½ cups) water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar. Bring to the boil, then add the lemon rind and lemon juice. Allow to boil, without stirring, for 15 minutes. Cool and strain into a jug, then chill until required.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

To make the nut filling, combine the almonds and pistachios in a bowl. Set aside about one-third of the mixture, then stir the sugar into the remainder.

Open out the fillo sheets and place between two dry cloths. Cover the top with a lightly dampened cloth to prevent the pastry drying out.

Spread one sheet of pastry out on a work surface. Brush with melted butter and fold in half lengthways, to give almost a square shape. Brush again with butter and sprinkle 1 tablespoon of the nut filling near the folded edge. Turn the pastry over the filling, fold in 1 cm (½ inch) on each side, and roll up to within 4 cm (1½ inches) of the other edge.

Lift the pastry up by the rolled edge, with the flap hanging towards you, and twirl it into a ring, curling it away from you. Tuck the loose pastry under, into the centre of the ring, to form a nest. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Place the pastries in a buttered baking dish and brush the tops lightly with butter.

Bake for 20 minutes, then reduce the oven temperature to 150°C (300°F/Gas 2) and bake for a further 15 minutes, so that the pastry cooks through without over-browning.

Pour half the cold syrup over the hot pastries. Leave until cool, then sprinkle some of the reserved nuts over the centre of each pastry.

Remove to a serving platter and serve the remaining syrup in a jug, for adding to individual taste.



KADIN GÖBEĞİ

Ladies' navels

MAKES: ABOUT 20

The name and the finished dish are colourfully Turkish, while the basic dough is very definitely French. Though the ingredient proportions differ from the traditional formula, it is choux pastry nonetheless, prepared in the Turkish manner.

oil, for shaping and frying whipped cream or Ushta (clotted cream,) 35 g (1¼ oz/ ¼ cup) finely chopped, blanched pistachio nuts Syrup

440 g (15½ oz/ 2 cups) sugar juice of ½ lemon, strained Choux pastry

150 g (5 oz/ 1 cup) plain (all-purpose) flour ¼ teaspoon salt

60 g (2 oz/ ¼ cup) butter

2 large eggs, lightly beaten

½ teaspoon almond essence To make the syrup, put the sugar and 375 ml (12½ fl oz/ 1½ cups) water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar. Bring to the boil, then add the lemon juice. Allow to boil rapidly, without stirring, for 15 minutes. Leave the syrup to cool in the pan.

To make the pastry, sift the flour and salt onto a square of stiff paper. In another heavy-based saucepan, heat the butter and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/ 1 cup) water until boiling. Pour in the flour all at once, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon or balloon whisk. Keep stirring until the mixture leaves the side of pan, then cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, for a further 5 minutes.

Remove the roux from the heat and tip it into a bowl. Cool for 2 minutes, then gradually beat in the eggs. Add the almond essence and beat until smooth and satiny. A balloon whisk will break up lumps, while a wooden spoon is better for beating to a smooth finish, so use both.

Oil your hands and take pieces of dough the size of walnuts. Roll into smooth balls and place on an oiled tray. Flatten into rounds about 5 cm (2 inches) in diameter, then press an oiled forefinger into the centre of each to make a hole. Keep your hands oiled during the shaping so that the dough will not stick.

Pour oil into a large electric frying pan to a depth of 1 cm (½ inch). Heat until just warm. Place half the doughnuts in the oil. As soon as they are added, increase the heat to 200°C (400°F). When they rise to the surface and are puffed, turn them over. Fry them for 15 minutes in all, timed from when they are first placed into the pan; turn frequently during the last half of the cooking time so they brown evenly.

When cooked, remove them from the oil with a slotted spoon and drain briefly on paper towels. Place them in the syrup, turn them to coat, then leave for 5 minutes before removing to a plate.

Turn off the frying pan and allow the oil to cool down before adding the second batch of doughnuts.

Arrange the doughnuts on a flat platter and place a dollop of whipped cream or Ushta in the centre. Serve sprinkled with the pistachios.

* Note: If you don't have an electric frying pan, use a large frying pan set on a thermostatically controlled hot plate or burner. Otherwise, use an ordinary burner, start at low and increase the heat to midway between the medium and high settings.

DİLBER DUDAĞI

Lips of the beauty Follow the [Kadin Göbeggi](#) recipe, until the roux has been prepared. Oil your hands, take pieces of dough the size of walnuts and roll into balls. Flatten each ball of dough in your hand to a 6 cm (2½ inch) round, then fold the dough over so that the pastries resemble lips on their curved edge. Place on an oiled tray until all are shaped.

Fry and finish as instructed. Serve plain, or with whipped cream or [Ushta](#).

HANIM PARMAĞI Dainty fingers Follow the Kadin Göbeggi recipe, to the stage where the eggs are beaten into the roux. Instead of shaping the dough into balls, shape about 2 teaspoons of the dough into fingers about 8 cm (3½ inches) long. Keep your hands oiled, and place the finished shapes on an oiled tray.

Heat the oil for deep-frying to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6) and deep-fry eight to ten at a time for 10 minutes, turning to brown evenly. Drain briefly on paper towels and place in the syrup. Leave for 5 minutes to soak, then lift out and serve warm, piled on a platter. Sprinkle with finely chopped walnuts or pistachio nuts if desired.

Almond custard

SERVES: 6

115 g (4 oz/3/4 cup) whole blanched almonds 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) milk 30 g (1 oz/1/4 cup) ground white rice 1/4 teaspoon salt

55 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) sugar

4 drops of almond essence

**chopped pistachio nuts or toasted slivered almonds, to garnish pomegranate seeds, to garnish,
optional Grind the almonds finely in a food processor or blender, or pass through a food grinder two
or three times using a fine screen. Tip into a bowl, then knead to a firm paste with your hand.**

Heat 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) of the milk to boiling point. Pour onto the almonds and stir with a wooden spoon until well combined. Set aside to steep.

In a large bowl, mix together the ground rice and another 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of the milk. Heat the remaining milk in a heavy-based saucepan, preferably one with a non-stick coating. Bring to the boil, then pour the milk into the ground rice mixture, stirring constantly, then return all the mixture to the pan.

Bring to the boil, add the salt and boil gently for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Strain the almond milk through a fine sieve set over a bowl, pressing on the almonds with the back of a spoon. Discard the almonds. Pour the almond milk into the saucepan and stir well to combine. Add the sugar and boil gently for a further 10 minutes.

Stir in the almond essence and pour into individual dessert bowls. Serve garnished with chopped nuts, and pomegranate seeds if available.

LOKUM

Turkish delight

MAKES: ABOUT 1 KG (2 LB 3 OZ)

It is very important that the right cornflour (cornstarch) be used. There are two types available in some countries — one is made from corn/maize; the other is made from wheat and called wheaten cornflour. Use the one made from corn, otherwise your lokum will not remain thick during the lengthy cooking.

880 g (1 lb 15 oz/4 cups) sugar

1 teaspoon lemon juice

125 g (4 oz/1 cup) cornflour (cornstarch; see note)

1 teaspoon cream of tartar

1–2 tablespoons rosewater

red food colouring

80 g (3 oz/½ cup) chopped, toasted unblanched almonds, optional

To finish

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) icing (confectioners') sugar

30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) cornflour (cornstarch; see note)

Combine the sugar, lemon juice and 375 ml (12½ fl oz/ 1½ cups) water in a heavy-based saucepan. Stir over low heat until the sugar has dissolved, brushing the sugar crystals off the side of the pan with a bristle brush dipped in cold water.

Bring the syrup to the boil. Allow to boil to the 'soft ball' stage, when a small spoonful of the syrup forms a ball when dropped into a bowl of very cold water — 115°C (240°F) on a sugar thermometer. Remove from the heat.

In another heavy-based saucepan, mix together the cornflour, cream of tartar and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) cold water until smooth.

Boil 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and stir into the cornflour mixture. Place over the heat and stir constantly until the mixture thickens and bubbles; use a balloon whisk if any lumps form.

Gradually pour the hot syrup into the cornflour mixture, stirring constantly. Bring to the boil, then allow to boil gently for 1¼ hours. Stir occasionally with a wooden spoon and cook until the mixture is a pale golden colour. Stirring is essential during this time.

Stir in the rosewater to taste, and a few drops of red food colouring to tinge it a pale pink. Mix in the nuts, if

using, and remove from the heat.

Pour into an oiled 23 cm (9 inch) square cake tin and leave for 12 hours to set.

To finish the Turkish delight, combine the icing sugar and cornflour in a flat dish. Cut the Turkish delight into squares with an oiled knife, then gently toss in the icing sugar mixture.

Store in a sealed container, with the remaining icing sugar mixture sprinkled between the layers.

✿ Variations

Crème de menthe lokum: Replace the rosewater and red food colouring with 2 tablespoons crème de menthe liqueur and a little green food colouring. Omit the nuts.

Orange lokum: Use 1–2 tablespoons orange flower water instead of rosewater; use orange food colouring.

Vanilla lokum: Use 2 teaspoons vanilla essence instead of rosewater and colouring, and stir in 80 g (3 oz/½ cup) toasted chopped almonds or chopped walnuts. Do not blanch the almonds.



SARIĞI BURMA

Sultan's turbans

MAKES: 24

This dish is also prepared in Lebanon and Syria, where it goes under the delightful name of zind es sitt (ladies' wrists). It is important to have very fresh, pliable fillo pastry sheets, as the roll has to be crumpled up; brittle pastry breaks. If you find early attempts fail, then shape the remainder of the ingredients as directed at the end of the method. For tips on [handling fillo sheets](#).

24 sheets fillo pastry

185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) unsalted butter, melted and warm

Syrup

440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

2 cloves

Nut filling

200 g (7 oz/2 cups) finely ground almonds or walnuts

55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) caster (superfine) sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

To make the syrup, put the sugar and 375 ml (12½ fl oz/ 1½ cups) water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar. Bring to the boil, then add the lemon juice, cinnamon and cloves. Allow to boil rapidly, without stirring, for 15 minutes. Skim if required, then strain and cool.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Combine the nut filling ingredients in a bowl. Have a length of wooden dowel on hand — one about 5 mm (¼ inch) in diameter and 50 cm (20 inches) long.

Spread a sheet of pastry on a work surface, with the longer edge towards you. Brush lightly and evenly with warm melted butter. (To keep the butter warm, have it in a heatproof bowl, sitting in a saucepan of hot water.)

Evenly sprinkle 2 tablespoons of the filling across the lower third of the pastry, keeping 3 cm (1¼ inches) clear

of the base and just a little in from the sides.

Fold the bottom edge over the filling and place the wooden dowel along the edge. Roll the pastry with the filling firmly over the dowel, to the end of the sheet. Make sure the end of the pastry sticks on firmly; if not, brush again with a little warm melted butter.

Grip the dowel at each end of the pastry and push your hands gradually towards each other, crumpling up the pastry evenly as you push. When evenly crumpled and with the pastry roll less than half its original length, slip the pastry roll off the dowel, onto the work surface. Trim the ends, then twist into a flat snail-like coil.

Repeat with the remaining ingredients, taking care that the pastry does not dry out, otherwise shaping will be difficult.

Place the completed coils close together in a buttered baking dish. Brush lightly with melted butter and bake for 25–30 minutes, until light golden brown.

Pour the cooled thick syrup over the hot coils. Leave in the baking dish until cold before serving, or store in a sealed container at room temperature.

✿ Note: For an alternative shape, assemble and roll the pastry on the dowel prior to crumpling, then slide the pastry onto a work surface. Using a sharp knife, cut the roll into 10 cm (4 inch) lengths. Place in a greased baking dish, brush lightly with melted butter and finish as directed above.

AŞURE

Noah's pudding

SERVES: 12–16

The credit for this dish goes back a long, long way. Of course it is pure speculation, but it illustrates the romantic nature of the Turks. It is said that on the last day on the Ark, the women used up all the remaining foods and came up with aşure.

In Turkey today, this pudding is prepared with great ceremony during the month of Muharrem, also known as the Month of Aşure. Usually a vast quantity is made so that some may be given to friends and relatives. It is considered impolite not to give aşure to any person who may catch the cooking aroma.

As the right wheat for aşure is difficult to find outside the Middle East, the recipe is usually made with coarse burghul (bulgur) elsewhere.

110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) chickpeas 100 g (3½ oz/½ cup) dried haricot (navy) beans 175 g (6 oz/1 cup) coarse burghul (bulgur) 110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) short-grain white rice 330 g (11½ oz/½ cups) sugar

½ teaspoon salt

375 ml (12½ fl oz/½ cups) milk

90 g (3 oz/¾ cup) sultanas (golden raisins) 35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) currants

95 g (3¼ oz/½ cup) chopped dried apricots 95 g (3¼ oz/½ cup) chopped dried figs 80 g (3 oz/½ cup) chopped blanched almonds 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) chopped walnuts 40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) rosewater

pomegranate seeds, blanched almonds or pistachio nuts, to garnish Wash the chickpeas and beans well and place in separate bowls. Cover each with 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) cold water and leave overnight in a cool place.

Rinse the burghul and rice and place in separate bowls. Add 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) cold water to the burghul, and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water to the rice. Leave overnight.

The next day put the chickpeas and beans, with their soaking water, in separate saucepans. Cook for 1½–2½ hours, or until tender — the chickpeas will take longer to cook than the beans.

Place the burghul with its soaking water in a large heavybased saucepan. Pour in an additional 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water. Drain the rice and add to the pan. Place over low heat and cook gently, uncovered, for 40–50 minutes, or until the mixture is very soft, with a porridge-like consistency.

Drain the chickpeas and beans and add to the saucepan with another 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water. Leave over low heat, uncovered, for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the liquid is well reduced and the mixture is thick.

Stir in the sugar, salt and milk and cook for 15 minutes longer. Stir in the fruits and nuts and remove from the heat. Add the rosewater and stir well, then pour into a large bowl or individual dessert bowls.

Cool to room temperature, or cover and chill in the refrigerator.

Serve decorated with pomegranate seeds if available, otherwise decorate with blanched almonds or pistachio nuts.

YOĞURT TATLISI

Yoghurt cake

SERVES: 10–12

185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) butter **grated zest of 1 lemon**

230 g (8 oz/1 cup) caster (superfine) sugar **5 eggs, separated**

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) yoghurt **335 g (11½ oz/2¼ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour**

2 teaspoons baking powder

pinch of salt

½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) Syrup

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar **1 thin lemon rind strip**

1 tablespoon strained lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4). Grease and flour a 20 cm (8 inch) ring cake tin.

Cream the butter, lemon zest and sugar in a bowl until fluffy. Add the egg yolks separately, beating well after each addition, then mix in the yoghurt.

Sift the flour, baking powder, salt and bicarbonate of soda together, then fold into the creamed butter mixture.

Beat the egg whites until stiff, then fold into the cake batter. Spoon into the cake tin and bake for 50–55 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the syrup. Combine the sugar and 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) cold water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar. Bring to the boil, then add the lemon rind strip and lemon juice. Allow to boil over medium heat, without stirring, for 10 minutes. Remove the lemon rind strip and leave the syrup to cool in the pan.

Cool the cake in the tin for 5 minutes, then turn out onto a serving dish.

Spoon the cold syrup over the cake, letting it seep slowly into the cake. Serve warm, cut into thick slices, with whipped cream or [Ushta](#).



İNCİR COMPOSTU

Figs in syrup

SERVES: 6–8

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) dried figs blanched almonds, for stuffing 165 g (5½ oz/¾ cup) sugar

1 thin lemon rind strip

juice of 1 lemon

90 g (3 oz/¼ cup) honey For serving

chopped almonds, pistachio nuts or walnuts whipped cream or yoghurt Wash the figs well and cover with 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) cold water. Leave for 8 hours, or until plump. Drain the soaking liquid into a heavy-based saucepan.

Insert an almond into each fig, from the base. Set aside.

Add the sugar to the water in the pan and heat, stirring occasionally, until the sugar has dissolved. Add the lemon rind strip, lemon juice and honey and bring to the boil.

Add the stuffed figs and return to the boil. Allow to boil gently, uncovered, for 30 minutes, until the figs are tender and the syrup is thick. Remove the lemon rind strip.

Arrange the figs upright in a bowl. Pour the syrup over the figs, leave to cool, then cover and chill.

Sprinkle with chopped nuts and serve with whipped cream or yoghurt.

DONDURMA ÇİLEKLİ

Strawberry water ice

SERVES: 6–8

Flavoured water ices are another Western dessert adapted into Turkish cuisine. Turkey has wonderful fruit, and the climate is conducive to cooling desserts such as these.

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) whole strawberries

1 teaspoon strained lemon juice

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) milk red food colouring

Syrup

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar

2 teaspoons lemon juice

To make the syrup, put the sugar in a heavy-based saucepan with 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and stir over medium heat until the sugar has dissolved. Add the lemon juice and bring to the boil. Allow to boil for 5 minutes, skimming when necessary, then leave until cool.

Wash the strawberries, drain well and remove the hulls. Purée the strawberries in a food processor; you should end up with about 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) strawberry purée.

Combine the purée with the cooled syrup, lemon juice and milk. Stir in a few drops of food colouring. Pour into a freezer tray or loaf tin and freeze.

Spoon into chilled dessert glasses and serve immediately.

If desired, the ice can be flaked with a fork before spooning it into glasses.

DONDURMA LİMONLU

Lemon water ice

SERVES: 6–8

4 lemons

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar

1 egg white

yellow food colouring, optional

Wash the lemons well. Thinly peel the rind from each lemon, so that there is little or no white pith left on the rind.

Place the rind in a saucepan with 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water and bring slowly to the boil. Boil, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Strain into a measuring jug and discard the rind. If necessary, make up the liquid to 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) with water. Return the liquid to the pan.

Add the sugar to the pan and dissolve over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Bring to the boil, then leave to boil over medium heat for 5 minutes. Leave until cool.

Juice the lemons and strain. Measure 185 ml (6½ fl oz/ ¾ cup) of the juice and add to the cooled syrup. Pour into a bowl and place in the freezer. Leave until the mixture is half-frozen, then stir well to break up any ice crystals.

Beat the egg white until stiff. Combine thoroughly into the half-frozen syrup, with a little yellow food colouring if desired. Return to the freezer and leave until just firm.

Remove from the freezer and beat well until smooth and light. Pour into a loaf tin, cover with foil and freeze until very firm — about 3 hours or longer.

To serve, draw a metal spoon across the dondurma and place the flaky curls into chilled sweet glasses. Alternatively, scoop it out with an ice-cream scoop.

DONDURMA PORTAKAL

Orange water ice

SERVES: 6–8

**thinly peeled rind of 2 oranges thinly peeled rind of 1 lemon 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar
250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) orange juice 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice Put the orange and lemon
rinds in a saucepan with 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water. Boil, uncovered, for 10 minutes.**

Strain the liquid into a measuring jug and discard the rind. If necessary, make up the liquid to 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) with water. Return the liquid to the pan.

Add the sugar to the pan and dissolve over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Bring to the boil, then leave to boil over medium heat for 5 minutes. Leave until cool.

Add the orange and lemon juice to the sugar syrup, then pour into a bowl. Freeze for 3 hours, or until firm. Flake with a fork and pile the flakes into chilled sweet glasses.

✿ Note: Orange food colouring may be added to the syrup if desired.

DONDURMA KIRAZ

Cherry water ice Use the same method as for the [Dondurma Çilekli](#) recipe, substituting 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) cherry purée for the strawberry purée.

To make cherry purée, wash and pit about 600 g (1 lb 5 oz/ 3 cups) cherries and purée in a food processor or blender. Measure and add to the syrup with the lemon juice, milk and red food colouring if necessary.

Freeze and serve in chilled sweet glasses.

TÜRK KAHVESİ

Turkish coffee

Turkish coffee is prepared in a small, long-handled pot tapering at the top, called a jezve. The purist (and all Turks are, when it comes to making coffee) would grind the beans to a fine powder just before brewing. Turkish brass coffee mills are sold throughout the Middle East.

When offered a cup, you will be asked if you like it sade (unsweetened), orta (moderately sweetened) or sekerli (very sweet). Ideally, Turkish coffee is made one cup at a time, or three at the most.

Measure one demitasse cup of cold water into a jezve and add 1 heaped teaspoon of powdered Turkish coffee, and sugar if desired — a level teaspoon for orta, a heaped teaspoon or more for sekerli. Stir and place over medium-low heat.

When the coffee rises in the pot, immediately remove the pot from the heat, then spoon the froth into a cup. Return the pot to the heat and cook until the coffee rises again. Remove and fill the cup.

Some prefer to heat the coffee three times in all, though twice is sufficient, particularly if only making one cup. With the repeated heating method, a little froth is spooned into each cup each time it is removed from the heat, as a good cup of kahve must have creamy foam floating on top.

ÇİLEK REÇELİ

Strawberry jam

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) strawberries juice of 2 lemons

770 g (1 lb 11 oz/3½ cups) sugar Wash the strawberries, drain well and remove the hulls. Cut in half and place in a preserving pan with the lemon juice.

Place over medium heat, cover the pan and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer gently for 20–30 minutes, or until the fruit is very soft.

Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the sugar. Place back over medium heat, stirring again to dissolve the sugar.

Bring to the boil, then allow to boil over medium heat for 15 minutes, or until the jam sets when a little is tested on a cold saucer — see the [Kayisi Reçeli](#) recipe for more detail on testing.

Cool the jam a little, then ladle into hot, sterilised jars.

Seal while hot and store in a cool place.

GÜL REÇELİ

Rose petal jam

4 cups fragrant rose petals

660 g (1 lb 7 oz/3 cups) sugar juice of ½ lemon Snip off the white base of each rose petal with kitchen scissors and discard. Wash the petals gently in cold water and drain.

Layer the petals in a bowl, sprinkling 2 tablespoons of the sugar on each layer. Leave overnight.

The next day, put the remaining sugar and 500 ml (17 fl oz/ 2 cups) water in a heavy-based saucepan and set over medium heat. Stir occasionally until the sugar has dissolved, then bring to the boil. Add the lemon juice and boil for 5 minutes without stirring. Remove the syrup from the heat and cool to lukewarm.

Stir the rose petals and their liquid into the syrup and return the pan to the heat. Bring slowly to the boil, then allow to boil gently for 15 minutes, or until the syrup is thick when tested on a cold saucer (see recipe).

Cool the jam a little, then ladle into hot, [sterilised jars](#).

Seal while hot and store in a cool place.



KAYISI REÇELİ

Apricot jam

360 g (12½ oz/2 cups) dried apricots juice of 1 lemon

660 g (1 lb 7 oz/3 cups) sugar 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) blanched, split almonds, optional Wash the apricots very well in cold water. Chop into small pieces and place in a bowl with 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) cold water. Leave to soak for 12 hours.

Put the fruit and the soaking liquid in a preserving pan. Add the lemon juice and bring to the boil. Cover and boil gently for 30 minutes, or until the apricots are very soft.

Add the sugar and stir to dissolve. Return to the boil and boil quickly, stirring often.

Boil for 15 minutes, then test a little jam on a cold saucer. Draw a finger across the surface of the cooled jam — it is ready when the surface wrinkles. (Remember to remove the jam from the heat while testing.) Return to the heat if necessary and test the jam again after another 5 minutes.

Stir in the almonds, if using.

Cool the jam a little, then ladle into hot, [sterilised jars](#).

Seal while hot and store in a cool place.



Armenia





ARMENIA

Proclaimed a Soviet Republic in 1920, Armenia regained its nationhood in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the years of oppression, the nationalistic spirit lived on, both in the people of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and in those who, through the events of history, found a home elsewhere. They have shown that while adversity altered their fate, it has never altered their spirit. It is to their credit that, in spite of insurmountable odds, they have preserved their language, religion, customs and traditions.

To really understand the evolution of a cuisine, one must know something of a country's history. I doubt if there ever has been a country that has undergone such upheavals as Armenia, and about which the world knows so little. Perhaps knowing something of Armenia's history will shed light on many aspects of Middle Eastern cooking. Tradition has it that the kingdom of Armenia was founded by Haig, a descendant of Noah, in the Near East region of Lake Van. For centuries it was ruled by Haig's successors. There followed invasions by Assyrians, Medes and Persians; it was conquered by Alexander the Great and passed on to the ancient Syrian King, Seleucus I. Independence was finally declared in 189 BCE. This was short-lived, however, and Armenia was eventually made a protectorate of Rome. Nero confirmed a Parthian prince as King of Armenia in 66 CE. Christianity was introduced in the first century, and Armenia now has the distinction of being the oldest Christian state. Peace reigned for the next 300 years or so and then a succession of invasions followed for the next 1500 years, with brief periods of independence.

While Byzantium was at its zenith, Armenian Orthodox church leaders and many Armenians were centred in Constantinople, as were numbers of Greeks, and it was during this era, the pre-Ottoman era, that the exotic cuisine of Byzantium was developed, influencing Armenian and Greek and eventually Turkish cooking. It must also be noted that the Armenian boundaries through history have expanded and contracted considerably, accounting for so many similarities to Turkish dishes.

Mongol hordes swept across India, Afghanistan, Persia and Armenia into Russia in the 13th century, and though their mission was not one of goodwill, it is believed that they introduced pasta and noodles, almost a hundred years before Marco Polo's return from China. An Armenian noodle-type dish called mante also features in Russian cooking in a slightly varied form; it is a speciality of Uzbrek on the eastern side of the Caspian Sea, and both areas

were once under Mongol influence. In Turkish cooking, mante is known as Tartar boregi (the Mongols, in their surge, were joined by other peoples and became known collectively as Tartars). It is only through similar clues that one might hope to piece together the jigsaw of culinary origins.

THE FLAVOUR OF ARMENIAN FOOD

True Armenian cooking is relatively simple fare, often of a kind necessary in a cold climate. It is subtly herbed and spiced with overtones of the colourful era of Byzantium. The combination of rice, currants, onions and pine nuts is a legacy from that era — a legacy that in fact belongs to those of the Orthodox faith, be it Armenian, Greek or Eastern. Fasting is a very important requirement of the religion, and the ingenuity of the Armenians in preparing dishes without any animal products is evident in recipes. Many such recipes in other chapters are also used in Armenian cooking.

To illustrate their staunch upholding of tradition, the founder of Armenia is immortalised in the recipes haigagan parak hatz and haigagan keteh. The former is a bread similar to the flat breads of Persia and Lebanon, cooked a little longer so that it dries out. Try the [Khoubiz](#) recipe, but cook it straight after it is shaped, sprinkling the breads with sesame seeds. Bake for 6–7 minutes, long enough to dry it. This keeps well and is served as a dry bread or moistened with water. Haigagan keteh is the same as [Glor Keteh](#), with the circle folded in on itself, then pressed flat rather than rolled into a rope and coiled.

Another recipe worthy of mention is topig, one dating back to the days of Byzantium. His Grace, the Armenian Bishop of the Diocese of Sydney, is not only renowned among Sydney's Armenian community as a cook of great standing, he is also remembered for his culinary achievements in Los Angeles and Washington. His topig and his oologantch litzk are the envy of every Armenian cook in these three cities. The [Topig](#) recipe I have given does not quite follow his Grace's in that I refuse to soak the chickpeas for the length of time he recommends (my comments on this matter are documented in the section on pulses at the beginning of this book). Investigation and testing found that I did not need to cook the topig for quite as long he recommends either. My taste testers, members of his congregation, assured me that it was a very good topig, not quite as good as His Grace's, but near enough, and just like their mothers used to make. Perhaps I should give you details of the famous topig so that you might judge for yourself.

Apparently the secret is to soak the chickpeas for three days, changing the water daily and letting them ferment, as he claims this is necessary for the success of the dish. By then the peas are much easier to skin. His method is to wrap the peas in a cloth and rub vigorously. The skins come off easily. Put the peas in a bowl of water and skim off the floating skins. Grind the drained peas in a food grinder, or process in a food processor using a steel blade. The onions should be boiled in a generous amount of water and drained, reserving the water. Regarding the filling, we both agree on that point, so mix the onions with the remaining ingredients listed. Now, to prevent the water penetrating the cloth used for boiling, it should be soaked in the reserved onion water, and wrung out well. Spread out one-quarter of the ground pea mixture (mixed with mashed potato) on the cloth in a very thin square — as thin as you can make it. Fill as described, then fold the corners over, sealing the joins. Knot the cloth and prepare the remaining topigs in the same way. Boil them in salted water for 1 hour. Drain and leave them in the cloths until completely cold before removing. Now you know.

The [Oologantch Litzk](#) recipe is also His Grace's, minus three onions.

AN ARMENIAN MEAL

Rather than describe Armenian meals as served today in the Republic of Armenia, it is preferable to describe the usual way in which Armenians, wherever they may live, may take a meal following tradition. Meals are served in the Western manner; that is, with Western table appointments. All the prepared dishes for the meal are placed on the table at the one time so that the diners may take what they wish. In cooler weather the meal could begin with a bowl of soup, probably spiced with mint and thickened with yoghurt. Then follows a meat, chicken or fish dish, and vegetable, rice or pasta accompaniment, salad, bread and pickles. Tan (yoghurt drink) accompanies every meal served in the Armenian tradition. When fasting, the meal could feature fish or one of their delicious dishes made from dried beans, peas or burghul (bulgur). The full range of foods, from meats to desserts, could be Armenian, but they are just as likely to be from any of the Arabic countries, Greece or Iran — in fact from countries where they or their parents sought a new home.

COOKING METHODS

Armenians, particularly in the United States, are renowned for their success in the food industry. They operate speciality food stores, delicatessens, restaurants and bakeries, and while Armenian foods feature in their commercial endeavours, their affinity with food extends to preparing dishes from any nation. Perhaps it is an inherited gift; to be able to adapt to a situation is either born with us or thrust upon us. It has been thrust upon the Armenians for generations and it has held them in good stead. In other words, it is difficult to say that the Armenian uses this pot or that method of cooking, for it could be anything you might be using yourself.

An Armenian kitchen would be well stocked and well equipped with all the items necessary for producing good, wholesome food. You would not find cupboards filled with tins, or freezers filled with TV dinners, but you would be likely to find pantry shelves lined with jars of pickles and preserves, with perhaps a basderma hanging. I tested the latter recipe but I am afraid that I cannot advise you to prepare this pungent, spiced meat at home, as it requires days of hanging in the open air to dry it. I would prefer you to patronise your local Armenian or Greek food store and buy it ready prepared, as its commercial preparation is carried out under controlled conditions. Basderma is similar to the Romanian pastrami, except that a large quantity of fenugreek is included in the garlic and spice coating.

INGREDIENTS FOR ARMENIAN COOKING

There is hardly an ingredient in Armenian cooking with which the Western cook would not be familiar. [Harissa](#) is made in Armenia with a special wheat unavailable outside the Near and Middle East. Pearl barley is a more than reasonable substitute; consequently, in this recipe barley has been given as the ingredient.

Chickpeas are usually preferred without the skin. These are available at Armenian and Greek food stores but are difficult to find elsewhere. It may be necessary for you to follow the instructions for removing the [skins](#).

Sumac is a coarse powder with a sour flavour, prepared from the dry red berries of a species of the sumac tree. It is also used in Iran and other countries of the region.

Chickpeas with spinach SERVES: 6

330 g (1½ oz/½ cups) chickpeas 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil 1 large onion, chopped 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

1 teaspoon sugar

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) spinach lemon wedges, to serve Wash the chickpeas well, place them in a bowl and cover them with 1.125 litres (38 fl oz/4½ cups) cold water. Leave to soak overnight, in a cool place if the weather is warm.

The next day, put the chickpeas and soaking water in a deep saucepan and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer gently for 2 hours, or until tender.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the tomato paste, some salt, a generous grinding of black pepper and the sugar, then add to the cooked chickpeas.

Wash the spinach well, removing the roots and discoloured leaves. Chop the leaves and stems roughly and stir them through the chickpea mixture.

Simmer, uncovered, for a further 20 minutes, adding more water only if necessary. Nivik should be moist, but not too liquid. Serve with lemon wedges, bread, salad and pickles as an appetiser or light meal. Also good served cold.



YEREPOUNI

Brain fritters

SERVES: 4 AS AN APPETISER

As the recipe name suggests, these delicately flavoured brain fritters are from Yerevan, the capital and largest city of Armenia.

6 sets of lamb brains

2 tablespoons vinegar

3 teaspoons salt, plus extra to taste 2 egg yolks

1 tablespoon finely chopped dill

30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) finely grated kasseri cheese olive or corn oil, for pan-frying lemon wedges, to serve

Cover the lamb brains with water, adding the vinegar and 2 teaspoons of the salt. Leave for 15–20 minutes, then drain. Remove the skin and any veins. If the brains have been frozen, it is very difficult to remove the skin — this does not matter so much, but do cut out any veins present, as the blood discolours the brains.

Place the brains in a saucepan with fresh water to cover, add the remaining salt and bring almost to the boil. Cover and simmer gently over low heat for 15 minutes, or until tender.

Drain the brains well and turn them into a mixing bowl. Mash them finely with a fork and leave to cool.

Add the egg yolks, dill and cheese. Mix to a soft paste and add more salt to season if necessary.

Add the oil to a frying pan, to a depth of 5 mm (¼ inch). Place six egg-poaching rings in the oil, turning them to oil the surfaces.

Heat the oil over medium–high heat. Spoon a generous tablespoon of the brain mixture into each ring and fry until golden brown on each side. Once the mixture is set, the rings may be removed.

Drain on paper towels and add the remaining mixture to the rings in the pan. Serve hot or warm as an appetiser, with lemon wedges.

DEREVE PATTOUG

Stuffed grape vine leaves MAKES: 80

80 fresh or preserved grape vine leaves 1 lemon, thinly sliced

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil lemon wedges, to serve

yoghurt, to serve

Rice filling

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 2 large onions, finely chopped 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) short-grain white rice 40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts 35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) currants 1 teaspoon ground allspice

2 tablespoons finely chopped dill

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season To make the rice filling, heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the rice and stir for 5 minutes. Add the pine nuts, currants, allspice and dill, and season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook over gentle heat for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Blanch the fresh or preserved vine leaves in boiling water for 3 minutes, adding them in three batches. As each batch is blanched, remove it to a bowl of cold water, then drain well.

Spread a vine leaf on a work surface, shiny side down. Snip off the stem and place a heaped teaspoon of the rice filling towards the stem end. Roll once, fold in the sides, then roll into a neat package. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Line the base of a heavy-based saucepan with four vine leaves. Place the rolls, seam side down, in closely packed rows. As each row is completed, place three thin lemon slices on top before beginning the next row.

When all the rolls are in the pan, top them with another three lemon slices and cover with the remaining vine leaves. Pour the oil and 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water over the rolls, then invert a heavy plate on top of the rolls so they keep their shape during cooking.

Bring to a slow simmer, reduce the heat and cover the pan. Simmer gently for 50 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and leave until cool.

Carefully transfer the rolls to a serving dish, discarding the lemon slices. Serve at room temperature, or cover the dish and chill before serving.

Serve with lemon wedges and a bowl of yoghurt.

TOPIG

Lenten chickpea kofta

SERVES: 8–12

**440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) chickpeas 2 small potatoes, boiled in their jackets 1½ teaspoons salt
freshly ground white pepper, to season Filling
3 large onions, halved and sliced ¼ teaspoon ground allspice ½ teaspoon ground cumin
50 g (2 oz/⅓ cup) pine nuts 50 g (2 oz/⅓ cup) currants 205 g (7 oz/¾ cup) tahini
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season To finish and serve**

1 tablespoon salt

olive oil

**ground cinnamon or paprika lemon wedges
parsley sprigs**

Soak the chickpeas in 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) cold water for 24 hours, in a cool place if the weather is warm. Remove the skins by either of the methods described under '[Skinning pulses](#)'. Drain well.

Pass the skinned chickpeas through a food grinder twice, using a fine screen. Alternatively, process them to a paste in two batches in a food processor, using a steel blade.

Peel the boiled potatoes, place in a mixing bowl and mash finely with a fork. Add the ground chickpeas, salt and a generous pinch of white pepper. Mix thoroughly and set aside.

To make the filling, place the onion in a saucepan with 2 tablespoons water. Cover and steam over medium heat for 10 minutes, then remove the lid and allow the moisture to evaporate. Tip the onion into a bowl and cool.

Add the allspice, cumin, pine nuts and currants to the onion. Combine well, then mix in the tahini, and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Take four pieces of muslin (cheesecloth), each about 50 cm (20 inches) square, and scald them in boiling water. Cool them a little, then wring them out well.

Open out a square of cloth on a work surface and place onequarter of the chickpea paste in the centre. Spread the paste evenly with a spatula to a 20 cm (8 inch) square, then place one-quarter of the filling in the centre, spreading it a little.

Bring each corner of the paste over the filling by lifting up the corners of the cloth. The paste should enclose the filling in envelope fashion. Smooth the joins to seal them well.

Make a single tie with each pair of diagonally opposite corners of cloth, then tie a second time. Complete another three topigs in the same way.

Half-fill a large saucepan with water, bring to the boil and add the 1 tablespoon salt.

When the water is briskly boiling, lower the prepared topigs into the pan and return to the boil. Cover the pan and allow it to boil steadily for 12–15 minutes, or until the topigs float and feel firm to the touch.

Lift out the topigs immediately and place them on a tray, draining off the water that collects in the tray.

Untie and invert the topigs on a platter and leave until cool.

When ready to serve, pour a little olive oil over each topig and dust lightly with cinnamon or paprika. Garnish with lemon wedges and parsley.

To serve, cut each topig in half, then slice into thick pieces. Add olive oil and lemon juice to individual taste.

✿ Note: Ready-skinned chickpeas are available at some Armenian and Greek food stores. These look like split peas, but are larger and nut-coloured.

HARISSA

Meat and barley purée

SERVES: 6–8

There are versions of harissa in various countries of the region. The Armenians use a special wheat that is unavailable outside the Middle East, so this version uses barley instead. Harissa is traditionally served on the first day after New Year.

**330 g (11½ oz/½ cups) pearl barley 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) chuck steak salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 90 g (3 oz/⅓ cup) butter
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**

1 teaspoon ground cumin

Wash the barley well under cold running water. Place in a bowl and add cold water to cover. Leave to soak overnight.

Place the barley and soaking water in a heavy-based saucepan. Place over medium heat and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat, then cover and simmer gently for 1½ hours, or until the barley is just tender.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 170°C (340°F/Gas 3).

Cut the steak into 3 cm (1¼ inch) cubes and place in a separate saucepan with water to cover. Bring slowly to the boil, skimming as required.

Place the barley and steak, together with their simmering liquids, into a large casserole dish. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer to the oven and bake for 3 hours, stirring occasionally during cooking, and adding water if the mixture looks like scorching.

In a small frying pan, heat the butter until browned, then stir in the cinnamon and cumin. Remove from the heat.

When the meat is very tender and falling apart, remove the casserole from the oven and beat the mixture with a wooden spoon until puréed. The meat should break up into stringy pieces and combine with the barley.

Spread on a heated serving platter, smoothing the surface. Make indentations over the surface with the back of a spoon and fill with the melted butter mixture.

Serve with bread and salads.

CHROD BOUREK

Water-dipped pastry with cheese filling

SERVES: 12 AS AN APPETISER, 6 AS A MAIN COURSE

Occasionally during the compilation of this book I almost resorted to coin-tossing to decide which chapter I should place some recipes in — such as this particular gem, which both the Turks and the Armenians lay claim to.

As the Armenian mante uses a noodle-type dough, its origin probably dating from the influence of the Mongols, it is possible this water-dipped pastry was developed around the same time.

Cheese filling

300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) crumbled feta cheese 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) cottage or ricotta cheese 125 g (4 oz/1 cup) grated kasseri cheese 4 eggs, lightly beaten

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 tablespoons chopped dill

freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Water-dipped pastry

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour, plus extra for kneading and rolling

1 teaspoon salt

3 eggs, beaten well

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter, melted, for brushing To make the cheese filling, finely mash the feta in a mixing bowl, using a fork. Combine with the remaining filling ingredients and refrigerate until required.

To make the pastry, sift the flour and salt into a bowl and make a well in the centre. Add the eggs to the centre of the flour with 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) lukewarm water. Gradually stir the flour into the liquid to form a soft dough.

Thoroughly knead the dough in the bowl. If it is still sticky, gradually add a little more sifted flour until the dough is smooth and comes away cleanly from the side of the bowl. The amount of flour depends on the size of the eggs and the flour's absorption qualities. Shape the dough into a ball, then cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Rest for 30 minutes.

Divide the dough into 10 even-sized balls. On a lightly floured work surface, shape one ball of dough into a square, dust it with flour and roll it out thinly, following the directions in the 'Rolling pastry thinly' section [Homemade fillo pastry](#). The final pastry sheet should be about 28 × 33 cm (11 × 13 inches) in size. Stack and cover as directed as each sheet is rolled. All but two sheets of pastry are to be boiled.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Three-quarters fill a large saucepan with water and bring to the boil. Have a large bowl of cold water next to the pan, and spread a large, folded cloth next to this.

Lift up one pastry sheet and lower it gradually into the boiling water. Boil for 1 minute, then scoop it out carefully with a large sieve, guiding the pastry into the sieve with a wooden spoon. Plunge the pastry into the cold water, leave it for 2 minutes, lift it out and drain it over the bowl. Turn the pastry onto the cloth and open it out carefully to drain and dry a little. Boil another three sheets, laying them separately on the cloth to drain. Any sheets that tear may still be used.

Brush a 25 × 30 cm (10 × 12 inch) baking dish with melted butter and spread one uncooked pastry sheet in the dish. Brush it with butter and place the four boiled sheets of pastry on top, brushing each with butter as it is positioned. Spread the cheese filling evenly in the dish.

Boil another four sheets of pastry as described above, using a dry cloth for draining. Place them on top of the filling, buttering each layer as it is placed in the dish. Top with the last uncooked pastry sheet, then trim the edges with a sharp knife, level with the top of the dish. Brush the top of the pie with the remaining butter.

Bake for 1 hour, or until the top is golden brown and crisp. The centre sheets will be soft and tender. Rest the pie for 10 minutes before cutting it into serving portions. Serve hot as an appetiser, or as a main course for a light meal.

✿ Note: Spinach, meat or chicken fillings may be used with this pastry. See '[Savoury pastries](#)' in the index.

KHARENI TTVASH

Armenia pickles

½ small cauliflower 2–3 celery stalks

1 green capsicum (pepper) 1 red capsicum (pepper) 2 carrots

2 green tomatoes

cooking salt, for sprinkling Brine mixture

80 g (3 oz/¼ cup) rock salt 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) white vinegar

3 teaspoons sugar

To finish

1–2 garlic cloves

1–2 hot fresh or dried chillies 1–2 dill sprigs, optional Wash the vegetables well. Break the cauliflower into florets; cut the celery into 5 cm (2 inch) lengths. Core and seed the capsicums, then cut into wide strips. Peel the carrots and cut into 5 mm (¼ inch) slices. Cut the tomatoes into thick wedges.

Layer the vegetables in a bowl, sprinkling each layer with about 2 tablespoons cooking salt. Leave for 5–6 hours, then rinse well and drain.

To prepare the brine mixture, heat 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) water and the rock salt in a stainless steel or enamelled saucepan, stirring until the salt has dissolved. Add the vinegar and sugar and bring to the boil. Remove from the heat and leave until cool.

Pack the vegetables into one or two sterilised jars, arranging them attractively. To each jar add a cut garlic clove, a whole chilli and a sprig of dill among the vegetables.

Pour the cooled brine over the pickles and seal with glass or plastic lids. Store in a cool, dark place for 1 week before using, or up to 2–3 months. Once opened, store in the refrigerator.



LOUPIA TTVASH

Green bean pickles 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) stringless green beans, thoroughly washed cooking salt, for sprinkling 1 quantity Brine Mixture; see [Khareni Ttvash](#) recipe 2 fresh or dried hot chillies

2 garlic cloves

Top and tail the beans. Cut diagonally into 8 cm (3½ inch) lengths, or leave whole if desired. Layer the beans in a bowl, sprinkling each layer with about 2 tablespoons cooking salt. Leave for 6 hours, then rinse well and drain.

Make the brine mixture as directed and leave until cool.

Pack the beans into two sterilised jars, placing a chilli and a cut garlic clove in each jar. Pour the cooled brine over the pickles and seal. Store in a cool, dark place for 1 week before using, or up to 2–3 months. Refrigerate after opening.

DZAGHAGHAMPI TTVASH

Cauliflower pickles 1 quantity Brine Mixture; see [Khareni Ttvash](#) recipe

1 cauliflower, thick stems removed, broken into florets

1–2 hot chillies

1–2 garlic cloves

Make the brine mixture as directed and leave until cool.

Soak the cauliflower in a bowl of cold salted water for 15–20 minutes. Rinse well and drain.

Blanch the cauliflower in a large saucepan of boiling water in two batches, for 3 minutes each batch, timed from when the water returns to the boil. Drain well.

Pack into one large or two smaller sterilised jars, adding a chilli and a cut garlic clove to each jar. Pour the cooled brine over the pickles and seal. Store in a cool, dark place for 1 week before using, or up to 2–3 months. Refrigerate after opening.

MAKES: 6 BREADS

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

600 g (1 lb 5 oz/4 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) warm evaporated milk 1 egg, beaten

1 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon caster (superfine) sugar

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) melted unsalted butter To finish

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) melted unsalted butter 1 small egg, beaten

sesame seeds or black cumin seeds

Soak the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water and stir to dissolve. Sift the flour into a mixing bowl. Remove and reserve about 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) of the flour.

Mix the evaporated milk with the beaten egg; add the salt and sugar and stir until dissolved. Pour the yeast liquid and evaporated milk into the centre of the flour. Stir in a little flour to thicken the liquid, then cover and leave in a warm place for 10 minutes, or until frothy.

Mix in the remaining flour in the bowl. Beat by hand for 2 minutes, then gradually beat in the warm, melted butter with a little of the reserved flour. Beat the dough for a further 5 minutes by hand, or in an electric mixer fitted with a dough hook.

Knead in the reserved flour, adding as much as the dough will take. Knead for 10 minutes, or until the dough is smooth and satiny. Form into a ball.

Grease a clean bowl with a little butter, then add the dough and turn to coat it with butter. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and leave the dough to rise in a warm place for 1 hour, or until it has doubled in size.

Punch down the dough and turn it out onto a lightly floured work surface. Knead until smooth, divide into six even portions, and roll each portion into a ball. Cover with a cloth.

Dust the surface and one ball of dough with flour, then roll the dough into a large, thin circle about 40 cm (16 inches) in diameter.

To finish, brush the dough evenly with some of the melted butter. Roll it up into a long rope. Take each end and swing it up and down, letting the dough hit the work surface; you want to stretch the rope to twice its original length.

Coil the rope into a round, with the ends of the dough on top. Press the ends onto the coil and flatten them a little.

Shape the remaining dough in the same way.

When all are shaped, press firmly with your hands and flatten each into an 18 cm (7 inch) round — use a rolling pin if you prefer. Place the rounds on greased baking trays. Cover and leave for 45 minutes, or until they have doubled in size.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Glaze the breads with the beaten egg and sprinkle with sesame or cumin seeds. Bake for 12–15 minutes, or until golden brown and cooked.

Serve warm, with fruit preserves or cheese.

MANTIABOUR

Lamb pasta and yoghurt soup

SERVES: 6

Shades of Italy again? No — more likely a descendant from the man-ton of the nomadic Mongolians, and a relative of the manti of Russia. Here, mante is served in a satisfying soup. You will also find mante as a [lamb pie](#).

300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour ½ teaspoon salt

1 egg

Filling

200 g (7 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb (choose lamb that is not too lean) 1 onion, grated

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season To finish

2 teaspoons salt

1.25 litres (42½ fl oz/5 cups) chicken stock 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) drained yoghurt

1 garlic clove, crushed, optional

2 teaspoons dried mint

Sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl. Using a fork, beat the egg in a cup measure and make up to 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) with cold water. Pour into the flour and mix to a firm dough, adding a little more water if necessary. Knead until smooth, then cover and rest for 20–30 minutes.

Meanwhile, place the filling ingredients in a mixing bowl, season with salt and pepper and thoroughly combine.

Roll out half the dough as thinly as possible on a floured work surface. Cut it into 4 cm (1½ inch) squares, then stack the squares and cover them while rolling and cutting the remaining dough.

Place a teaspoon of the filling in the centre of a square of dough; fold the dough over into a triangle, then press the edges well to seal. Bring the two narrow angles of the triangle together and press well, making a shape resembling the Italian tortellini. Place on a cloth-lined tray and cover while preparing the remaining mante.

To finish, bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil in a large saucepan and add the salt. Add about 20 mante, return the water to the boil and leave to boil for 10 minutes. Remove the mante with a slotted spoon and place in a colander while boiling the remainder. (The mante may be kept in a sealed container in the refrigerator if not required immediately.) When ready to serve, bring the stock to the boil in a large saucepan. Add the mante and boil gently for 10 minutes.

Add the yoghurt and garlic, if using. Stir gently over the heat for 2–3 minutes, without allowing the soup to boil. Rub the mint into a powder and stir into the soup.

Serve immediately.

VOSBOV ABOUR

Lentil soup

SERVES: 6

1 quantity lamb stock; see [Dzedzadz Tanabour](#) recipe 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) red lentils, washed

3 onions

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) butter salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste To finish

paprika, for sprinkling herbs, such as chopped parsley, to garnish olive oil, for drizzling Make the stock as directed and strain it into a measuring jug. Add water if necessary to make it up to 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/ 6 cups). Pour the stock into a deep saucepan and bring to the boil. Add the lentils and return to the boil, skimming when necessary. Partially cover with a lid and boil gently while preparing the onions.

Finely chop two of the onions. Heat half the butter in a frying pan and fry the onions until lightly browned.

Stir the fried onions into the lentils. Cover the pan tightly and simmer for 1 hour, or until the lentils are tender. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Cut the remaining onion in half from top to bottom, then slice each half into semi-circles. Melt the remaining butter in the frying pan and fry the onion until golden brown.

Serve hot, garnished with the fried onion, a sprinkling of paprika and herbs, and a drizzle of oil.



DZEDZADZ TANABOUR

Yoghurt and barley soup SERVES: 6

110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) barley, washed 750 g (1 lb 10 oz/3 cups) yoghurt 1 egg

1 tablespoon dried mint

40 g (1½ oz) butter, optional Lamb stock

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) lamb soup meat, with bones (neck, breast, shank) 2 carrots, quartered

1 onion, quartered

leafy top of 1 celery stalk salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste To make the lamb stock, rinse the lamb pieces, place them in a large saucepan and pour in water to cover. Add the remaining stock ingredients, except any salt, and bring to the boil. Skim off any froth before the liquid boils. When well skimmed and boiling gently, season with salt and pepper, then cover and simmer over low heat for 1½ hours.

Strain the stock into another saucepan; discard or reserve the stock ingredients for another use.

Add the barley to the stock and stir occasionally until boiling. Cover and simmer over low heat for 1½ hours, or until the barley is very soft and the soup is thick.

Beat the yoghurt with the egg, then stir it into the simmering soup. Crush half the dried mint to a coarse powder and stir it through the soup as well. Return to a slow simmer, stirring occasionally, but do not allow to boil.

Ladle into bowls and serve hot, sprinkled with the remaining mint — or you can heat the butter in a frying pan, stir in the remaining mint and drizzle this over each soup.

ARAPGIRI TOPIG

Burghul and potato balls SERVES: 6

6 potatoes, about 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) in total, scrubbed clean 130 g (4½ oz/¾ cup) fine burghul (bulgur) 110 g (3¾ oz/¾ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste oil, for deep-frying

Filling

2 onions, chopped

¼ teaspoon ground allspice 40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts 35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) currants 90 g (3 oz/⅓ cup) tahini salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste In a large saucepan, boil the potatoes in their jackets until tender. Drain the potatoes and leave to cool slightly. Remove the skins, place in a bowl and mash.

Meanwhile, soak the burghul in a bowl of cold water for 5 minutes. Drain it through a fine sieve, pressing well with the back of a spoon to squeeze out all the moisture.

Add the burghul to the mashed potato, along with the flour. Season to taste with salt and pepper and combine thoroughly to a paste.

To make the filling, place the onion in a saucepan with 2 tablespoons water. Cover and steam over medium heat for 10 minutes, then remove the lid and allow the moisture to evaporate. Tip the onion into a bowl and add the remaining filling ingredients. Season to taste with salt and pepper and mix until thoroughly combined.

Using moistened hands, shape a scant tablespoon of the burghul mixture at a time into balls. Flatten a ball in your hand, put a generous teaspoon of filling in the centre, then close the burghul mixture over the filling, moulding it into a smooth oval shape. Repeat with the remaining burghul mixture and filling.

Heat 10 cm (4 inches) of oil in a deep saucepan over medium heat to 160°C (320°F). Deep-fry six balls at a time for 6–8 minutes each batch, turning to brown evenly. When golden brown, remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Serve hot or warm.

SHEHREHI YEGHINTZ

Rice with vermicelli SERVES: 6

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter 100 g (3½ oz) fine vermicelli noodles, lightly crushed 300 g (10½ oz/1½ cups) long-grain white rice 875 ml (29 fl oz/3½ cups) chicken or vegetable stock 1½ teaspoons salt

Melt the butter in a heavy-based saucepan. Add the noodles and stir over medium heat for 5 minutes, or until the noodles are golden brown.

Add the rice and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes. Stir in the stock and salt and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low, then cover and cook gently for 15 minutes.

Turn off the heat and leave covered for 5 minutes before serving.

HARSANIK YEGHINTZ

Spiced lamb pilaff

SERVES: 6

250 g (9 oz) lean boneless lamb

1 onion

**½ teaspoon saffron threads 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter 30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) blanched slivered almonds
½ teaspoon ground allspice 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) lamb or chicken stock**

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to taste 400 g (14 oz/2 cups) long-grain white rice Cut the lamb into thin strips 4 cm (1½ inches) long. Halve the onion lengthways and cut it into slender wedges. Pound the saffron threads and leave them to steep in 2 tablespoons hot water.

Melt the butter in a heavy-based saucepan and brown the lamb and onion over high heat, stirring constantly. Add the almonds and fry for 2 minutes longer. Reduce the heat and stir in the allspice.

Add 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) of the stock, the salt and a good grinding of black pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes. Increase the heat, pour in the remaining stock and bring to the boil.

Wash the rice well and drain, then add it to the boiling stock. When it returns to the boil, reduce the heat to low, cover the pan with paper towels and a lid and simmer for 20 minutes.

Pour the saffron liquid over the rice, then cover and cook for a further 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and leave covered for 5 minutes before serving.

HAVGOTOV SHIOMIN

Eggs with spinach

SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) spinach

4 small onions

85 ml (3 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil, plus extra for drizzling salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

6 eggs

yoghurt, to serve

Trim any roots and discoloured leaves from the spinach. Wash the spinach in several changes of water and drain well. Coarsely chop the leaves and stalks.

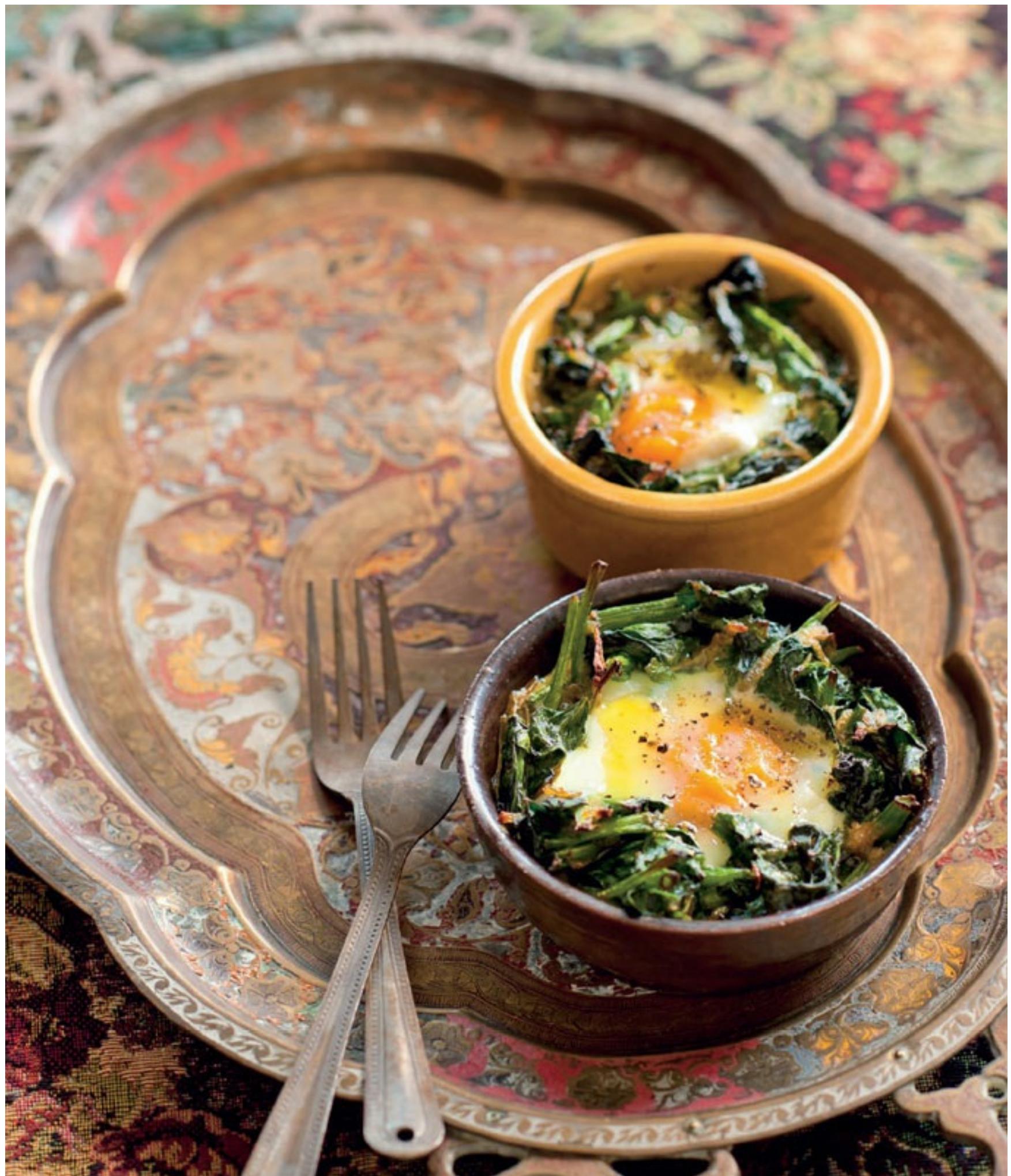
Place the spinach in a large non-aluminium saucepan, then cover and cook over medium heat for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. There is no need to add water to the pan as the moisture on the leaves will be sufficient for cooking. Drain the spinach in a colander, pressing with the back of a spoon to extract the moisture.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Cut the onions in half from top to bottom, then slice each half into semi-circles. Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onions until translucent and lightly browned. Add the spinach and stir over the heat for a few minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Tip the spinach mixture into a large, shallow baking dish, or six smaller ramekins. If using one large dish, make six depressions in the spinach with the back of a spoon; if using six ramekins, make a depression in each one. Break an egg into each depression, then drizzle a little oil on top of each egg.

Bake for 10 minutes, or until the eggs are set. Serve hot as a light meal, with a small bowl of yoghurt.



ZADIG AGHTZAN

Spinach salad SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) spinach 750 g (1 lb 10 oz/3 cups) drained yoghurt

1 garlic clove

½ teaspoon salt 1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley pinch of sugar Remove the roots and coarse stems from the spinach. Wash the leaves well, shake off as much moisture as possible, then shred the leaves quite thinly.

Place the spinach in a large non-aluminium saucepan, then cover and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. When just cooked, drain the spinach in a colander, pressing with the back of a spoon to extract the moisture. Leave until cool.

Place the yoghurt in a mixing bowl. Crush the garlic with the salt, then stir into the yoghurt with the cooled spinach, parsley and sugar. Check the seasoning and add more salt and sugar to taste. Cover and chill well before serving.

Stuffed mussels

SERVES: 8–10

Many cooks have trouble closing mussels after filling them with the rice mixture. Near the pointed end of the mussel, close inspection reveals a fine white ligament. Sever this and the mussel can be closed easily after filling — but do take care as you can completely unhinge it.

60 large mussels

olive oil, for rubbing

lemon wedges, to serve

Filling

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 3 large onions, finely chopped 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) short-grain white rice, washed 50 g (2 oz/⅓ cup) pine nuts 50 g (2 oz/⅓ cup) currants ½ teaspoon ground allspice

1 tablespoon chopped dill

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste To make the rice filling, heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the remaining filling ingredients and set aside.

Scrub the mussels well with a stiff brush, scraping the shells with a knife to remove any marine growth. Tug the beards towards the pointed end and remove them. To open the mussels easily, place them in warm salted water. As each one opens, insert the point of a knife between the two shells and slide it towards the pointed end, to sever the fine white ligament near the hinge, taking care not to separate the shells.

Place two generous teaspoons of filling in each mussel. Close each one up and arrange them in layers in a deep saucepan. Invert a heavy plate on top of the mussels to keep them intact during cooking. Pour in 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and place over medium heat. Bring to the boil, then cover and simmer gently over low heat for 35–40 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and leave the mussels to cool in the pan.

Remove the mussels from the pan. Wipe them dry with paper towels, then rub the shells with a cloth dipped in oil for a glossy appearance.

Arrange on a serving dish and garnish with lemon wedges. Serve at room temperature, or chilled.

SEMPOOGI YEV MISOVGHOROVATZ

Baked eggplant with lamb

SERVES: 4 AS A MAIN COURSE, 8 AS AN APPETISER

8 long eggplants (aubergines), each about 250 g (9 oz) salt, for sprinkling

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb 1 onion, finely chopped

2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 green capsicum (pepper)

1/4 teaspoon ground allspice

1 teaspoon salt, plus extra to taste freshly ground black pepper, to season 60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée) 40 g (1½ oz) butter

Remove the stems from the eggplants. Cut the eggplants crossways at 2 cm (¾ inch) intervals, almost all the way through. Sprinkle salt liberally into the cut surfaces and leave for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Rinse the eggplants in cold water and squeeze them dry by pushing the ends of each eggplant together.

Combine the lamb, onion and parsley in a mixing bowl. Core and seed the capsicum, keeping a quarter of it aside, and chop the remainder finely. Add to the lamb with the allspice, salt and a generous grind of black pepper. Mix together thoroughly.

Stuff some meat mixture into each slit in the eggplants, filling them generously. Place the eggplants in a baking dish.

Mix the tomato paste with 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) water and add salt and pepper to taste. Pour over the eggplants and place the reserved piece of capsicum in the liquid. Dot the tops with the butter.

Bake, uncovered, for 45 minutes, basting with the juices during cooking. Serve hot, with salad and bread.

KHAREN ILITZK BULGHOUROV

Vegetables stuffed with lamb

SERVES: 6 AS A MAIN COURSE, OR MORE IN A BUFFET

**6 long eggplants (aubergines), or 3 oval eggplants 6 green capsicums (peppers)
6 tomatoes**

3 tablespoons sumac

1 tablespoon tomato paste (concentrated purée) 1½ teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon sugar

Stuffing

**750 g (1 lb 10 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb (not too lean) 1 small onion, finely chopped
250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée)
40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) finely chopped green capsicum (pepper) 55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) short-grain white rice
90 g (3 oz/½ cup) coarse burghul (bulgur), rinsed pinch of hot chilli powder
1½ teaspoons salt**

Wash the vegetables. Remove the stalks from the eggplants, cut off 2 cm (¾ inch) from the stem end and set aside. Scoop out the eggplant flesh, leaving a 5 mm (¼ inch) border of flesh. Place the eggplants in salted water and soak for 20 minutes. Rinse and drain.

Meanwhile, cut the tops off the capsicums and reserve. Remove the core, seeds and white membrane from the capsicums, then rinse and drain.

Cut the tops off the tomatoes (the stem end) and set aside. Scoop out the tomato pulp with a spoon and keep it separate. Set the tomatoes upside down to drain off the juices.

Combine the stuffing ingredients in a bowl and mix together thoroughly.

Spoon the stuffing into the vegetables, but don't fill them completely as the rice needs room to expand. Put the reserved tops back on the capsicums and tomatoes. For the eggplants, pare down the reserved ends to form a cork.

In a saucepan, mix the sumac with 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and bring to the boil. Drain the liquid through a fine sieve, into a jug. Discard the sumac. Make the liquid back up to 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) with water if

necessary.

Spread the tomato pulp in the base of a deep, heavy-based saucepan. Arrange the stuffed capsicums upright in the pan. Lay the eggplants on top of the capsicums, placing them on their sides. Place the tomatoes upright on top of the eggplants.

Combine the sumac liquid with the tomato paste, salt and sugar and pour over the vegetables. Cover the pan tightly and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer gently for 1½ hours.

Arrange the vegetables in a serving dish and keep warm. Boil the liquid in the pan to reduce it a little and pour over the vegetables. Serve hot or warm.



MANTE

Lamb pie SERVES: 4–5

300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour ½ teaspoon salt

**60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) oil melted butter, for brushing 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) hot chicken stock
yoghurt, to serve**

Filling

1 tablespoon oil

1 small onion, finely chopped 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb (not too lean)

2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl. Add the oil and rub it into the flour with your fingertips. Add 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) cold water, mix to a soft dough and knead lightly until smooth. Cover and rest for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

To make the filling, heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Tip the onion into a mixing bowl and add the lamb and parsley. Season with salt and pepper and mix together thoroughly.

Roll out one-third of the pastry to fit the top of a buttered 25 × 30 cm (10 × 12 inch) baking dish. Set aside and cover with a cloth.

Thinly roll out the remaining pastry, then cut it into 4 cm (1½ inch) squares. Place a teaspoon of the filling in the centre of each, fold up the sides and press the ends together to seal them — the finished pastries will look like miniature canoes, with the meat filling showing.

Place the pastries side by side in rows in the baking dish. Top with the reserved sheet of pastry, tucking the edges in neatly. Brush with melted butter and bake for 45 minutes.

Pour the hot chicken stock over the pastry and bake for a further 10–15 minutes, or until most of the stock has been absorbed.

Cut into squares and serve with yoghurt.

✿ Note: Sometimes this is prepared without the top covering of pastry, but it is more attractive with the pastry. If not covering the pie with pastry, brush the meat filling with butter before baking.

AGHTZIVADZ KEDNAHUNZOUR

Lamb sausages with potatoes

SERVES: 6

As with many Armenian recipes, this cumin-flavoured lamb dish also features in Turkish and Greek cookery (Turkish, jzmir kbftesi; Greek, souzoukakia). While the sausage-shaped meatballs are browned first in the Turkish and Greek versions, then simmered in tomato sauce, the Armenians arrange them in a baking dish alternately with pieces of potato, then pour the sauce over them and bake them for a one-dish main course.

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb 3 slices of stale white bread, crusts removed 2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 tablespoon chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 teaspoon ground cumin

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) potatoes

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) melted butter

Tomato sauce

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée) 1/2 small green capsicum (pepper), chopped 1/2 teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Place the lamb in a mixing bowl. Soak the bread in cold water, squeeze it dry and crumble it over the lamb. Add the garlic, parsley and cumin, and season with salt and pepper.

If you have a meat grinder, pass the mixture through it once, using a fine screen; alternatively, process the mixture in a food processor using a steel blade, then knead it to a paste. (If you have neither, just knead the mixture by hand until it is thoroughly combined and paste-like in consistency.) Using moist hands, shape generous tablespoons of the lamb mixture into oval sausage-like rolls. Set aside.

To make the tomato sauce, combine the tomato paste with 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water. Add the capsicum and sugar, and season with salt and pepper.

Peel the potatoes and cut them in half so that the pieces are about the same size and shape as the meatballs.

Brush a baking dish with some of the melted butter. Arrange the meatballs in rows in the dish, placing pieces of potato, cut side down, between the meatballs. Brush with more melted butter. Pour the tomato sauce mixture evenly over the top.

Bake, uncovered, for 10 minutes, basting occasionally with the sauce in the dish.

Reduce the oven temperature to 160°C (320°F/Gas 2–3), then cover the dish with foil and cook for a further 1 hour, adding a little more water to the dish if necessary.

Serve hot with a green vegetable or salad accompaniment and pickles.

Christmas pudding SERVES: 8–10

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) pearl barley

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar To serve

ground cinnamon

blanched almonds and hazelnuts chopped walnuts

sultanas (golden raisins) rosewater, optional Wash the barley well, place in a bowl and cover with 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) cold water. Soak overnight.

Next day, combine the barley, soaking water and cinnamon in a heavy-based saucepan and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat, leave uncovered and gently boil for about 2 hours, or until the barley is very soft and porridge-like in consistency. Remove the cinnamon.

Stir in the sugar and cook for a further 10 minutes. Ladle into individual bowls and sprinkle with ground cinnamon. Decorate with nuts and sultanas.

Serve warm or chilled, with a little rosewater stirred through, if desired.



TAHINOV HATZ

Tahini cookies

MAKES: ABOUT 60

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter 270 g (9½ oz/1 cup) tahini

230 g (8 oz/1 cup) caster (superfine) sugar 115 g (4 oz/½ cup firmly packed) brown sugar

1 egg

375 g (13 oz/2½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour 1½ teaspoons baking powder

pinch of salt

125 g (4 oz/1 cup) finely chopped walnuts Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Beat the butter, tahini and sugars until light and creamy. Add the egg and beat well.

Sift the flour, baking powder and salt twice, then fold into the tahini mixture with the walnuts.

Roll portions of the dough into balls the size of small walnuts and place on greased baking trays. Lightly press each one with the tines of a fork to flatten slightly and give a decorative finish.

Bake for 15 minutes, or until lightly coloured. Leave to cool on the baking trays for 5 minutes, then lift onto wire racks to cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

KHORSHAAF

Dried fruit compote

SERVES: 6

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) pitted prunes 180 g (6 oz/1 cup) dried apricot halves 125 g (4 oz/1 cup) sultanas (golden raisins) 110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) sugar thin strip of lemon rind

2 cloves

¼ teaspoon ground allspice, optional chopped walnuts, to serve Wash the dried fruits well and place in a saucepan. Pour in enough cold water to cover and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low, then cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

Add the sugar, lemon rind, cloves and allspice, if using. Stir to dissolve the sugar, and add a little more water to cover the fruit if necessary. Leaving the lid off, simmer gently until the syrup is thick, and the fruit is soft but not mushy. Remove the lemon rind and cloves.

Spoon the compote into a bowl and chill well. Serve in dessert glasses, sprinkled with chopped nuts.

DARTCHINOV TEY

Cinnamon tea

MAKES: 2 TEACUPS

4 pieces of cinnamon bark, each 8 cm (3½ inches) long sugar, to serve Leave the cinnamon bark intact and place in a long-handled coffee pot with 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water.

Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and leave to boil gently for 15 minutes.

Remove the cinnamon bark and pour the tea into teacups. Serve the sugar separately.



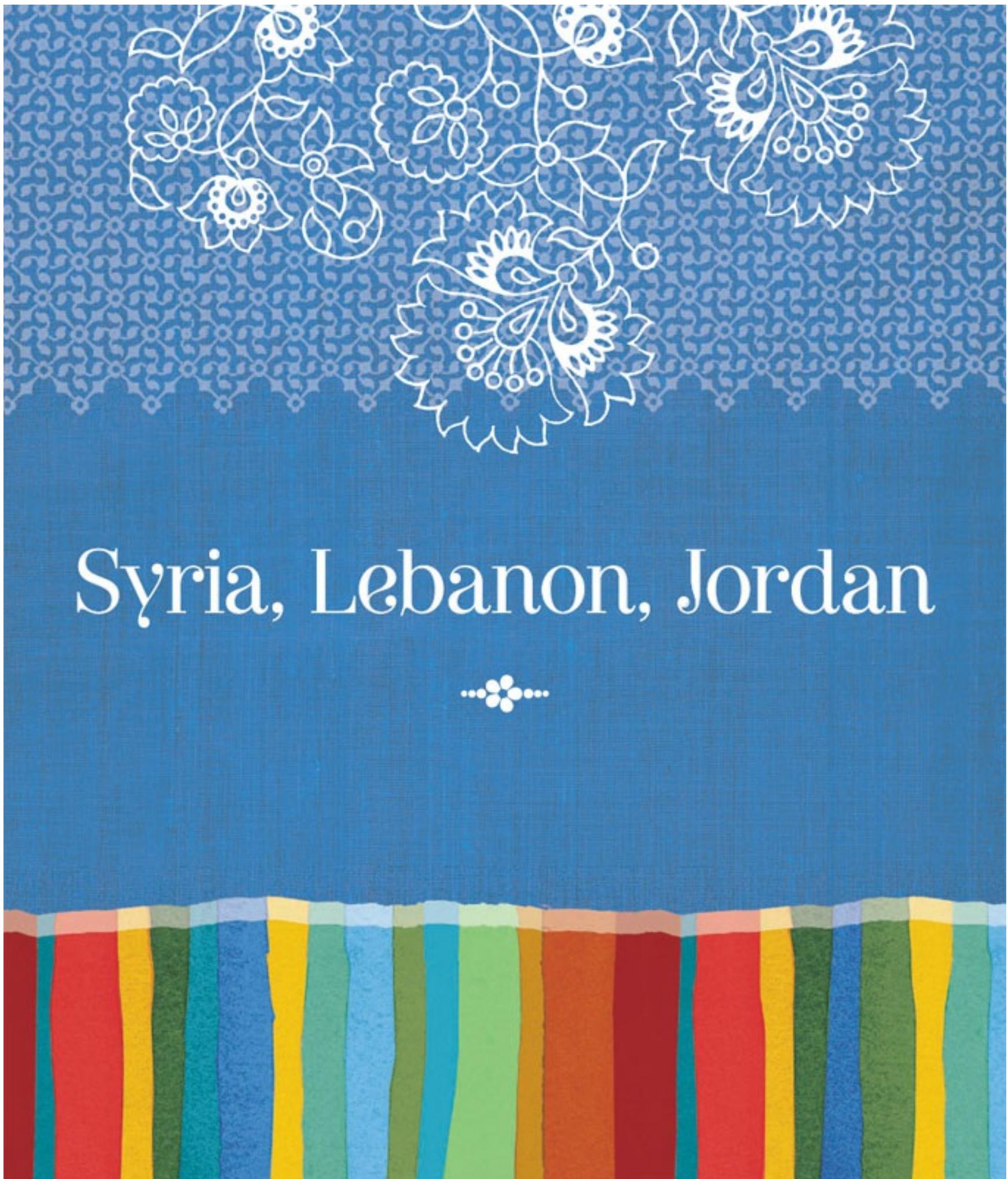
TAN

Yoghurt drink MAKES: ABOUT 750 ML (25 FL OZ/3 CUPS) In many countries in the region, a yoghurt beverage is served with meals. It is most refreshing, particularly in summer. In Turkey and Iran it is called ayran and abdug respectively; in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan it is ayraan when salt is used, and laban bi sikkar when sweetened with sugar. Tan accompanies every Armenian meal.

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) yoghurt pinch of salt Beat the yoghurt in a blender or bowl until smooth.

Gradually add 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water, beating constantly. If the yoghurt is too thick, add a little more water, as yoghurts vary in consistency.

Beat in the salt and chill well before serving.



Syria, Lebanon, Jordan





SYRIA, LEBANON, JORDAN

In writing this book I was faced with many a dilemma. This chapter was one of them. Should I treat each country separately, or place them together? So many dishes, though different in name, are basically the same, and are claimed by each nation. In the interests of avoiding repetition it seemed best to put them together. You will find a mixture of Arabic dialects in the names because recipes were given to me by Lebanese, Syrians, Jordanians and Palestinians.

The area which is now Lebanon, Syria and Jordan has played a significant part in history for thousands of years, a trading link with East and West and a melting pot of Arabic cultures and creeds. Their dishes have been developed through the wide variety of foods available and the diverse nature of the people in the cities, towns and the remotest desert areas. Collectively this has produced a cuisine that epitomises the Arabic people, adopted by other nations in the region, and that has in turn adopted dishes from its neighbours.

THE FLAVOUR OF ARABIC FOODS

In my time I have tried many a kibbeh, some excellent, others good, and an occasional disappointing one. The excellence of an Arabic cook is measured by their kibbeh, and in trying to find out how a cook goes about making an excellent kibbeh or a kibbeh bil sanieh, I was left thoroughly bewildered, since no two cooks seemed to agree. Keep the mixture cold, I was told; it doesn't matter, said someone else. Use only hogget, not lamb, for cooked kibbeh; lamb is fine if it is not too young. Bake it for a long time; bake it for a short time. What confusion! Try my [Kibbeh Bil Sanieh](#) and you can start on the merry-goround of kibbeh-making! I am dizzy!

One modernisation that will probably have traditional kibbeh-makers throw their hands up in horror is the use of the food processor. But try it before you condemn its use. Though I enjoy using a mortar and pestle, I lack the stamina to use it for making kibbeh. Furthermore, I doubt if many cooks do use one away from their native home, as even the hand-operated food grinder makes light of the task in comparison.

Following kibbeh in popularity is tabbouleh, the delicious parsley and burghul (bulgur) salad of the region. Again there will be those who disagree with my recipe — more about that in the introduction to the recipe [Tabbouleh](#).

Parsley, mint, the understated spiciness of cinnamon and allspice, the somewhat acidic flavour of yoghurt, the

refreshing tartness of lemon, the fruitiness of olive oil, the earthiness of burghul, tahini, eggplant (aubergine), dried beans, rice — these are the flavours of the cuisine of this region. Never overpowering, subtly blended, a delight to the palate.

Arabic hospitality is frequently expressed with the offering of meze, a variety of appetisers only limited by the availability of ingredients and the capacity of the cook to prepare them. [Hummus bi Tahini](#), [Baba Ghanoush](#) and [Bakdounis bi Tahini](#) are three bread dips that are almost always on hand for meze as they keep very well in the refrigerator. With the food processor, these dips can be prepared very quickly and efficiently.

More time-consuming in their preparation, but nevertheless prepared frequently, are mihsni warak enib (stuffed grape vine leaves). Recipes for these most popular morsels are found in the chapters on Armenia and Cyprus; these are similar to the Arabic versions.

A diligent cook prepares pastries and stores them in the freezer, to be reheated at a moment's notice. Fatayer, sfiha and lahm bi'ajeen — delicious spinach pies and flat or shaped lamb pies and rolls — are piled on platters and served with yoghurt or lemon wedges. Khoubiz bread dough, a kind of shortcrust pastry, or the fine fillo pastry can form the basis of the pies and rolls. You can take short cuts by using frozen bread dough for some of them, if it is available in your region, and the advantages of fillo pastry are already well known.

Other mezes include Labneh Makbus ([yoghurt cheese balls](#); [Tabbouleh](#)), a good salad to have on hand for any situation; Falafel ([dried bean croquettes](#)), and fried or baked kibbeh balls. All these can be prepared ahead: store labneh and tabbouleh as directed in the recipes; falafel and kibbeh balls freeze well and may be defrosted and heated in a 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) oven. With modern refrigeration, freezers and food preparation appliances, the Arabic cook has a much easier task entertaining than their predecessors had, even in their native land.

All meze are served with [Khoubiz](#), the Lebanese flat bread now so widely available to the Westerner. Even if your local store does not keep it in stock, you will find the recipe given quite easy to follow, particularly if you bake bread. The Lebanese khoubiz sorj, and the Palestinian and Jordanian shirak are one and the same. The same dough is rolled and stretched as thinly as possible without breaking it, and baked on a large metal dome called a sorj. The sorj is heated curved side up over a fire until very hot, and the bread draped over it. Cooking time is short — about 3 minutes — and after cooking the bread is wrapped in a cloth to keep it soft. The sorj is available in varying sizes, but I have found that a good iron Chinese wok inverted over a charcoal fire works very well, even if the breads are not as large as they should be. Bread sheets, as they are commonly called, are cut into squares and rolled up with grilled meats and salad ingredients for an Arabic-style hamburger. Khoubiz bread has a convenient pocket for the same kind of filling, or anything you would conceivably put between two slices of bread.

Tahini is a most important ingredient in the Arabic cooking of the region. It is a paste made from toasted sesame seeds; sometimes a little experimentation is required to find a blend to your liking, as they do vary in quality. I have found considerable variation between tahinis, though they all separate to some degree. Store the unopened jars upside down for some time before use; this way the blending usually required is minimised considerably.

The making of yoghurt is an art handed down from mother to daughter and is almost a daily occurrence in traditional homes. Instructions have been given in the introductory chapter of the book, with two methods detailed. It is through the cooking of this region that I learned how to stabilise yoghurt, and for those who might be watching their saturated fat intake, cooked skim milk yoghurt, [Laban Mutboukh](#), is an excellent substitute for sour cream. The people of the region never, ever, serve yoghurt with fish. I really do not know why; the different reasons I have been given have varied considerably.

The pastries of the region are renowned worldwide: every Western city now has Lebanese or Syrian pastry

shops. I have always made it a practice to patronise such shops as I have found their pastries superb. My favourite version of baklava is the Lebanese [Baklawa Be'aj](#). In my quest to find and develop this recipe for the home I had a problem finding a name for it. Though to me the shape resembles the petals of a flower, it seems that the Lebanese or Syrian is reminded of a cloth-wrapped bundle called a be'aj, and this is the name they give this pastry, though it is generally referred to as baklava. The other version of baklava I have given, [Kul'wa'shkur](#), has a delightful translation, which describes the pastry admirably — 'eat and praise'.

EATING IN THE STYLE OF THE REGION

With such a diverse group of peoples, it is difficult to give a general method of serving a meal, as the meal could be taken in a city home, a village dwelling or a desert tent. As I describe the traditional Arabic feast as served in a tent in the Gulf States chapter, I shall concentrate on the city or village meal service.

Once again foreign influences have been felt widely in the area and Beirut is considered a very Western city, though still with an essentially Arabic character. The meal is likely to be set on a conventional table spread with a cloth, or it could be set up on a large, low, brass table, depending on the atmosphere that the hosts wish to create. The one single feature of any meal is abundance, with a large variety of foods served at the meal. There could be kibbeh prepared in one of the many ways, tabbouleh, perhaps a fish dish, rice, a vegetable stew, crisp cos (romaine) lettuce, and other salad ingredients, khoubiz, pickles, olives and fresh fruit. Individual serving plates, cutlery and glassware are part of the table appointments. The setting could be as refined as any Western dining room, or colourfully Arabic in flavour. After the meal, coffee is taken in a separate room, perhaps with sweets, though these are more likely to be eaten at a later time. With coffee comes conversation and sharing the narghile, the water pipe of the area.

COOKING METHODS

The journ and madaqqa, the mortar and pestle of the region, is a necessary piece of cooking equipment. The mortar is usually very large and made of stone for kibbeh-making, with smaller versions in stone or brass for hummus and other purées, and for pounding spices. A sanieh — large, round baking tray — is an ideal cooking utensil for the oven and readily available at Middle Eastern food stores. For shaping ma'amoul, a tabi can also be obtained from such stores, though I have given a means of shaping using equipment you will have on hand. Coring zucchini (courgettes) is an art that requires an implement more slender than an apple corer, and zucchini corers are also available.

For general cooking, standard pots and pans may be adapted, though I recommend heavy-based pans, particularly for thick soups and dishes containing yoghurt.

INGREDIENTS FOR ARABIC COOKING

Stock up on fine and coarse burghul, tahini, dried beans, chickpeas, dried mint and a spice mix called za'tar, used as a topping with oil on khoubiz bread before baking. Flatleaf parsley is used in abundance, and it is worthwhile having a sizeable patch in your herb garden. The favoured fats are olive oil and [Samneh](#) (clarified butter, though

substitutes can be used in many recipes. Where a recipe's flavour is dependent on the right oil or fat, no substitute is given.

Rosewater and orange flower water are required for flavouring syrups and pastries; and you will need walnuts, almonds and pine nuts, with the occasional use of unsalted pistachio nuts. Salted nuts, and toasted and salted chickpeas and pumpkin seeds, are favoured for nibbling with arak, the potent aniseed-flavoured spirit of the region, and no Arabic household of this region would be without them.

Dibs (carob syrup) is also very much part of the cuisine. It is mixed with tahini and spread on khoubiz.

LABNEH

Yoghurt cheese

MAKES: ABOUT 500 G (1 LB 2 OZ/2 CUPS)

Yoghurt made from full-cream milk must be used when making Labneh.

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz/6 cups) Laban ([yoghurt I](#),

2 teaspoons salt

Measure the yoghurt into a bowl and stir in the salt.

Place the yoghurt in the centre of a doubled-over piece of muslin (cheesecloth), or a piece of soft cotton cloth. Gather up the corners and tie them securely.

Suspend the bundle from a fixed object over a bowl and leave to drain for at least 10 hours. It is best to do this at night when it is cooler.

When well drained and the consistency of ricotta cheese, transfer the cheese to a bowl. Cover and store in the refrigerator.

Use as directed in recipes, or as a spread on [Khoubiz](#) or other flat bread.

Labneh is a popular breakfast food; it is spread on bread with a drizzle of olive oil and eaten with olives.

LABNEH MAKBUS

Yoghurt cheese balls MAKES: ABOUT 500 G (1 LB 2 OZ) 1 quantity Labneh (left) olive oil, to cover

Make the Labneh as directed in the recipe (left). When well drained, take a tablespoonful at a time and roll into smooth balls. Place the balls side by side on a tray.

Chill the cheese balls in the refrigerator for several hours, or until firm. When firm and a little dried, pack them into a [sterilised jar](#) and cover with olive oil. Seal and store at room temperature.

When serving as an appetiser or for spreading on flat bread, serve in a bowl with a little of the oil, so that the oil may be used to soften the cheese.



LABAN MUTBOUKH

Cooked yoghurt

MAKES: ABOUT 500 G (1 LB 2 OZ/2 CUPS) Yoghurt is used in Lebanese and other Middle Eastern dishes in much the same way as sour cream is used in Western cuisine. If goat's milk yoghurt is available, it may be added as it is to any dish that requires yoghurt to be cooked for a time.

However, the yoghurt generally available (or made at home) is made with cow's milk. This curdles when heated for a long period, so it has to be stabilised beforehand.

Cow's milk yoghurt can be added to a cooked dish just before serving without being previously stabilised, providing the sauce is not allowed to boil.

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) yoghurt

1 egg white

2 teaspoons cornflour (cornstarch)

1 teaspoon salt

Place the yoghurt in a heavy-based saucepan.

Beat the egg white with a fork until frothy, then stir it into the yoghurt with the cornflour and salt. Stir in the same direction until thoroughly combined.

Place the pan over medium heat and stir constantly with a wooden spoon. Heat until the yoghurt begins to boil, stirring continuously in the same direction. This is important.

Reduce the heat and leave to simmer gently, uncovered, for 3–5 minutes, until thick.

Use as required in recipes.

KAREESHEE

Cottage cheese

This is the Syrian version of the Greek Mizithra, and as there is little difference, simply follow the directions for making [Mizithra](#).

However, if you wish to make Kareeshee bi Limoon (below) — a whey cheese similar to the Italian ricotta cheese — be sure to collect all the whey.

KAREESHEE BI LIMOON

Whey cheese

whey from making Kareeshee (above) 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) whole milk juice of 1 lemon, strained

Heat the whey in a large saucepan over low heat until lukewarm. Pour in the milk and continue to heat until the milk rises to the surface, keeping the heat low.

Add the lemon juice and leave until the cheese thickens, with the pan still over low heat. This takes about 15 minutes.

Line a colander or large sieve with a doubled-over piece of muslin (cheesecloth), set it over a bowl and ladle the cheese into it. Leave until well drained, scraping down the sides of the muslin occasionally.

Gather the ends and tie them securely. Suspend the bundle from a fixed object over a bowl and leave until completely drained.

Remove the cheese from the cloth and store in a sealed container in the refrigerator until required. It will keep for up to 1 week.

Use as for ricotta cheese in recipes.

SAMNEH

While ghee is popularly used in place of samneh, the flavour is not quite the same as the clarified or drawn butter prepared by the Arabic cook.

Melt salted or unsalted butter in a saucepan over low heat. When the froth rises, skim it off — it contains some of the milk solids, and the salt if salted butter is used.

Line a sieve with a doubled-over piece of muslin (cheesecloth). Pour the clear oil through the sieve into a container, leaving the milk solids in the pan. These can be combined with the froth for adding to meat and chicken stews, or tossed through vegetables not prepared in the Middle Eastern tradition.

BAKDOUNIS BI TAHINI

Parsley and tahini sauce

MAKES: ABOUT 400 G (14 OZ/1½ CUPS) Follow the directions for the Taratour bi Tahini recipe (right), adding 1 large handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley after the 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) water and all the lemon juice has been blended into the tahini. Beat well and add more water only if it is necessary.

At the end, add coarsely chopped parsley to the food processor or blender and process just long enough to chop it finely; the parsley must still be visible.

Serve as a dip as part of a meze, or as an accompaniment to simple fish dishes.

✿ Note: In Cyprus this sauce is known as tahinosalata.

TARATOUR BI TAHINI Tahini sauce

MAKES: ABOUT 350 G (12 OZ/1¼ CUPS)

2 garlic cloves

½ teaspoon salt 135 g (4½ oz/½ cup) tahini 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) lemon juice **Crush the garlic cloves with the salt in a mixing bowl. Gradually add the tahini and beat well with a wooden spoon.**

Beat in a little water and lemon juice alternately. The water thickens the mixture, and the lemon juice thins it. Add all the lemon juice and enough water to give the desired consistency, thick or thin, depending on its intended use; you will need about 60–125 ml (2–4 fl oz/¼–½ cup) water in total.

Add more salt to taste; the sauce should be tart in flavour. Use as directed in recipes.

✿ Note: If using a food processor or blender, blend or process the tahini and garlic for a few seconds to crush the garlic. Add the lemon juice and water alternately, a little at a time, until the desired consistency is reached. Blend in salt to taste.

HUMMUS BI TAHINI

Chickpea and sesame purée

MAKES: ABOUT 660 G (1 LB 7 OZ/3 CUPS) Even if you use a modern appliance for making this popular dish, the chickpeas must first be separated from their skins for a successful hummus. Preparation time can be shortened by removing the skins either after the initial soaking, or after boiling. See [Skinning pulses](#) for more details.

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) dried chickpeas 1½ teaspoons salt

90 g (3 oz/⅓ cup) tahini

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) lemon juice

2 garlic cloves, crushed

For serving

olive oil, for drizzling

chopped flat-leaf parsley

paprika or cayenne pepper, for sprinkling Wash the chickpeas well, cover with 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water and soak for 12 hours, or overnight.

Drain the chickpeas, reserving the soaking water. Place the chickpeas and soaking water in a saucepan. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and leave to boil gently for 2 hours.

Add 1 teaspoon of the salt and cook for a further 1 hour, or until the chickpeas are very tender.

Drain, reserving some of the cooking liquid and 1 tablespoon of the chickpeas.

Press the chickpeas through a sieve or food mill, adding about 2 tablespoons of the cooking liquid to separate the last of the chickpeas from the skins.

Slowly stir the tahini and most of the lemon juice into the purée.

Crush the garlic with the remaining ½ teaspoon of salt using a mortar and pestle and add to the purée. Adjust the flavour and consistency with lemon juice or cooking liquid and add more salt if necessary. Hummus should be thick and smooth.

Spread in a shallow serving dish, swirling it with the back of a spoon. Serve drizzled with olive oil and garnished with the reserved chickpeas, chopped parsley and a sprinkling of paprika or cayenne pepper.

✿ Note: If you are using a blender or food processor, first soak the chickpeas to separate the skins (see recipe [introduction](#)). Add the soaked chickpeas to the processor with the remaining ingredients, holding back some lemon juice and salt to adjust the flavour. Blend or process until thick and smooth.



BABA GHANOUSH

Eggplant and sesame purée SERVES: 4–6

1 eggplant (aubergine), about 375 g (13 oz) **60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice** **65 g (2½ oz/¼ cup) tahini**

2 garlic cloves

2 teaspoons salt, or to taste **1 tablespoon olive oil**

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

Grill the eggplant over a charcoal fire for 30–40 minutes, turning frequently. Alternatively, place on the centre shelf of a preheated 200°C (400°F/Gas 6) oven and cook until soft, again turning often.

Peel off the skin while the eggplant is still hot. Remove the stem, and the end of the eggplant, if firm.

Chop the flesh and pound to a purée using a mortar and pestle, or purée using a blender or food processor. Blend in most of the lemon juice and gradually add the tahini.

Crush the garlic to a paste with 1 teaspoon of the salt and add to the eggplant. Beat well and adjust the flavour with more lemon juice and salt. Beat in the oil and parsley.

Spread in a shallow serving dish, swirling it with the back of a spoon. Garnish with parsley and serve with [Khoubiz](#) as an appetiser.

✿ Note: If using a food processor or blender, use about 4 parsley sprigs instead of the chopped parsley. Add towards the end and blend until the parsley is chopped, but still visible. If making the dish ahead, store it in a sealed container in the refrigerator and bring to room temperature before serving.

LSANAT MTABBLI

Lamb tongue salad

SERVES: 6–8

10 lamb tongues

3 teaspoons salt

1 garlic clove, halved 1 quantity Fattoush dressing, or ½ quantity Bakdounis bi Tahini

2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

Wash the lamb tongues well, scrubbing if necessary. Place in a saucepan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil.

Add the salt and garlic. Reduce the heat to low, then cover and simmer for 1½–2 hours, or until the tongues are tender when tested with a skewer.

Drain the tongues and cool a little. Take off the skin and gristle and remove the bone from the root end. Cut the meat into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes and place in a serving bowl.

Pour the Fattoush dressing or Bakdounis bi Tahini over the tongues and toss well.

Serve sprinkled with the parsley, at room temperature or chilled, as an appetiser or part of a main meal.

TABBOULEH

Burghul and parsley salad

SERVES: 6–8

I once prepared this salad on my television cookery show and received much criticism from members of the Lebanese community in Sydney. It was said that I used far too much burghul (bulgur) and should have mixed the tomato through the salad, not just used it as a garnish. I concede the latter point, with one reservation. If you wish to have the salad on hand for a few days in the refrigerator for convenience, then leave the tomato out and add it to the portion being served.

As to the former criticism, I still believe tabbouleh should have a large proportion of burghul to flat-leaf parsley. While in the Middle East I spoke with many excellent exponents of Lebanese cookery, and found they agreed with me.

If you beg to differ, then reduce the burghul to 45 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) and increase the chopped parsley to 3 large handfuls or more.

130 g (4½ oz/¾ cup) fine burghul (bulgur)

1 large bunch flat-leaf parsley

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) finely chopped spring onions (scallions)

3 tablespoons finely chopped mint

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil

2 tablespoons lemon juice

1½ teaspoons salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 firm ripe tomatoes

For serving

crisp lettuce leaves

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice, mixed with ½ teaspoon salt

Place the burghul in a bowl and cover with 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) cold water. Leave to soak for 30 minutes.

Drain the burghul through a fine sieve, pressing with the back of a spoon to extract the moisture. Spread over a cloth and leave to dry further.

Meanwhile, prepare the parsley. Wash well, shake off the excess moisture and remove any thick stalks. Wrap in a tea towel (dish towel) and place in the refrigerator to crisp and dry.

Put the burghul in a mixing bowl and add the spring onion. Squeeze the mixture with your hands so the burghul absorbs the onion flavour.

Chop the parsley fairly coarsely, then measure it (you need 2 cups) and add it to the burghul with the mint.

Beat the oil with the lemon juice and stir in the salt and pepper. Add to the salad and toss well.

Peel the [tomatoes](#), then remove the seeds and dice the flesh. Gently mix through the salad. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour before serving.

Serve in a salad bowl lined with crisp lettuce leaves. Serve the lemon juice and salt mixture separately in a jug so that it may be added according to individual taste.

ZAYTUN MSABBAH

Spiced olives

fresh green olives

105 g (3½ oz/⅓ cup) rock salt per 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) water 3 small, dried hot chillies for each 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) olives

Either leave the olives as they are, or cut three or four slits in each with a fine-bladed stainless steel knife or stanley knife. Discard any damaged olives.

Pack the olives into a [sterilised](#) glass jar or jars and cover with cold water. Soak for 3 days, changing the water each day. Measure the last amount of water.

Measure the same amount of fresh water into a saucepan and add the appropriate amount of rock salt — 105 g (3½ oz/⅓ cup) to each litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) water. Heat and stir until the salt dissolves. Leave to cool.

Pack the chillies into the jar or jars, placing them among the olives. Pour the cooled brine on top, filling the jars. Remove any air bubbles by inserting a fine skewer down the side of a jar and seal with a plastic lid. Store in a cool, dark place for 5 months before using.

To serve, remove the required amount of olives, rinse them under cold water, then drain and place in a bowl. Squeeze the juice of a lemon over the olives and drizzle with 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil. Stir to combine and leave for 1–2 hours before serving.



KABES EL KARNABEET

Pickled cauliflower

1 cauliflower

40 g (1½ oz/⅓ cup) pickling salt or table salt 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) white vinegar 1 beetroot (beet), optional 2 garlic cloves

2 hot chillies

Break the cauliflower into florets and place in a bowl of salted water to remove any insects. Leave for 10 minutes, then drain and rinse well. Drain again.

Heat 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water in a saucepan with the pickling salt until the water is boiling and the salt has dissolved. Leave to cool, then add the vinegar.

Peel the beetroot, if using. Cut into slices, then cut the slices in half.

Pack the cauliflower into two [sterilised jars](#), placing slices of beetroot between the layers, if using, and adding 1 garlic clove and 1 hot chilli to each jar.

Fill the jars with the pickling solution and seal with glass or plastic lids. Store in a cool place for 1 week before using.

Once opened, store in the refrigerator. Unopened pickles can be kept in a cool, dark place.

FATAYER SBANIKH

Triangle spinach pies

MAKES: ABOUT 30

½ quantity Khoubiz dough Spinach filling

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) spinach

85 ml (3 fl oz/⅓ cup) olive oil

1 large onion, finely chopped

80 g (3 oz/½ cup) pine nuts, or 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) chopped walnuts ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Make the Khoubiz dough as directed, using the full amount of yeast specified, even though making half the quantity. Cover and leave to rise.

Meanwhile, make the filling. Remove the roots and any damaged leaves from the spinach. Wash the spinach well in several changes of water, then shake off the excess moisture. Chop the leaves and stalks fairly finely.

Place the spinach in a deep non-aluminium saucepan and cook over medium heat, uncovered, for 5–8 minutes, or until the leaves are wilted and the juices run out. Toss with a fork during cooking.

Tip the spinach into a colander and press with the back of a spoon to remove as much moisture as possible.

Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the spinach and fry for 5 minutes, stirring frequently.

Add the nuts, nutmeg and lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Cook for a further 5 minutes, or until the moisture has evaporated. Leave to cool.

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Punch down the dough and roll out on a lightly floured work surface until 5 mm (¼ inch) thick. Cut into 10 cm (4 inch) rounds. Place the rounds on a cloth and cover with another cloth.

Place a tablespoon of the spinach filling in the middle of each round, then bring up the sides at three points to form a triangular shape. Press the edges very firmly with your fingertips to seal the pies completely. Take care not to let the oily juices of the filling seep onto the edge of the dough. If this happens, dip a finger in flour and dab it onto the dough before sealing.

Place the pies close together on a lightly oiled baking tray and bake for 15 minutes, or until lightly coloured and cooked. For a golden brown top, place briefly under a hot grill (broiler). Serve hot or warm.

ARDISHAWKI MIHSI

Stuffed artichokes

SERVES: 4

8 large globe artichokes

juice of 1 lemon

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 onion, finely chopped

40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb 1 tablespoon finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 40 g (1½ oz) butter

2 tablespoons plain (all-purpose) flour Wash and prepare the artichokes following the directions for whole artichokes.

Open them carefully with your fingers to expose the choke and remove it with a teaspoon. Drop the prepared artichokes into a bowl of cold water with half the lemon juice.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the pine nuts and stir until lightly browned.

Tip the mixture into a bowl and add the meat, parsley and 1 teaspoon of the salt. Season with pepper and mix well.

Drain the artichokes and fill the centres with the meat mixture, forcing in as much as they will take, and mounding the meat on top.

Arrange the artichokes upright in a large saucepan, in a single layer if possible. Add 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and the remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Sprinkle the remaining lemon juice over the artichokes.

Cover and bring to just below the boil. Simmer gently for 45–60 minutes, or until the artichokes are tender.

Drain off the liquid into a measuring jug and top it up to 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) with water, if needed. Keep the artichokes hot.

Melt the butter in a small saucepan and stir in the flour. Cook for 1 minute, then add the reserved cooking liquid, stirring constantly. Bring to the boil, still stirring, then boil gently for 2 minutes.

Arrange the artichokes on a platter and drizzle with the sauce. Serve hot.

FALAFEL

Dried bean croquettes

MAKES: ABOUT 35

175 g (6 oz/1 cup) dried broad beans (fava beans) **220 g (8 oz/1 cup) dried chickpeas** **1 onion, roughly chopped**

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley **pinch of ground hot chilli or chilli pepper**

1 teaspoon ground coriander

½ teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) **salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season** **oil, for deep-frying**

Put the beans in a bowl and cover with 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) cold water. Leave to soak for 48 hours, changing the water once each day, or twice in hot weather.

Meanwhile, soak the chickpeas in 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) cold water for 12–15 hours, in a cool place.

Drain the beans and chickpeas. Remove the [skins](#) as directed, in the section ‘Skinning pulses’. The skin may be left on the chickpeas.

Combine the uncooked beans and chickpeas with the onion and garlic. Pass through a food grinder twice, using a fine screen, or process in two batches in a food processor using a steel blade.

Combine the mixture with the parsley, spices and bicarbonate of soda. Season with salt and pepper and knead together well, then leave to rest for 30 minutes.

Shape 1 tablespoon of the mixture at a time into balls, then flatten into thick patties 4 cm (1½ inches) across. Place on a tray and leave for 30 minutes at room temperature.

Heat 10 cm (4 inches) of oil in a deep saucepan to 170°C (338°F). Deep-fry in hot oil, six to eight at a time, and cook for 5–6 minutes, turning to brown evenly. When well browned, remove and drain on paper towels.

Serve hot as an appetiser with [Taratour bi Tahini](#), or in split [Khoubiz](#) with the Taratour bi Tahini and salad vegetables.



KHOUBIZ

Lebanese flat bread

MAKES: 8 FLAT BREADS

Of all the Middle Eastern breads, this is the most widely known. In recent years its popularity has increased enormously as Western tastes become more adventurous.

Though widely available, khoubiz is easily made in a domestic oven or electric frying pan. Though the home product is not as evenly browned, it has a better flavour and finer texture. Traditionally, khoubiz contains no shortening, but I find a little oil in the dough improves the flavour and texture. Many Lebanese cooks also add oil.

You will find more details on baking, storing and serving Khoubiz in the '[Bread](#)' section.

900 g (2 lb/6 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

1½ teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon sugar

2 tablespoons oil

Sift the flour into a large mixing bowl and warm in a low oven.

Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water. Add another 440 ml (15 fl oz/1¾ cups) warm water and stir in the salt and sugar.

Remove and reserve about 300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) flour from the bowl. Pour the yeast liquid into the centre and stir in some flour from the side of the bowl to make a thick liquid. Cover with a cloth and leave in a warm place until frothy.

Stir in the flour remaining in the bowl, adding the oil gradually. Beat until smooth, either by hand for 10 minutes, or with an electric mixer using a dough hook for 5 minutes.

Sprinkle some of the reserved flour onto a surface. Turn out the dough and knead for 10 minutes, using more flour as required. The dough is ready when it is smooth and satiny, with a slightly wrinkled texture. Shape the dough into a ball.

Put the dough in an oiled bowl, then turn it over to coat the top with oil. Cover with plastic wrap and leave to rise in a warm place for 1–1½ hours, or until almost doubled in size.

Preheat the oven to 250°C (480°F/Gas 9).

Punch down the dough and turn it out onto a lightly floured work surface. Knead for a minute or so, then divide into eight equal pieces, rolling each into a ball.

Roll each ball into a 25 cm (10 inch) circle and place on a lightly floured cloth. Cover with another cloth and

leave for a further 20 minutes.

Heat a large baking tray or flat griddle on the lowest shelf of an electric oven; in a gas oven, select the section of the oven with the most even heat, probably near the top.

Place a round of dough on a lightly floured baking tray with one flat edge, or on a piece of plywood, spreading it evenly. Shake to ensure that it will slide off easily.

Rub the heated baking tray or griddle with a wad of paper towels dipped in oil, then slide the dough onto it.

Bake for 4–5 minutes, or until the dough puffs up like a balloon. If you would like it browned on top, turn the bread quickly and leave for a minute.

Remove the bread from the oven and wrap in a cloth to keep it warm and soft. Bake the remaining rounds in the same way.

✿ Note: To bake the flat breads in an electric frying pan — a good alternative if your gas oven does not heat evenly — preheat the frying pan on the highest setting with the metal lid on, vent closed. When heated, oil the base quickly and slide the dough onto the base. Cover and cook for 3 minutes, then remove the lid and turn the bread over.

MNA'ISH BI ZA'TAR

Seasoned flat bread MAKES: 8 FLAT BREADS

Make the [Khoubiz](#) dough as directed, but do not rest it for 20 minutes after shaping the rounds. Flute the edge of each round with your fingertips and generously brush each round with olive oil. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons Za'tar spice mix (see [Mint](#)) evenly over the 8 rounds and bake as for Khoubiz. Do not turn it over; brown the top under a hot grill (broiler) if desired.

RIZ MUFALFAL

Plain rice

SERVES: 5–6

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) good-quality long-grain white rice 2 tablespoons Samneh or ghee

2 teaspoons salt, or to taste

Place the rice in a bowl and cover with cold water. Stir with your fingers to loosen the starch, then drain. Rinse under running water, then drain thoroughly.

Heat the Samneh in a heavy-based saucepan. Add the rice and stir over medium heat for 2 minutes, or until the grains are well coated with fat.

Pour in 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) hot water and add the salt. Stir occasionally until boiling, reduce the heat, cover the pan tightly and leave over low heat for 25 minutes.

Turn off the heat and leave for 10 minutes before serving — the rice may be left longer if desired.

Fluff up the grains with a fork before serving.

ADAS BIS SILQ

Lentil and silverbeet soup SERVES: 5–6

**280 g (10 oz/1½ cups) brown lentils
8–10 leaves silverbeet (Swiss chard)
60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil
1 large onion, finely chopped**

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

**15 g (½ oz/¼ cup) chopped fresh coriander (cilantro) leaves
60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
lemon wedges, to serve**

Khoubiz (left), to serve

Wash the lentils well and place in a heavy-based saucepan with 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) cold water. Bring to the boil, skimming if necessary, then cover and simmer gently for 1 hour, or until the lentils are soft.

Meanwhile, wash the silverbeet well and cut off the stems. (The stems may be used as a separate vegetable in other meals.) Slit the leaves down the middle, then shred coarsely.

Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the garlic and cook for a few seconds longer. Add the shredded silverbeet and fry, stirring often, until the leaves wilt.

When the lentils are soft, add the onion and silverbeet mixture. Stir in the coriander and lemon juice and season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for a further 15–20 minutes.

Serve the soup in deep plates, with lemon wedges for squeezing into the soup according to individual taste.

Khoubiz or other bread is a necessary accompaniment.

SHURABAT AL KIBBEH

Kibbeh soup

SERVES: 6

½ quantity Kibbeh mixture 50 g (2 oz/⅓ cup) pine nuts

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) Samneh

1 large onion, finely chopped

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) short-grain white rice, washed salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

Khoubiz, to serve Make the Kibbeh as directed and shape into balls the size of walnuts. Make a hole in each ball, insert ½ teaspoon of the pine nuts in each, then re-form into balls.

Heat the Samneh in a large frying pan and brown the kibbeh balls, shaking the pan so they keep their round shape and brown evenly. Remove to a plate, leaving the Samneh in the frying pan.

Gently fry the onion in the Samneh until translucent and soft, stirring often. Add 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water and bring to the boil, stirring to dissolve the browned sediment.

Tip the pan contents into a deep saucepan. Add 1.25–1.5 litres (42½–51 fl oz/6–7 cups) water, the cinnamon and rice, and season with salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, stirring occasionally. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Add the kibbeh balls, then cover and simmer for a further 20 minutes. Ladle into bowls, sprinkle with the parsley and serve with warm Khoubiz or other flat bread.



SHURABAT MOZAAT

Meat soup

SERVES: 6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) lamb soup bones 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lamb stewing meat, cubed salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

3 small carrots, quartered

70 g (2½ oz/½ cup) chopped celery 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes 110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) short-grain white rice, or 100 g (3½ oz/1 cup) fine noodles, crushed

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

Rinse the bones and place in a large saucepan. Add the meat, cover with 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water and bring to the boil, skimming when necessary.

When well skimmed, add the cinnamon and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for 45 minutes.

Add the vegetables, then cover and cook for a further 30 minutes. Remove and discard the soup bones.

Stir in the washed rice or crushed noodles and adjust the seasoning. Cover and simmer for a further 20–25 minutes. Remove the cinnamon.

Serve in soup bowls, sprinkled with the parsley.

FATTOUSH

Toasted bread salad

SERVES: 6

1 Khoubiz

6 cos (romaine) lettuce leaves, or 4 other lettuce leaves, crisped 1 slender green cucumber

2 tomatoes

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) chopped spring onions (scallions) 3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

3 tablespoons chopped mint

155 g (5 oz/1 cup) chopped green capsicum (pepper) 60 g (2 oz/1 cup) purslane (ba'le or chickweed), optional (see [Peppers, Sweet](#)); choose the leaves near the top of the stalks and the young leafy ends Salad dressing

1 garlic clove

1 teaspoon salt

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) lemon juice 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil freshly ground black pepper, to taste Toast the Khoubiz under a hot grill (broiler) until golden brown. Break into small pieces, or cut into small squares using kitchen scissors. Set aside.

Shred the lettuce or break into small pieces. Peel the cucumber, cut into quarters lengthways, then cut into chunks. Cut the tomatoes into small cubes.

To make the dressing, crush the garlic in a bowl with the salt and mix to a paste. Stir in the remaining dressing ingredients and beat thoroughly with a fork.

Put all the salad vegetables and herbs in a salad bowl, with the bread on top. Pour over the dressing, toss well and serve.



BATATA MTABBLI

Potato salad

SERVES: 6

8 potatoes

1 onion, finely chopped 1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley ½ teaspoon dried mint salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 1 quantity Fattoush salad dressing (left) Scrub the potatoes, then cook them in their jackets in a saucepan of boiling salted water until tender. Drain and cool slightly, then peel and cut into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes.

Place the potatoes in a bowl with the onion and parsley. Sprinkle with the mint, rubbing it to a powder. Season with salt and pepper.

Make the salad dressing as directed in the Fattoush recipe (left) and pour over the potatoes. Toss and serve at room temperature.

SHURABAT AL KISHK

Soup with kishk

SERVES: 6

The preparation of kishk is a once-a-year effort when the wheat crop is harvested. Villagers, particularly in isolated areas, depend on kishk for nutritious winter breakfasts, and add it to soups for substance.

Basically kishk is burghul (bulgur) fermented with milk and yoghurt, a long process which all together takes 2 weeks. After the fermentation process, the mixture is salted, spread on cloth and allowed to dry thoroughly, then rubbed to a fine powder.

Middle Eastern food stores sell kishk, and although it is expensive, a little goes a long way. It is also used in Iran.

**1 tablespoon Samneh or oil 250 g (9 oz) lean minced (ground) lamb 1 large onion, finely chopped
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped**

1 cup kishk

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Heat the Samneh in a heavy-based saucepan and stir the lamb and onion over high heat until the meat loses its pink colour and is crumbly. Add the garlic and cook until the juices evaporate.

Stir in the kishk and cook over medium heat for 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove the pan from the heat and gradually add 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) cold water, stirring constantly. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Return to medium heat and stir constantly, until thickened and bubbling. The consistency should be that of a thick cream soup; add a little more water if necessary.

Remove from the heat and serve immediately.

✿ Note: This soup can be served at any time. For breakfast in Syria and Lebanon, it is often prepared without the meat and garlic.

KIBBEH BATATA BI SANIEH

Potato kibbeh

SERVES: 6–8

6 potatoes, about 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) in total 265 g (9½ oz/1½ cups) fine burghul (bulgur) 1 onion, grated

1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 teaspoon dried mint

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon 2–3 teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to taste 75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour, optional To finish

1 large onion, halved, and sliced 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) olive oil Scrub the potatoes, then cook them in a saucepan of boiling salted water until tender. Drain and cool, then peel and mash.

Place the burghul in a fine sieve and rinse with cold water. Press with the back of a spoon to extract the moisture, then tip into a large bowl and leave for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Add the potato to the burghul, along with the onion, parsley, mint, cinnamon and 2 teaspoons salt. Season with pepper and mix together. Taste and add more salt if necessary.

Knead well by hand, moistening the mixture occasionally with water. If the mixture is too soft, add enough flour to make a firm paste, kneading well.

To assemble the dish, spread the onion slices in a 25 × 30 cm (10 × 12 inch) baking dish, or a 30 cm (12 inch) round dish. Drizzle with half the oil. Dot the potato paste over the onions, then spread evenly with a spatula. Deeply score the top into diamond shapes using a sharp oiled knife. Drizzle the remaining oil evenly over the top.

Bake for 40 minutes, or until golden brown. Cool in the dish for 10 minutes if serving hot, otherwise serve at room temperature with salad.

MIHSI MALFUF BI ZAYT

Meatless cabbage rolls

SERVES: 6

1 cabbage, to give 24 leaves

3 garlic cloves

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon dried mint

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice **125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive oil** **Rice and chickpea stuffing**

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil

180 g (6 oz/1½ cups) chopped spring onions (scallions) **200 g (7 oz/1 cup) long-grain white rice** **200 g (7 oz/1 cup) drained, tinned chickpeas** **15 g (½ oz/½ cup) finely chopped flat-leaf parsley** **250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes** **½ teaspoon ground allspice**

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste **Start by making the stuffing. Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the spring onion for 2–3 minutes. Tip into a bowl and add the remaining stuffing ingredients. Season to taste with salt and pepper.**

Carefully separate the leaves from the head of cabbage. You will need 24 leaves, although larger leaves may be counted as two. Blanch the leaves in two or three batches in a large saucepan of boiling water for 5 minutes, or until limp — do not overcook.

Drain the leaves, then cut out and remove the larger end of the white centre rib in each leaf. Cut the larger leaves in half down the centre. Line the base of a deep saucepan with the ribs and any torn leaves.

Working one at a time, place a generous tablespoon of the stuffing on the base of each leaf. Roll up once, fold in the sides, then roll up into a firm package. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Crush the garlic with the salt and mix in the crumbled mint and lemon juice.

Pack the rolls in the lined pan, seam side down, close together, stacking them in layers, and sprinkling some of the garlic–lemon mixture and oil between each layer.

Invert a plate on top of the rolls to keep them intact during cooking. Pour in enough cold water to just cover the rolls and put the lid on firmly.

Bring to the boil over medium heat, then reduce the heat to low and simmer gently for 45 minutes.

Remove from the heat and set aside for 30 minutes. Serve lukewarm or cold.

WARAK MIHSI BI SILQ

Stuffed silverbeet leaves

Follow the Mihshi Malfuf bi Zayt recipe (left), substituting 1½ cups (300 g /10½ oz) cooked brown lentils for the chickpeas in the stuffing.

Instead of cabbage leaves, use silverbeet (Swiss chard) leaves, halved lengthways and cut into 10 cm (4 inch) squares. You will require about 50 squares.

Dip the leaves briefly in boiling water, or just run hot tap water over to soften them enough for handling. Drain, then place the squares shiny side down on a work surface.

Use one scant tablespoon of stuffing for each square and roll them up into small, neat rolls.

Finish as for the Mihshi Malfuf bi Zayt, omitting the dried mint and increasing the lemon juice to 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup).

KOUSA MIHSI BI LABAN

Stuffed zucchini with yoghurt

SERVES: 6–8 AS AN APPETISER, 4–5 AS A MAIN COURSE

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) evenly sized zucchini (courgettes); choose ones that are either small or medium in size **1 quantity Laban Mutboukh**

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 teaspoon dried mint

Stuffing

1 tablespoon Samneh or oil 1 onion, finely chopped

1 tablespoon pine nuts, optional

250 g (9 oz) minced (ground) lamb or beef 55 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) short-grain white rice

1 tablespoon chopped flat-leaf parsley

1/2 teaspoon ground allspice

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season

Wash the zucchini well and cut off the stem end. Using a vegetable or apple corer, hollow out each zucchini, leaving the rounded end intact. Try not to puncture the skin. Soak in salted water for 10 minutes, then drain.

Heat the Samneh or oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. If using pine nuts, add them to the pan after 10 minutes, and cook with the onions for at least another 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Tip the mixture into a bowl. Add the remaining stuffing ingredients and 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) water. Season with pepper and thoroughly combine.

Fill the zucchini with the stuffing. Although the rice expands during cooking, the meat shrinks, so there is no need to allow room for expansion.

Arrange the zucchini in layers in a heavy-based saucepan, sprinkling the layers lightly with salt. Pour in 300 ml (10 fl oz/1 1/4 cups) cold water. Invert a heavy plate on top of the zucchini and bring to a slow simmer. Cover and simmer gently for 1 hour, or until tender.

Meanwhile, prepare the [Laban Mutboukh](#) as directed. When it begins to boil, stir in the crushed garlic and boil for 2 minutes, then remove from the heat.

When the zucchini are cooked, remove the plate and pour the Laban Mutboukh over them. Boil gently, uncovered, over medium heat for 10 minutes, or until the sauce is thick.

Crush the dried mint to a coarse powder and sprinkle it over the zucchini. Remove from the heat, cover and stand for 10 minutes before serving.

For a main course, serve the zucchini and sauce with mashed potatoes or steamed rice.

✿ Note: Middle Eastern food suppliers usually stock a special corer for preparing vegetables for stuffing. It is not as wide as an apple corer, and much longer.



KOUSA MIHSHI BI BANDOURA

Stuffed zucchini with tomato sauce

Prepare and stuff the zucchini (courgettes) as directed in the Kousa Mihshi bi Laban recipe (left), using the same stuffing mixture. Set aside.

To make the tomato sauce, heat 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) Samneh or oil in a frying pan and gently fry 1 large chopped onion until translucent. Add 2 finely chopped garlic cloves and cook for a few seconds. Stir in 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped peeled tomatoes, 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée), 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water and ½ teaspoon cinnamon. Season with salt and pepper and bring to the boil.

Pour one-quarter of the sauce into a heavy-based saucepan. Arrange the filled zucchini in layers in the pan, spooning the remaining sauce over each layer. Cover and simmer gently for 1¼ hours. Serve hot or warm, with the sauce.

LUBYI BI ZAYT

Green beans in oil

SERVES: 6

**500 g (1 lb 2 oz) green beans 60 ml (2 fl oz/ ¼ cup) olive oil 1 onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, chopped 250 g (9 oz/ 1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes 1 tablespoon tomato paste
(concentrated purée) ½ teaspoon sugar
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

Wash the beans well, then top and tail and remove the strings, if present. Cut into 5 cm (2 inch) lengths, or slit them lengthways (French cut). Set aside.

Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the garlic and cook for a few seconds longer.

Add the tomatoes, tomato paste, sugar and 125 ml (4 fl oz/ ½ cup) water. Season to taste with salt and pepper, then cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

Stir in the beans and parsley. Cover and simmer for a further 15–20 minutes, or until the beans are tender.

Serve hot or lukewarm in the traditional way. The beans are also very good served chilled.



BAMYI BI ZAYT

Okra in oil

SERVES: 6

Substitute 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) okra for the beans in the Lubyi bi Zayt recipe (left); prepare the [okra](#) as directed.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the okra quickly, stirring carefully so as not to break them. Remove to a plate with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Make the tomato and onion sauce as directed and simmer for 15 minutes. Add the okra and 3 tablespoons chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves instead of the parsley. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes, or until tender.

Pour 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice over the okra, then cover and cook for a further 5 minutes. Serve hot or lukewarm.

✿ Note: Tinned or frozen okra may be used instead of fresh okra. Do not fry them in the oil.

KARNABIT BI TAHINI

Cauliflower with tahini sauce

SERVES: 6

1 cauliflower

salt

270 g (9½ oz/1 cup) Taratour bi Tahini

Break the cauliflower into florets and place in a bowl of salted water to remove any insects. Leave for 10 minutes, then drain.

Cook the cauliflower in a saucepan of rapidly boiling salted water, without a lid, for 10–12 minutes, or until just tender and still a little crisp. Drain.

Place the cauliflower in a serving bowl and spoon half the tahini sauce evenly over it. Serve hot or cold, with the remaining tahini sauce in a separate bowl for adding to individual taste.

LABAN BIL BAYD

Eggs in yoghurt garlic sauce

SERVES: 6

1 quantity Laban Mutboukh

2 garlic cloves

½ teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons dried mint

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) Samneh

6 eggs

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Make the [Laban Mutboukh](#) as directed and leave to simmer gently, uncovered.

Crush the garlic with the salt and mix in the mint, crumbled to a coarse powder.

Heat the Samneh in a small frying pan and add the garlic mixture. Fry for 5 minutes, stirring often.

Pour the hot Laban Mutboukh into a shallow baking dish. Break the eggs on top, spacing them evenly.

Pour the garlic Samneh mixture over the eggs. Bake for 15–20 minutes, or until the eggs are set hard. Serve hot.

✿ Note: For an interesting first course, divide the yoghurt mixture among six individual dishes, break an egg into each dish and top with the garlic Samneh mixture. Bake as above.

SERVES: 4–5

4 sets of lamb brains

salt, to season

1 garlic clove

juice of 1 lemon

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) Samneh

1 onion, finely chopped

6 eggs

4 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

freshly ground black pepper, to season Cover the brains with cold salted water and leave to soak for 20 minutes. Drain and remove the skin if possible. This is difficult if the brains have been frozen, and it might be necessary to leave the skin on. Any veins should be removed.

Place the brains in a saucepan with water to cover. Add the garlic clove and lemon juice and season with salt. Bring to a slow simmer, then simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes, or until tender. Drain the brains and cut into tiny pieces.

Heat the Samneh in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Remove the onion to a bowl, and drain the Samneh back into the pan. Cool.

Break the eggs into a bowl with the onion and beat lightly with a fork. Add the parsley and brains and season with salt and pepper. Stir to combine.

Reheat the frying pan over medium heat, then pour in the egg mixture. Cover and cook over low heat for 10–15 minutes, or until the eggs are set and puffed.

Serve hot, cut into wedges.

SAMKE BI TARATOUR

Fish with tahini sauce SERVES: 6–8

1 snapper or other fish suitable for baking, weighing about 2 kg (4 lb 6 oz) juice of ½ lemon salt, to season

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil double quantity Taratour bi Tahini

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

To garnish

thinly peeled cucumber skin olives

parsley sprigs

pomegranate seeds, if available 1 tablespoon pine nuts, pan-fried in 1 tablespoon olive oil until golden lemon wedges or slices Clean and scale the fish if necessary. Leave the head on but remove the eyes. Rinse the fish and pat dry with paper towels. Make three slashes into the skin on each side of the body.

Rub the fish inside and out with the lemon juice and salt. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Oil a large baking dish. Lay the fish in it and pour the remaining oil over the top. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the fish is cooked when tested at its thickest part. Baste the fish occasionally with the pan juices during baking, and do not overcook.

Carefully lift the fish onto a platter, cover with plastic wrap and chill. Alternatively, leave it to cool a little, then neatly cut off the head and tail and reserve. Remove the side fins and lift the flesh from the body in two sections from each side. Take off the skin and remove any bones. Discard the backbone and fins. Rearrange the fish in its original shape on a clean platter, then cover and chill.

Make the Taratour bi Tahini as directed, using enough water to give a thick sauce. Spread half the sauce over the fish, leaving the head and tail uncovered. Smooth the sauce with a small spatula.

Decorate as desired, with whatever garnish ingredients are available or appeal. Cucumber skin can be used to simulate fins; make fringe-like cuts along the length of the strips. Use an olive or a parsley sprig for the eye. Cover and chill again until ready to serve.

Garnish the platter with lemon slices or wedges and parsley sprigs. Stir most of the chopped parsley into the remaining sauce, place in a bowl and sprinkle with the remaining chopped parsley.

Serve as part of a buffet spread, or as a first course.



SAMKE HARRAH AL-SAHARA Baked fish with hot chilli sauce SERVES: 4

Many versions of this famous Lebanese fish dish exist. Even pronunciations and the resultant transliteration vary considerably. The regional Arabic for fish is samke (singular) and samek (plural), the 'a' pronounced as the 'u' in 'up', and the 'e' as in 'end'. Thus spellings vary from samke, sumke, sumki to samek, samak and sumak.

This delicious version was graciously provided by Mrs Laudy Jammal and Mr Jimmy Antoun of the popular Al-Sahara Lebanese restaurant in Chatswood, a Sydney suburb, so I have just as graciously used their translation.

1 snapper or other fish suitable for baking, weighing about 2 kg (4 lb 6 oz) salt, for sprinkling

100 ml (3½ fl oz) olive oil Hot chilli sauce

4–6 garlic cloves

1 teaspoon salt

3 tablespoons finely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves 270 g (9½ oz/1 cup) tahini 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) lemon juice ¼–½ teaspoon ground hot chilli or chilli pepper To garnish

1 tablespoon pine nuts, pan-fried in 1 tablespoon olive oil until golden lemon wedges

coriander (cilantro) leaves Clean and scale the fish if necessary. Leave the head on but remove the eyes. Slash the body diagonally in two places on each side. Sprinkle inside and out with salt, then cover and refrigerate for 1–2 hours.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Pat the fish dry. Heat the oil in a large frying pan and fry the fish over high heat for a few minutes each side. Do not cook it through. Remove the pan from the heat, then lift the fish out and place in a baking dish.

To make the hot chilli sauce, pound the garlic cloves with the salt, then mix in the coriander. Tip most of the oil out of the frying pan, leaving about 2 tablespoons. Heat the oil and add the garlic mixture; fry quickly until the mixture is crisp, but not burnt. Remove from the heat and cool.

Place the tahini in a bowl, beat well, then gradually add 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water, beating constantly. The mixture will thicken. Gradually beat in the lemon juice, then stir in the garlic mixture and chilli to taste. Add more salt if necessary.

Pour the sauce over the fish, covering it completely. Bake for 30–35 minutes, or until the fish is cooked through and the sauce is bubbling.

Lift the fish onto a platter and spoon the sauce over the top. Sprinkle with the pan-fried pine nuts and garnish the platter with lemon wedges and coriander. Serve hot.

KIBBEH SAMAK

Fish kibbeh

SERVES: 6

Fish kibbeh

525 g (1 lb 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz/3 cups) fine burghul (bulgur) **1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) white fish fillets** **1 large onion, chopped**

3 tablespoons finely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

grated zest of 1 orange

3 teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season Filling

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive or other oil **50 g (2 oz/½ cup) pine nuts** **2 large onions, halved and sliced**
To finish

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) olive or other oil **Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).**

Put the burghul in a fine sieve and rinse under cold running water. Press out the moisture with the back of a spoon. Set aside.

Remove the skin and any bones from the fish. Roughly chop the flesh.

Pass the fish and onion through a food grinder using a fine screen, or process in a food processor using a steel blade.

Combine the fish and onion with the burghul, coriander, parsley, orange zest and salt. Season with pepper, then knead to a firm paste. (The mixture may be processed in a food processor in four batches.) To make the filling, heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the pine nuts until golden brown. Remove with a slotted spoon. Then gently fry the onion in the pan until translucent. Return the pine nuts to the pan and remove from the heat.

Grease a 25 × 30 cm (10 × 12 inch) baking dish with some of the remaining oil. Add half the fish kibbeh, spreading it out evenly. Top with the onion and pine nut mixture.

Dot the remaining fish kibbeh over the filling, spreading it evenly with a spatula, to keep the filling in place. Deeply score the top into diamond shapes using a sharp oiled knife. Drizzle the remaining oil evenly over the top.

Bake for 30–35 minutes, or until golden brown.

Serve hot or cold.

MOUSAKHAN

Chicken roasted with bread

SERVES: 8

Mousakhan is a Palestinian speciality that calls for a very thin flat bread called shirak. This bread requires considerable expertise in making the dough paper thin, and also should be baked on a large metal dome (sorj) over a charcoal fire. Mousakhan is well worth trying, so I have given a substitute bread.

2 chickens, each about 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 85 ml (6½ fl oz/½ cup) olive oil 3 onions, sliced

3 teaspoons sumac

2 Khoubiz

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Pat the chickens dry with paper towels. Rub inside and out with salt and pepper. Tie the legs together and tuck the wings under the body.

Heat half the oil in a large frying pan and fry the chickens over medium heat until lightly browned, turning them often. Remove to a plate and set aside.

Add the remaining oil to the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent, stirring often. Sprinkle in the sumac and cook for a further 2 minutes. Remove from the heat.

Split each Khoubiz horizontally into two, to give four flat pieces of bread. Place two pieces slightly overlapping in the base of a baking dish.

Place a mound of the onion mixture in the centre of each piece of bread, using about one-quarter of the onion mixture. Put a chicken on top of each mound, then spread the remaining onion mixture over the top of each chicken. Pour the oil from the pan over the chicken and bread.

Cover the chickens with the remaining bread pieces, laying the white surface of the bread face down. Sprinkle the bread lightly with water.

Bake for 1½ hours, or until the chickens are tender and thoroughly cooked. If the bread begins to burn, cover the top with a piece of foil. The bread covering keeps the chickens moist, while the bread in the base of the dish absorbs the flavoursome juices.

Serve cut into portions, with a piece of bread for each serving.

KASBI MISHWI BI TOUM

Grilled liver with garlic SERVES: 4–6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lamb liver

**3–4 garlic cloves
½ teaspoon dried mint, finely crumbled
60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season
lemon wedges, to serve**

Soak the liver in cold salted water for 20 minutes. Drain, remove the skin, then cut the liver into 1 cm (½ inch) slices. Cut the slices into roughly 2 cm (¾ inch) squares. Pat dry with paper towels.

Crush the garlic and combine with the mint. Spread each side of the liver pieces with the garlic paste and place in a dish. Sprinkle with the oil and season with salt and pepper. Cover and leave for 30 minutes.

Thread the liver pieces onto skewers, passing them through the sides of the squares so that the liver is flat on the skewers.

Cook over a glowing charcoal fire for 1–2 minutes each side, taking care not to overcook, and brushing with the oil from the dish during cooking.

Serve hot with lemon wedges. Serve as a meze or main meal.

KIBBEH NAYYE

Raw kibbeh

SERVES: 10–12 AS AN APPETISER OR FIRST COURSE

1 quantity Kibbeh

60 ml (2 fl oz/ ¼ cup) olive oil

65 g (2½ oz/ 1 cup) sliced spring onions (scallions), including the green tops

2 cos (romaine) lettuce

lemon wedges, to serve

4–6 Khoubiz, cut into quarters

Make the Kibbeh according to the directions, using only 350 g (12 oz/ 2 cups) burghul (bulgur).

After the final kneading, place the kibbeh on a large oval platter and spread it out flat. Dip your hand in iced water and round the edges and smooth the top. Make a depression in the centre with your thumb. With the side of your forefinger, make two grooves along and across the kibbeh, to the edges. Alternatively, shape the kibbeh on individual dishes.

Place the kibbeh in the refrigerator, uncovered. Chill for about 1 hour, or until the colour of the kibbeh changes to a pleasant red (the cold plus the oxygen brings up the colour).

If not serving immediately, cover with plastic wrap. If using individual plates, do not stack them, otherwise the colour will change.

To serve, drizzle the oil in the centre depression and along the grooves. Garnish with a ring of spring onion around the edge. Place the washed and crisped lettuce leaves in a bowl, the lemon wedges in another bowl, and the Khoubiz in a basket.

The kibbeh is scooped up with either lettuce leaves or bread, and lemon juice squeezed on if desired.

✿ Note: Kibbeh Nayye should be eaten the day it is made. Any leftovers should be used for a cooked kibbeh dish.

KIBBEH

Minced lamb and burghul

SERVES: 6–10

The preparation of kibbeh, virtually the national dish of both Lebanon and Syria, is an exercise in patience and stamina. Or rather this was the case, and still is for the purists of Middle Eastern cookery. Modern appliances can replace the traditional madaqqa and jorn (mortar and pestle) for the tedious preparation — the kibbeh will be just as good and the cook far less exhausted.

Two essential principles of kibbeh-making are to have the right meat, and to keep the mixture cool. Ideally hogget (yearling mutton) should be used; if you cannot obtain this, lamb may be used, provided it is not too young. Look for lamb with a deep pinky-red colour and a good fat cover. Very young lamb is a definite pink in colour, very lean and velvety in texture, and may be used for the making of Kibbeh Nayye (left) only. Beef topside (US bottom round) may be used as a last resort, providing it is prime quality.

Whatever the meat, it must be trimmed of all fat and gristle before preparation, so allow for this trimming when purchasing your meat.

In cities with large Lebanese and Syrian communities, it is sometimes possible to find a butcher who specialises in providing ready minced (ground) kibbeh meat. A Lebanese or Syrian acquaintance might know of such a butcher.

525 g (1 lb 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz/3 cups) burghul (bulgur) 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) lean lamb or hogget (yearling mutton), from the leg 1 large onion, chopped

3 teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 teaspoon ground allspice

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) iced water or ice chips Food grinder method Place the burghul in a bowl, cover with cold water and leave to soak for 10 minutes. Drain in a sieve and press with the back of a spoon to remove as much moisture as possible. Tip into a flat dish, spread out and chill for 1–2 hours. This also dries the burghul further.

Trim all the fat and fine skin from the meat and cut it into cubes. Chill for 1 hour if not very cold.

Pass the meat through the meat grinder twice, using a fine screen. Grind the onion twice and combine with the meat, burghul, salt, pepper and allspice.

Pass the mixture through the grinder again twice, adding a little iced water or ice chips if the mixture feels warm.

Knead to a smooth, light paste with your hands, adding iced water or ice chips when necessary. Cover and chill until required.

Food processor method Prepare the burghul and meat as above. Using a steel cutting blade, process a quarter of the meat cubes at a time until paste-like in consistency. Transfer to a large bowl. Process the onion to a thick liquid and add to the meat. Combine the meat with the onion, seasoning, allspice and burghul. Process again in six lots, adding a tablespoon of iced water or ice chips to each lot. Combine again in a bowl and give a final knead by hand. Cover and chill until required.

KIBBEH BIL SANIEH

Baked stuffed kibbeh in a tray

SERVES: 6–10

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) Samneh or oil

2 onions, finely chopped

40 g (1½ oz/1/4 cup) pine nuts

250 g (9 oz) coarsely minced (ground) lamb or veal

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 quantity Kibbeh

To finish

185 ml (6½ oz/¾ cup) melted Samneh, ghee or olive oil pine nuts, to garnish, optional

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Heat the Samneh or oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the pine nuts and fry until the nuts are lightly browned.

Increase the heat and add the meat. Stir and cook until the juices evaporate and the meat begins to brown. Remove from the heat, season with salt and pepper and add the cinnamon.

Make the Kibbeh mixture as directed — there is no need to chill it, unless making ahead of time.

To assemble the dish, brush a 28 × 33 cm (11 × 13 inch) baking dish, or a 35 cm (14 inch) round dish, with some of the melted Samneh or ghee. Press a little less than half the kibbeh mixture onto the base, smoothing it with a wet hand.

Top with the meat and nut mixture, spreading it evenly. Dot the top with mounds of the remaining kibbeh mixture, then carefully press it out evenly, to keep the filling in place. Smooth the top.

Run a knife blade around the edge of the dish, then deeply score the top into diamond shapes. Press a pine nut into the centre of each diamond if desired.

Mix the remaining melted Samneh or ghee with 2 tablespoons cold water. Pour it over the top, making sure some runs down between the sides of the dish and the kibbeh.

Bake for 30 minutes; to brown the top, sprinkle lightly with water three or four times during cooking.

Cut through the scored sections and serve hot or cold with yoghurt, salads and **Khoubiz**.

✿ Note: Use oil if planning to serve the dish cold. It may also be cooked without the filling. Spread the kibbeh evenly in a dish, without the meat and pine nut filling. Score the top as required and pour on the melted Samneh or

oil. Bake as above.



KIBBEH MISHWEY OR KIBBEYET

Stuffed kibbeh balls

SERVES: 6

Use the same ingredients as for the [Kibbeh bil Sanieh](#) recipe, replacing the 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) melted Samneh, ghee or olive oil with sufficient oil for deep-frying.

Take lumps of [Kibbeh](#) the size of small eggs and shape into balls.

Dip your hands in cold water, roll a ball of kibbeh in your palms until smooth, then make a hole in the ball with your forefinger. Work your finger round in the hole until you have a shell of even thickness. Fill the hole with the filling mixture and close the opening. Moisten with cold water to seal well. If any breaks appear in the shell, close them with wet fingers.

Complete the shape to resemble either a torpedo, pointed at each end, or a spinning top, rounded at one end and pointed at the other. Place the finished kibbeh shells on a tray.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and deep-fry a few at a time until they become a deep brown colour, without being burnt, turning them to brown evenly. Lift out with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Keep warm in a low oven until the remainder are cooked.

Alternatively, place the shaped kibbeh side by side in a large greased baking dish, brush well with the melted Samneh or oil, and bake in a preheated oven at 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) for 20–25 minutes.

Serve hot or cold with salads, yoghurt and [Khoubiz](#) or other flat bread.

✿ Note: Torpedo-shaped kibbeyet are usually fried in oil. The ones shaped like spinning tops can be cooked over a glowing charcoal fire or baked in the oven.

KIBBEH BI LABAN

Kibbeh balls in yoghurt

SERVES: 6

½ quantity Kibbeh Mishwey (left) double quantity Laban Mutboukh

1 garlic clove

½ teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons dried mint

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) Samneh

Make the kibbeh balls as directed (left), filling with the stuffing and shaping them into torpedo shapes. Do not cook the finished balls. Set aside.

Prepare the **Laban Mutboukh** as directed, adding 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water after the mixture has simmered for 3–5 minutes. Bring to the boil and simmer, uncovered, for a further 5 minutes.

Add the kibbeh balls and simmer, uncovered, over low heat while preparing the garlic mint mixture.

Crush the garlic with the salt and stir in the crushed mint. Heat the Samneh in a small saucepan, add the garlic mixture and fry for 2–3 minutes.

Gently stir the mixture through the kibbeh balls, stirring only in one direction. Add more salt to taste.

Leave to simmer gently, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Do not stir again. When the kibbeh are cooked, the yoghurt sauce should be thick; if not, leave to simmer for a further 5 minutes.

Serve hot, with **Riz Mufalfal**.

MANSAAF

Spiced lamb in yoghurt

SERVES: 6

Apparently it is a popular misconception to regard mansaaf as a Jordanian feast. I have been assured by Jordanian friends that mansaaf is actually a dish served at feasts. The Palestinians also prepare this, calling it mansi.

As a favour to my friends, I shall now set the record straight, and give you the recipe. Of course in Jordan they would probably use a whole lamb, though it is scaled down for normal meals.

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) lamb shoulder, on the bone, cut by your butcher into 6 evenly sized pieces, or 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) thickly cut lamb shoulder chops

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) Samneh or ghee

40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts

1 large onion, chopped

1½ teaspoons ground turmeric

½ teaspoon ground allspice

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

1 quantity Laban Mutboukh

Place the lamb in a saucepan and add just enough cold water to cover. Bring slowly to the boil, skimming as required. When well skimmed and boiling, season with salt and pepper, then cover and simmer gently for 30 minutes.

Heat the Samneh in a frying pan and fry the pine nuts until golden. Remove the pine nuts to a plate, draining the Samneh back into the pan.

Add the onion to the pan and gently fry until translucent. Stir in the turmeric, allspice and cinnamon and cook for a further 2 minutes. Stir this mixture into the simmering lamb.

Meanwhile, make the [Laban Mutboukh](#) according to the directions and set aside.

After the lamb has been simmering for 1 hour, remove the lid and reduce the liquid until it half covers the lamb.

Now add the Laban Mutboukh, shaking the pan to combine it evenly with the liquid. Leave to simmer gently over low heat until the lamb is tender and the sauce is thick. If the sauce must be stirred, only stir in one direction.

Remove the cinnamon and add salt and pepper to taste.

Serve piled on a serving platter, sprinkled with the pine nuts. Serve hot, with [Riz Mufalfal](#).

✿ Note: To serve in the traditional manner, line the serving platter with split [Khoubiz](#) as a substitute for the paper-

thin shirak bread of Jordan. Pile on the rice ([Riz Mufalfal](#),) and cover with the lamb and yoghurt mixture. Sprinkle with pine nuts.

MIHSI MALUF

Cabbage rolls

SERVES: 6

1 large cabbage

4 garlic cloves, chopped

salt, for sprinkling

60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) lemon juice, or 3 teaspoons pomegranate molasses

1 teaspoon dried mint

Filling

40 g (1½ oz) Samneh, or 2 tablespoons oil 1 onion, finely chopped

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) finely chopped or coarsely minced (ground) lamb shoulder 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) short-grain white rice, washed and drained ½ teaspoon ground allspice

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Core the cabbage and carefully remove the leaves.

The heart may be reserved for making salad. Blanch the leaves in a saucepan of boiling salted water, a few at a time, until limp. Drain.

Cut the larger leaves in half, removing the thick white central rib. Cut the thicker part of the rib from the smaller leaves. Line a deep pan with the ribs and any torn leaves.

To make the filling, heat the Samneh or oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent and soft. Tip into a bowl, add the remaining filling ingredients and season with salt and pepper. Combine thoroughly.

Place a tablespoon of filling on the bottom edge of each leaf. Roll up, tucking in the sides to contain the filling. Press with your hand into a neat sausage shape.

Pack the finished rolls, seam side down, in the lined saucepan. Place them close together in layers, sprinkling each layer with a little garlic, salt and lemon juice; if using pomegranate molasses instead of lemon juice, mix it into 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) water before sprinkling onto the rolls.

Crush the remaining garlic and mix with the coarsely powdered mint. Scatter over the final layer of rolls and add enough water to the pan to just cover the rolls.

Invert a heavy plate on top of the rolls, then cover the pan and bring to a simmer. Leave to simmer over low heat for 1 hour. Serve hot or warm.

✿ Note: Lean lamb bones may be used to line the base of the pan instead of the cabbage trimmings. Another alternative is to simmer the rolls in lamb stock instead of water.

LAHM BI'AJEEN

Lamb-filled pastry rolls

MAKES: ABOUT 60

These delicate pastries often appear on restaurant menus as 'ladies fingers'. Sometimes they are called sambusik bi lahm, but any combination of lamb and pastry or dough is usually called lahm bi'ajeen or similar, literally meaning 'meat with dough'.

As there is another recipe by this name in this chapter [Sfiha, Lahm Bi'ajeen](#), I am depending on the translation to indicate the difference.

15 sheets fillo pastry

125–185 g (4–6½ oz/½–¾ cup) Samneh, melted Filling

2 tablespoons Samneh or ghee 80 g (3 oz/½ cup) pine nuts

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lean lamb 1 large onion, finely chopped

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh mint

To make the filling, heat the Samneh or ghee in a frying pan and fry the pine nuts until golden. Remove to a plate with a slotted spoon.

Add the lamb to the pan and stir over medium–high heat until the colour changes and the lamb is crumbly. Add the onion and gently fry until the onion is translucent.

Reduce the heat, add the cinnamon and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes, or until the juices evaporate, stirring occasionally. Stir in the parsley and mint, remove from the heat and leave covered until cool. Add the pine nuts.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Take a sheet of fillo pastry and brush it lightly with melted Samneh. Fold it in half, to give almost a square shape. Brush again with Samneh and place about 2 tablespoons of filling towards the edge of the longer end of the pastry. Fold the pastry over the filling, fold in the sides to contain the filling, then roll up firmly so the finished pastry looks like a long cigar, about the thickness of a finger.

Repeat with the remaining ingredients, keeping the finished pastries covered.

Place the rolls on baking trays lightly greased with melted Samneh. Brush the rolls lightly with more Samneh.

Using a sharp knife, make shallow slits across the top of each roll, about 8–10 cm (3¼–4 inches) apart, so that the rolls are evenly marked. This helps when cutting the finished rolls into finger lengths, as fillo pastry shatters easily when cooked.

Bake the rolls for 12–15 minutes, or until golden brown.

Cut into finger lengths and serve hot, piled on platters.

✿ Note: Smaller rolls can also be made. Shape as directed [Cutting and shaping techniques](#), using pastry strips 12 cm (5 inches) wide.

SFIHA, LAHM BI'AJEEN

Flat lamb pies

MAKES: ABOUT 30

Sfiha is the Syrian equivalent of [Lahm bi'Ajeen](#), a flat lamb pie popular throughout this region — an area known as the Fertile Crescent (which also includes Iraq). Khoubiz dough is used in Syria for sfiha.

The Lebanese cook often uses a pie-crust or short-crust pastry base for a more tender and crisp crust, and a lot less fuss.

½ quantity Khoubiz dough, optional Pie-crust pastry, optional

600 g (1 lb 5 oz/4 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 teaspoon salt

250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) melted Samneh, or other shortening Lamb filling

1 tablespoon oil

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) minced (ground) lamb 1 large onion, finely chopped

50 g (2 oz/⅓ cup) pine nuts

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground allspice

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper ¼ teaspoon freshly ground white pepper salt, to season

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes 3 teaspoons pomegranate molasses or lemon juice To finish

oil, for brushing

pomegranate seeds, lemon wedges or yoghurt, to serve If using the Khoubiz dough option, make the dough as directed, using the full amount of yeast, even though making the half quantity of dough.

Cover and leave to rise.

Alternatively, make the pie-crust pastry. Sift the flour and salt into a bowl, add the cool melted Samneh and rub it thoroughly and lightly into the flour with your fingertips. Have 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) warm water ready. Sprinkle in most of the water and mix to a pliable dough, adding more water if necessary. Knead lightly until smooth. Cover with plastic wrap and leave to rest for 30 minutes.

To make the filling, heat the oil in a frying pan, add the lamb and stir over medium–high heat until the colour changes and the meat is crumbly. Add the onion and gently fry until the onion is translucent and soft. Add the pine nuts and spices and season with salt. Fry for 1 minute longer, then stir in the tomatoes. Cover and cook over low heat for 10 minutes, or until the tomato softens.

Stir in the pomegranate molasses or lemon juice. Remove from the heat and leave to cool. The mixture should be moist, but not liquid.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Punch down the pie-crust dough, if using.

Roll out the dough or pastry on a lightly floured work surface until 5 mm (1/4 inch) thick, then cut into 10 cm (4 inch) rounds. Alternatively, take balls of dough the size of eggs and press each into a round by hand.

Cut out or shape the trimmings too. Place the rounds on a cloth, covering them with another cloth.

Take a round of dough and flute the edge with your fingertips. Spread a tablespoon of filling onto the dough and place the pies close together on oiled baking trays. Brush the meat and crust lightly with oil.

Bake the pies for 12–15 minutes. Serve hot or warm, sprinkling with a few fresh pomegranate seeds if available. Lemon wedges for squeezing onto the pies, or yoghurt for drizzling over them, may also be served.



FATAYER

Triangular lamb pies

MAKES: ABOUT 30

½ quantity Khoubiz dough Lamb Filling (see Sfiha,) oil, for brushing

For serving

lemon wedges or Laban (yoghurt I,) Make the Khoubiz dough as directed, using the full amount of yeast, even though making the half quantity of dough. Cover and leave to rise.

Prepare the lamb filling according to the directions [Sfiha, Lahm Bi'ajeen](#), making the filling a little drier than for the Sfiha.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Punch down the dough and turn out onto a lightly floured work surface. Roll out until 5 mm (¼ inch) thick, then cut into 10 cm (4 inch) rounds. Alternatively, roll the dough into balls the size of eggs and flatten them out with your hand or a rolling pin.

Working with one round at a time, place a tablespoon of the lamb filling in the centre. Moisten the edge of the dough with a little water, then bring up the sides at three points to form a triangular shape. Press the edges firmly to seal, leaving the top of the pie open a little to show the filling.

Place the pies on oiled baking trays and brush with oil. Bake for 15 minutes, or until golden and cooked.

For a golden brown top, place the pies under a hot grill (broiler) for a few seconds.

Serve hot or warm, with lemon wedges so that the juice may be squeezed into the centre of the pie.

Alternatively, serve with a bowl of yoghurt on the side.

SHISHBARAK

Lamb pastries in yoghurt sauce SERVES: 6

300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour ½ teaspoon salt

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) melted Samneh

Filling

2 tablespoons Samneh

**40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lean lamb 1 large onion,
finely chopped ¼ teaspoon ground allspice**

pinch of ground cinnamon

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Yoghurt sauce

1.25 kg (2 lb 12 oz/5 cups) yoghurt 1 tablespoon cornflour (cornstarch) 1 egg white, lightly beaten

2 teaspoons salt

To finish

2 garlic cloves

½ teaspoon salt

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) Samneh

1 tablespoon dried crushed mint

Riz Mufalfal, to serve Sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl, add 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) cold water and mix to a soft dough, adding a little more flour if necessary. Knead lightly until smooth, then cover the dough with plastic wrap and rest for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the filling. Heat half the Samneh in a pan and fry the pine nuts until golden brown. Lift out with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Heat the remaining Samneh in the pan and stir the meat over high heat until the meat changes colour and is crumbly. Add the onion and fry for a further 10 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Stir in the spices and season with salt and pepper. Add the pine nuts and leave to cool.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured work surface and cut into 5 cm (2 inch) rounds. Place a teaspoon of meat filling in the centre and fold the pastry over into a crescent. Press the edges to seal, then crimp with your fingers or

the tines of a fork. Wrap the crescent around your finger and press the two points together to give a hat shape. Place on baking trays greased with some of the melted Samneh. When the pastries are filled and shaped, brush with the remaining Samneh.

Bake for 10–15 minutes, or until lightly browned; the pastries do not have to be completely cooked.

To make the yoghurt sauce, place the yoghurt in a large heavy-based saucepan and stir until smooth. Blend the cornflour into 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water and stir into the yoghurt with the egg white and salt. Stir constantly in one direction over medium heat, until thickened and bubbling.

Add the pastries to the bubbling yoghurt, stir gently, then cook, uncovered, over medium-low heat for 10 minutes. Stir twice more during cooking.

To finish, crush the garlic with the salt. Heat the Samneh in a small saucepan, add the garlic and fry gently for a few seconds. Stir in the mint and remove from the heat.

Pour the garlic mixture into the shishbarak. Stir gently and cook for 2–3 minutes longer.

Serve hot in deep plates, with Riz Mufalfal.

SHEIKH AL MIHSI

Stuffed eggplant

SERVES: 6

12 small long eggplants (aubergines), or 6 oval eggplants 60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) Samneh, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) oil 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Meat filling

2 tablespoons oil

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb or beef 1 large onion, finely chopped 1 garlic clove, finely chopped 40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground allspice

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Remove the stalks from the eggplants, then peel off 1 cm (½ inch) strips lengthways at intervals to give a striped effect.

Heat the Samneh or oil in a frying pan and brown the eggplants lightly on all sides, in batches if necessary. Remove to a plate.

To make the filling, heat the oil in the pan and fry the meat, onion and garlic, stirring often, until the juices evaporate. Add the pine nuts, spices and parsley. Season with salt and pepper and remove from the heat.

Cut a deep slit along one side of each eggplant. Fill the slits with the meat mixture.

Arrange the eggplants in a baking dish and pour the passata over the top. Season with salt and pepper.

Bake for 30 minutes, adding water to the baking dish during cooking if necessary, and basting the eggplants occasionally with the sauce mixture.

USHTA

Clotted cream

MAKES: ABOUT 375 G (13 OZ/1½ CUPS)

Where buffalo milk is available in the Middle East you will find ushta. The rich milk is boiled and left to stand until the cream on the top becomes solid. It is so thick it can be cut with a knife. The cream is enjoyed with certain pastries, used as a filling for pancakes ('Ataif,) as it does not melt on heating, or enjoyed on its own with sweet preserves or honey.

As the flavour of the genuine ushta is rather strong, it is an acquired taste. This version uses dried cow's milk to make the flavour more widely acceptable. If you have access to rich milk fresh from the cow, it is possible to make clotted cream; Devonshire cream is a good substitute where available.

Ushta (sometimes transliterated as kishta with a deep guttural sound for the 'k') is the Arabic name for the region covered in this chapter. In Turkey it is known as kaymak, and in Iraq, gaimer.

200 g (7 oz/2 cups) full-cream powdered milk

Thoroughly combine the powdered milk with 625 ml (21 fl oz/ 2½ cups) water, beating if necessary to break up lumps.

Pour the mixture into a heavy-based 23 cm (9 inch) frying pan, preferably one with a non-stick coating, so the milk will not scorch. Place over medium-low heat and bring slowly to a gentle simmer — do not allow to boil.

When a skin forms on the top, pull it to one side of the pan with a large spoon. Lift the skin out, pouring any liquid in the spoon back into the pan. Place the skin in a bowl.

Every 10 minutes or so, for the next 2–2½ hours, remove the skin as it forms. At the end, only a thin layer of thick milk will remain in the pan. This may be discarded or used in cooking.

Process the collected cream in a blender or food processor and process until smooth. Pour back into the bowl and chill thoroughly. The cream sets solidly and, if kept covered, will keep in the refrigerator for 1 week or more. Use as directed in recipes, or with stewed fruits and desserts.

'ATAR I

Scented syrup

MAKES: ABOUT 625 ML (21 FL OZ/2½ CUPS) 660 g (1 lb 7 oz/3 cups) sugar

1 teaspoon lemon juice

1–2 tablespoons rosewater or orange flower water Dissolve the sugar in 625 ml (21 fl oz/2½ cups) cold water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Bring to the boil and add the lemon juice. Allow to boil over medium heat, without stirring, for 12 minutes, or until the syrup is thick when tested on a cold saucer.

Add rosewater or orange flower water to taste, then boil for 1 minute longer. When cool, the consistency should be similar to thin honey.

Strain, cool and store in a sealed container in the refrigerator until required.

✿ Note: Once the syrup has begun to boil, do not stir it again, as this makes the syrup cloudy.

'ATAR II Syrup

MAKES: ABOUT 625 ML (21 FL OZ/2½ CUPS) 660 g (1 lb 7 oz/3 cups) sugar 1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 piece of cinnamon bark

Dissolve the sugar in 625 ml (21 fl oz/2½ cups) cold water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Bring to the boil and add the lemon juice and cinnamon.

Boil over medium heat, without stirring, for 12 minutes, or until the syrup is thick when tested on a cold saucer; when cool, the consistency should be similar to thin honey.

Strain, cool and store in a sealed container in the refrigerator until required.

'ATAIF

Pancakes

MAKES: 16–18

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

1 teaspoon sugar

225 g (8 oz/1½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

pinch of salt

melted ghee or oil, for brushing

For serving

cold 'Atar I or II (left)

Ushta (left), or thick whipped cream Dissolve the yeast and sugar in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lukewarm water. Stir in another 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) warm water.

Sift the flour and salt into a warm mixing bowl and make a well in the centre.

Pour the yeast mixture into the centre, then gradually stir in the flour with a wooden spoon until smoothly combined. If the batter is lumpy, stir with a balloon whisk until smooth.

Cover the bowl with a cloth and leave in a warm place for 1 hour, or until the batter has risen and the surface is bubbly.

Heat a heavy-based frying pan and grease it with a paper towel dipped in melted ghee or oil. Medium heat should be sufficient for cooking the pancakes.

Using a ladle, pour in about 1½ tablespoons of the batter in one lot and tilt the pan immediately so that the batter spreads a little into a circle about 10 cm (4 inches) in diameter. If the batter is too thick, stir in another 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) water — the pancakes should be thick, but should spread a little.

Cook until golden brown on the underside, then flip over and cook the other side. Lift out and stack on a plate.

Dip the pancakes into the 'Atar syrup and pile onto a plate. Serve with Ushta or thick whipped cream.

✿ Note: Flours vary in their absorbing quality, so hold back some of the liquid and adjust the consistency before cooking.

'ATAIF MIHSI

Stuffed pancakes

MAKES: 16–18

1 quantity 'Ataif batter (left) 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) cold 'Atar I or II

corn oil or peanut oil, for deep-frying Nut filling, optional

185 g (6½ oz/1½ cups) finely chopped walnuts 55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) sugar

1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon Cheese filling, optional

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) *Kareeshee*, or Italian ricotta cheese Make the pancakes as directed in the 'Ataif recipe (left), cooking them on one side only for about 3 minutes, until the top loses all trace of whiteness. Stack the pancakes on a plate.

Prepare your chosen filling — either combine the nuts, sugar and cinnamon in a bowl, or mash the cheese with a fork to soften it.

Place 2 generous teaspoons of filling in the centre of each pancake, on the uncooked side. Fold the pancake over and pinch the edges well together to seal.

Heat the oil in a deep saucepan to 200°C (400°F), or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 5 seconds.

Deep-fry the stuffed pancakes three or four at a time for 2–3 minutes, turning to brown them evenly. Lift out with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

While they are hot, dip the pancakes into the 'Atar syrup and pile onto a plate. Serve warm or cold.

* Note: *Ushta*, a thick clotted cream, may be used as a filling for these pancakes. However, do not be tempted to use any other cream as it will melt.

MUHALLABIA

Almond cream pudding

SERVES: 6

35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) rice flour 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) milk pinch of salt

55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) sugar

80 g (3 oz/¾ cup) ground almonds

1 tablespoon rosewater

pistachios or almonds, to serve pomegranate seeds, to serve, optional Mix the rice flour in 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) of the milk.

Bring the remaining milk to the boil in a heavy-based saucepan. Stir in the rice flour mixture, salt and sugar.

Stir constantly with a wooden spoon over medium heat until the mixture bubbles gently.

Reduce the heat and simmer gently for 5 minutes, stirring often; it is important that the mixture cooks slowly.

Stir in the ground almonds until smoothly combined. Stir in the rosewater and remove from the heat.

Stir occasionally until the mixture cools a little, then pour into a serving bowl or six individual dishes.

Chill the pudding or puddings and serve garnished with nuts, and pomegranate seeds if available.



K'NAFI JIBNI

Shredded pastry with cheese

SERVES: 10–12

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) konafa ([kataifi](#)) pastry

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) [Samneh](#), melted

1 quantity cold '['Atar I or II](#)

Filling

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) ricotta cheese or [Mizithra](#)

1 tablespoon sugar

grated zest of 1 lemon

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Loosen the pastry by pulling it gently with your fingers. Place in a large bowl and pour the melted Samneh over. Toss the pastry shreds so that they are evenly coated with Samneh, using a fork or your fingers.

Place half the strands in a 25 × 30 cm (10 × 12 inch) baking dish, or in a 25 cm (10 inch) round baking dish. Press down to make the pastry layer more compact.

Combine the filling ingredients in a mixing bowl and beat until softened. Evenly spread the filling over the pastry in the baking dish, then top with the remaining pastry.

Bake for 45 minutes, or until golden brown.

Remove from the oven and pour the 'Atar syrup over. Leave until cold, then serve cut into squares or diamonds. Store any remaining k'nafi in a covered container in the refrigerator.

BAKLAWA BE'AJ

Nut pastries

MAKES: ABOUT 40

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) fillo pastry 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) melted Samneh or unsalted butter 65 g (2¼ oz/½ cup) chopped pistachio nuts, optional Nut filling

2 egg whites

115 g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar 230 g (8 oz/2 cups) coarsely ground walnuts 200 g (7 oz/2 cups) coarsely ground almonds

1 teaspoon rosewater

Syrup

**440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar 1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon orange flower water**

1 teaspoon rosewater

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Stack 10 sheets of fillo pastry on a flat surface, keeping the remainder covered with a dry tea towel (dish towel), with a damp tea towel on top.

Brush the top sheet of the stack with melted Samneh or butter. Lift the sheet and replace it on the stack, buttered side down. Brush the top with butter, lift the top two sheets and turn over on the stack. Repeat until all 10 sheets are buttered, lifting an extra sheet each time. The top and bottom of the finished stack should remain unbuttered.

Using kitchen scissors, cut the buttered stack of fillo into approximately 10 cm (4 inch) squares. Stack and cover. Prepare the remaining fillo pastry as before. Depending on the size of the fillo sheets, you may have fewer than 10 left at the end, so halve the sheets if necessary to give 10 layers.

To make the filling, beat the egg whites until stiff, then gradually beat in the sugar. Fold in the nuts and rosewater.

Butter the top of a fillo square and place a tablespoon of nut mixture in the middle. Gently squeeze into a lily shape, with the four corners of the square as petals, and the filling in the centre. Place in a buttered 25 × 33 cm

(10 × 13 inch) baking dish.

Repeat with the remaining ingredients, placing the finished pastries close together in the dish. Bake for 30 minutes.

Reduce the oven temperature to 150°C (300°F/Gas 2) and bake for a further 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the syrup. Dissolve the sugar in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/½ cups) cold water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat. Add the lemon juice and orange flower water and bring to the boil. Allow to boil for 15 minutes without stirring, then stir in the rosewater and cool.

Spoon the syrup over the hot pastries and leave until cool. Sprinkle pistachio nuts in the centre of the pastries if desired.

✿ Note: If you are not used to working with fillo pastry, fill and shape the first stack of buttered squares before working with the next lot. The butter firms fairly quickly and it may be difficult to shape the pastries if the buttered sheets are left for a time.

MA'AMOUL B'JOWZ

Easter walnut cakes

MAKES: 45

560 g (1 lb 4 oz/4½ cups) fine semolina (farina) 115 g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) butter

250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) milk

½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) icing (confectioners') sugar, for coating Walnut filling

170 g (6 oz/1½ cups) coarsely ground walnuts 55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) caster (superfine) sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Combine the semolina and sugar in a mixing bowl.

Melt the butter in a frying pan and heat until bubbling. Pour over the semolina and sugar and mix with a wooden spoon until the butter is evenly distributed.

Heat the milk in a heavy-based saucepan until bubbles begin to rise. Remove from the heat and stir in the bicarbonate of soda, then pour into the semolina mixture. Mix with a wooden spoon to a soft dough.

When the mixture cools a little, knead it lightly by hand. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap to make an airtight seal. Leave for at least 5 hours, or overnight.

Mix the walnut filling ingredients together in a bowl.

Knead the dough again to make it pliable. Roll a tablespoonful of dough at a time into balls the size of large walnuts. Flatten a ball of dough in your palm, then push up the sides to make a bowl shape. Fill the hollow with a generous teaspoonful of nut filling, then mould the dough over the filling. Press the edges to seal well and roll into a ball again.

Press into a decorated mould (a tabi) and tap out on a board. Place on an ungreased baking tray. Alternatively, place the ball of dough on a tray, flatten slightly and press the tines of a fork obliquely around the sides to give the cakes a slightly conical shape. Press the top with a fork.

Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 230°C (450°F/Gas 8).

Transfer the cakes to the preheated oven. Now reduce the oven temperature to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) and bake the cakes for 20–25 minutes, or until lightly coloured. Remove from the oven and cool on the trays for 10 minutes.

Sift icing sugar onto a sheet of greaseproof (parchment) paper. Place the cakes on the sugar and sift more sugar on top to coat thickly. When cool, store in an airtight container.

✿ Note: Traditionally, ma'amoul are shaped using the same technique as the [Stuffed Kibbeh Balls](#).



SAMBUSIK

Date crescents

MAKES: 30

375 g (13 oz/2½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour ½ teaspoon ground mahlab, optional 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter, melted 85 ml (3 fl oz/⅓ cup) milk 55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) sugar

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil or nut oil Date filling

250 g (9 oz) dates

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter

1 teaspoon rosewater

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Sift the flour into a mixing bowl with the mahlab, if using. Rub in the butter until evenly distributed.

Heat the milk and sugar in a heavy-based saucepan and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Leave until lukewarm.

Pour the milk mixture into the flour, then add the oil and mix to a soft dough. Knead until smooth.

To make the filling, chop the dates and place in a heavybased saucepan with the butter. Stir over medium heat until the mixture is combined and has a paste-like consistency.

Remove from the heat and stir in the rosewater.

Roll out the dough on a lightly floured board until 5 mm (¼ inch) thick. Cut into 5 cm (2 inch) rounds.

Working with one piece at a time, place a teaspoon of the date filling in the middle of each round, then fold the pastry over the filling to form a crescent. Crimp the edge with your fingers, or press with the tines of a fork to seal. Place the crescents on ungreased baking trays and bake for 20–25 minutes, or until lightly coloured.

Remove from the oven and cool on the trays for 5 minutes, then lift onto a wire rack to cool completely.

When cool, store in an airtight container.

✿ Note: A walnut filling may be used instead of dates. Use the filling from the [Ma'amoul b'Jowz](#) recipe.

Almond pastry ('Eat and praise') MAKES: 40 PIECES

185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) Samneh, melted or unsalted butter, melted 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) fillo pastry

65 g (2¼ oz/½ cup) chopped pistachio nuts, optional Almond filling

300 g (10½ oz/3 cups) coarsely ground almonds 230 g (8 oz/1 cup) caster (superfine) sugar

1 egg white

1½ teaspoons orange flower water

2 drops of almond essence

Syrup

440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar

2 teaspoons lemon juice

2 teaspoons rosewater

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Brush a 25 × 33 cm (10 × 13 inch) baking dish with the Samneh or melted butter. Place a sheet of fillo pastry in the dish. Brush the fillo with butter and top with another sheet. Butter the sheet and repeat until half the fillo sheets are used.

To make the almond filling, combine the almonds and sugar in a bowl. Beat the egg white in a separate bowl until stiff, then fold in the nuts, orange flower water and almond essence.

Spread the nut filling over the pastry in the baking dish.

Place a sheet of fillo on top, butter it, then repeat until all the remaining fillo sheets are used.

Brush the top sheet with butter. Using a sharp knife, cut through the pastry layers in diamond shapes (see the diagram). Sprinkle the top lightly with cold water.

Bake on the middle shelf of the oven for 30 minutes.

Raise the shelf one notch above the centre and bake the pastry for a further 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the syrup. Dissolve the sugar in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) cold water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Add the lemon juice and bring to the boil. Allow to boil over medium heat, without stirring, for 15 minutes, or until the syrup is thick when tested on a cold saucer. Stir in the rosewater and leave until cool. The syrup should be the consistency of thin honey when cool.

Pour the cooled syrup over the hot pastry and leave until cold. Sprinkle with chopped pistachios if desired.

Cut through the pastry again and lift out the pieces with a spatula. Store in a sealed container at room temperature.

Coffee

Coffee-making in this part of the world is taken as seriously as it is in Turkey and the Gulf States. Every household has its rakwi (long-handled coffee pot) and tahrini (brass coffee grinder).

To impress your Arabic host or your guests, use the right coffee term — murrah for sugarless coffee, mazboutah for medium-sweet and hilweh for very sweet.

Coffee is always served in tiny, bowl-shaped, handleless cups, sometimes placed in decorative brass holders. The rakwi is usually made of brass and attractively worked; very old pieces have a lid to keep the coffee hot. The rakwi is often taken to the coffee drinkers with the cups. Speed in transferring the coffee from the stove to the serving area is necessary as the grounds must not be given time to settle in the pot. When drinking coffee, however, you must allow a little time before drinking it to allow the grounds to settle.

To each Arabic coffee cup measure of water, add a level teaspoon of sugar for medium-sweet, and a heaped teaspoon for very sweet. Stir the sugar in the water over the heat until dissolved and boiling. Add 1 heaped teaspoon of pulverised coffee (usually a dark roasted coffee) for each cup of water, stir well and cook until the foam rises to the top of the pot. The pot is removed from the heat and the base rapped on a flat surface to reduce foaming. Heat twice more, with raps in between. Pour immediately into the cups.

To flavour the coffee, either grind cardamom pods with the coffee beans (three or four with each 250 g/9 oz beans), or add one pod to the pot for each four cups of coffee being brewed, though this is the particular flavouring of the Arab Gulf countries. Traditionally a little silver urn of rosewater or orange flower water would accompany the coffee so that a few drops may be added to individual taste.

SHARAB EL WARD

Rosewater syrup

**440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar strained juice of
½ lemon**

**pink food colouring 85 ml (3 fl oz/⅓ cup) rosewater Put the sugar and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water
in a heavybased saucepan and stir over medium heat until the sugar has dissolved. Bring to the boil
and add the lemon juice.**

Boil, without stirring, for 10 minutes, skimming when necessary.

Add a few drops of colouring to the syrup to achieve a deep pink — it will be lighter when diluted later.

Add the rosewater and boil for 3 minutes longer. Remove from the heat, leave to cool, then bottle and seal.

To serve, pour 2–3 tablespoons of the syrup into a glass and fill with iced water.



GHERFER or AINAR

Spiced tea with nuts SERVES: 4

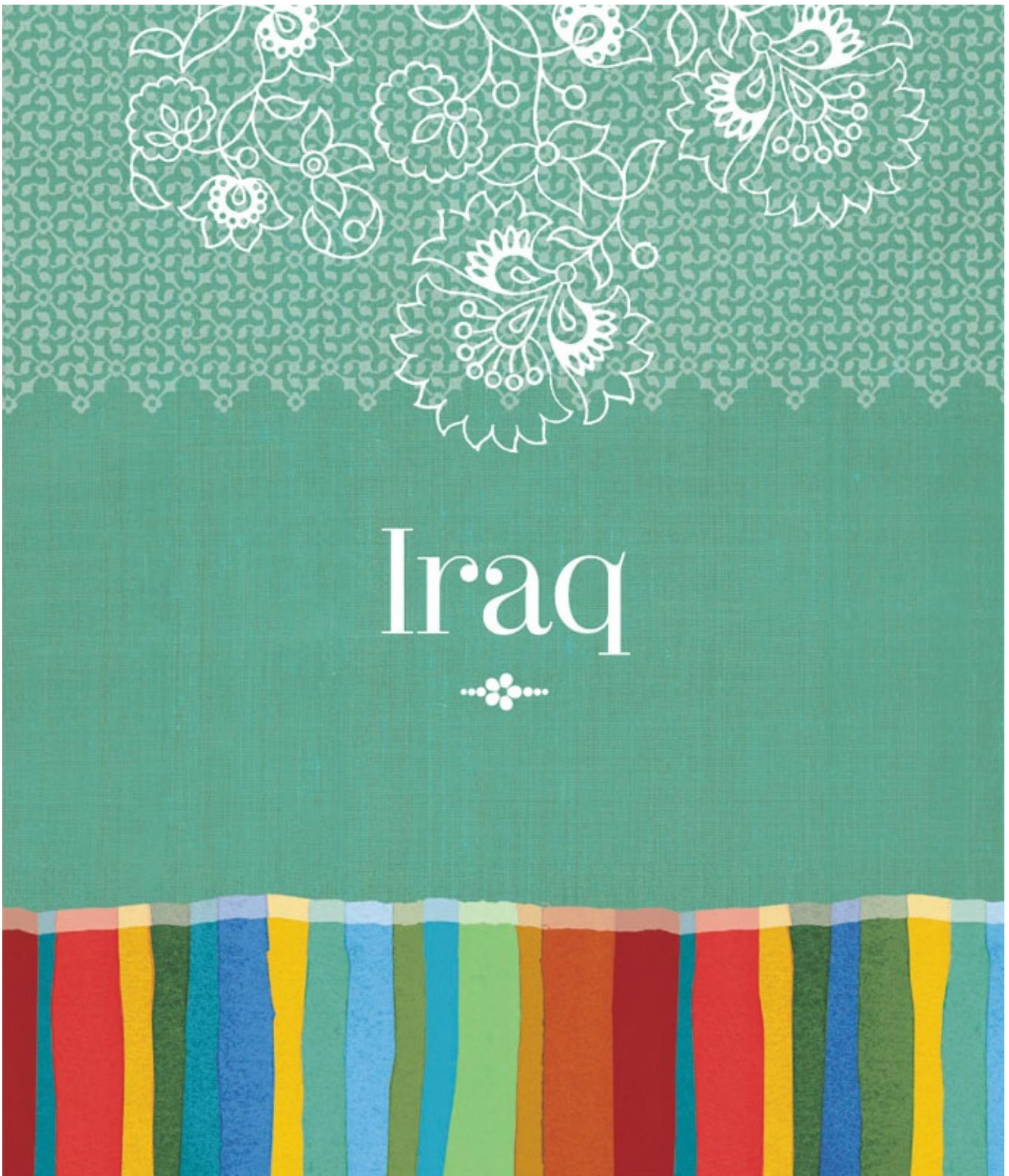
4 large pieces of cinnamon bark

40 g (1½ oz/⅓ cup) finely chopped walnuts sugar, to taste Put 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water into a long-handled coffee pot (rakwi). Add the cinnamon and bring to the boil.

Boil gently for 5 minutes, then remove the cinnamon.

Put 2 teaspoons walnuts in each of four tea glasses. Pour the tea into the glasses and add sugar to taste.

Serve with a spoon.





IRAQ

In northern Iraq lies Kurdistan, an area stretching across to southern Turkey and western Iran. It is here that humans first began farming, planting grain crops and raising livestock in order to control food production.

The fertile valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers saw the birth of the Sumerian civilisation before 5000 BCE. Called Mesopotamia by the Ancient Greeks, this area is regarded as the birthplace of Western civilisation. Towards the southern part of the valley, Babylon and Ur grew, flourished and died around 500 BCE, leaving a legacy for civilisations to come.

After the unification of the Arab people under the banner of Islam some 1300 years later, the region came under Arab rule, with Baghdad succeeding Damascus as the capital of the Islamic world. Baghdad became the centre of Arabic culture and trade, with caravans bringing foods and spices from China, India and Persia (Iran).

In the courts of the caliphs of Baghdad, the art of cooking thrived, with a strong Persian influence — a legacy of Persian civilisation. Arabic cooking and food tastes flourished and expanded with the vast variety of foods brought from Asia. As the Arabs swept westward, spreading Islam, they took with them the foods to which they had become accustomed — saffron from Asia Minor; citrus fruits, almonds, rice and sugar cane from Asia — many to be planted in their conquered lands, thus introducing new foods to Europe.

The Mongols, then the Ottoman Turks, swept into Baghdad and the political power of the city diminished, but the culinary glories spread far and wide, influencing the cuisine of the Arab world in general. That influence is still evident today.

THE FLAVOUR OF IRAQI FOOD

One usually enters a country with preconceived ideas about their foods. Though I expected an extension of Arabic cuisine, all I could associate with Iraq was the Lion of Babylon dates I had been buying for years, and I wondered in what other ways the date was used on its home ground.

When dates are being dried for export and for use throughout the remainder of the year, a thick dark amber syrup is exuded from the fruit. It is used in [Hamuth Heloo](#), a lamb and dried fruit dish reminiscent of Iranian meat and fruit combinations, but with a flavour more sweet than sweet-sour. Marees is a combination of date syrup and butter, heated and blended with squares of khoubiz (bread) and eaten with gaimer, the thick buffalo cream of the

area, similar to the ushta and kaymak of neighbouring countries. The Kurds in the north of Iraq use a raisin syrup for mareas.

For a simple date sweetmeat, try [Holwah Tamar](#), or the more intricate [Murabba Tamar](#) and [Klaicha](#), for a mouth-melting pastry filled with dates and perfumed with rosewater or orange flower water.

Iraqi date varieties dried for export are kahastawari, khadrowi and zhehdik, the first two being the varieties exported to the West. Baban and berhi are delicate dates best eaten fresh, though they freeze very well. Baban is a black date with a fairly firm skin — when squeezed gently the flesh pops out and literally melts in the mouth. Berhi, a light golden date with a tender skin, is not skinned before eating. It is stringy, sweet and delicious, with a slightly peppery undertone, and the texture of fresh sugar cane. If left too long, berhi dates become overripe and squashy, rather like bananas do.

The rice dishes of Iraq, though not extensive in range, are somewhat similar to those of Persia: [Timman](#) — steamed rice very similar to chelou — and [Timman Z'affaran](#), a rice dish reminiscent of Persian polous, with the spiciness of the Gulf Arabic cooking, but essentially Iraqi in concept and presentation.

Dolmas are as popular here as elsewhere and I was fascinated with [Mumbar](#), basically a dolma meat filling in a sausage casing. A long length of the casing is filled and coiled into a pan and given a long, slow simmering; the mumbar is then sliced into portions and served as an appetiser.

Though potatoes are relative newcomers to Middle Eastern cooking, and in Iraq not readily available all year round, the Iraqis make the most of the potato when it is in season, using it for delightful potato cakes called batata charp, filled with a spicy meat or a tomato and parsley stuffing.

In discussing foods with our Iraqi contact, I would frequently ask how a particular dish was served. His reply was always 'as part of a feast', giving me the impression that Iraqis are always feasting. After visiting his home unexpectedly, I found that every meal indeed is a feast, with huge quantities served. It was at this meal that another side of Arabic hospitality was revealed. Our host did not eat while we were his guests, as it is the custom for the host to look after their guests' needs exclusively; his needs were not considered until after our departure. I was impressed and amazed at his self-control in not even venturing to take a nibble during the many hours we enjoyed his hospitality. However, he did take care of his thirst with a few glasses of beer — Australian beer at that.

One typically Iraqi dish, and a speciality of Baghdad outdoor restaurants bordering the Tigris, is masgoof. It is a dish that is seldom prepared in the home, though it is possible to do so. The Tigris River teems with a vast variety of freshwater fish — very large, firm-fleshed and flavourful. The fish is gutted and slit, opened out and impaled on two green sticks secured in the earth and set alongside a fire of fragrant woods. As the fish is rather oily, it needs little attention from the cook, except perhaps light seasoning with salt, pepper and paprika before cooking. The fish is barbecued slowly with the inner flesh exposed to the heat. After almost an hour's cooking in this way, the fish is removed from the sticks and thrown skin side down on top of the now-glowing embers to complete the cooking. It is served on a platter with sliced onion and tomato, and plenty of bread. The right way to eat masgoof is with your fingers, so that you may feel the bones — it makes a lot of sense. While the variety of fish is large, the most popular fish for masgoof is the shabboot, though booni and theka are also available and equally good (local alternatives include Murry River carp or golden carp). The diner is given a choice of which fish to have prepared, as they are all kept in a tiled pond on the premises for your selection. There is certainly no doubt about the freshness.

Beautiful parks and gardens stretch along the banks of the Tigris, with bronzed statues set in groups, the tableaux depicting tales from the Arabian Nights, a reminder of the glorious days of the caliphs of Baghdad and their contribution to the art and culture of the Arabic world. [Zlabiya](#), a kind of sweet, syrupy pastry rosette and a favourite of the Iraqis, is immortalised in the stories of the Arabian Nights: 'Of sweet zlabiya chain I hung a

necklace around her neck. From its delicious loops I made a ring on her ears.' The same confection is prepared in neighbouring countries to the west and as far east as India, but its home is Iraq.

One particular dish served at feasts — that is, real feasts — is khouzi. A version that I found fascinating, khouzi khasibi, needs very special facilities for its preparation. A rice is prepared similar to Timman Z'affaran, but with little cooking of the grain. The lamb is steamed beforehand in a conventional oven until half done. It is then skewered with two green ribs from palm branches passing through the leg and shoulder on each side. The rice is placed in a deep tray on top of a bed of glowing coals set in the base of a tannour oven. The lamb is lowered head down into the tannour, with the fat tail of the lamb at the top of the carcass so that the meat is basted as the fat melts. The opening of the oven is crisscrossed with green palm leaves, and wet clay is packed on top to seal the opening completely. The lamb cooks slowly, the juices dripping onto the rice below, and when the clay seal begins to crack, the lamb is cooked. The use of the green palm ribs is all part of the flavour of the whole dish as these begin to smoulder towards the end of cooking, imparting a special fragrance to the meat. The khouzi of the city-dweller is prepared in a similar way to the khouzi of Saudi Arabia, and you may find that recipe easier to duplicate for an Arabic feast.

Khoubiz, the flat bread of Iraq, is similar to the [Mafrooda Burd](#) of the Gulf States and the [Nane Lavash or taftoon](#) of Iran. There is also a recipe for [Khoubiz](#), in the chapter on Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Samoon is a diamond-shaped thick loaf similar to the [Barbari](#) of Iran, but only a quarter of its size. Khoubiz is served with every meal; samoon is a popular bread for breakfast.

EATING IRAQI STYLE

A meal in a town house is served on a dining table spread with a cloth, with china and cutlery. All the dishes for the meal are placed on the table at the one time. Soup is seldom, if ever, served. Rice is always part of the meal and served with [Murag](#), a meat stew with bamia (okra), eggplant (aubergine), green peas or beans. A roast chicken could also be served with a platter of batata charp, a large bowl of salad containing cos (romaine) lettuce, crisp cucumbers, tomatoes, onion rings and a cress-like herb called barbeen. Another herb which could be included is rashad, resembling coarse dill and with the peppery flavour of cress. Date vinegar is used as the dressing on salads, with a little salt and pepper. The beverage is more than likely to be beer, and when one recalls the area's earliest history it is understandable because beer was made by the Sumerians as far back as 3000 BCE. At the conclusion of the meal, coffee — prepared in the Turkish manner — and sweet pastries are served in another room. If you are a guest, on your departure your hostess sprinkles the top of your head with rosewater dispensed from a long silver decanter fitted with a perforated top. The significance is to carry the pleasure of the visit away with you, the lingering fragrance serving as a reminder.

INGREDIENTS FOR IRAQI COOKING

Favourite meats are lamb, beef and chicken. The rice preferred is the basmati rice of Pakistan. You will need [Baharat](#), the spice mix popular in the Gulf States, although the Iraqi cook is quite likely to substitute ground allspice, adding a little pepper and paprika for added heat and colour. Flat-leaf parsley is essential, and watercress for salads in place of the rashad and barbeen which are difficult to obtain outside the region. Dried dates are

essential and, if you can get them, fresh dates for preserves and sweets; rosewater, orange flower water, saffron, almonds, walnuts and dried fruits also feature heavily. The dried lime of the Gulf States and Iran is also used in Iraq, where it is called noomi basra. Basra is a seaport on the Arabian Gulf, and as the dried limes would arrive from there the locals added the name of the seaport to the name for the lime. I have referred to the lime as noomi in the Iraqi recipes, although it is elsewhere known as [loomi](#); the directions for preparing your own dried limes can be found.

PRONUNCIATION OF ARABIC NAMES

Pronounce 'a' as in past; 'e' as in egg; 'eh' as in egg, slightly aspirated; 'ou' as in soup; 'i' as in pit; 'u' as in put; an inverted comma (') before a vowel is a barely perceptible 'k' (Lebanon, Syria and Jordan only).

This guide serves for all Arabic-speaking countries: Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the Gulf States, Yemen and Egypt, and for Iran and Afghanistan.

BATATA CHARP I

Potato cakes with meat filling MAKES: 40

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) potatoes 1 large egg, beaten

35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour, plus extra for coating salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season oil, for pan-frying

Meat filling

1 tablespoon oil

1 onion, finely chopped 1 garlic clove, finely chopped 250 g (9 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb or beef 1 teaspoon Baharat

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes

3 teaspoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt, to taste

Scrub the potatoes and boil them in their jackets until tender. Drain, peel and mash to a smooth purée. Leave to cool, then mix in the egg and flour. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.

To make the meat filling, heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the garlic and meat and stir over high heat until the mixture is crumbly and the meat begins to brown. Stir in the Baharat, tomatoes and parsley and season with salt. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes — the mixture should be fairly dry.

Take about a tablespoon of the potato mixture and flatten it in the palm of your hand. Put a teaspoon of meat filling in the centre and close the potato around the filling. Roll into a ball and place on a tray. While shaping the potato cakes, moisten your hands with water to prevent the potato sticking.

Roll the balls in some extra flour and flatten them slightly to make thick cakes.

Pour oil into a frying pan to a depth of 5 mm (¼ inch). Heat well and fry the potato cakes until golden brown on each side — about 3 minutes in all. Drain on paper towels and serve hot, piled on a plate.



BATATA CHARP II

Potato cakes with vegetable filling MAKES: 40

2 tablespoons oil

1 large onion, finely chopped 1 teaspoon turmeric

2 large ripe tomatoes

1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Prepare the potato mixture as for Batata Charp I (left).

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the turmeric and fry for a further 1 minute. Remove from the heat.

Score a cross in the base of each tomato. Place in a heatproof bowl and cover with boiling water. Leave for 30 seconds, then transfer to cold water and peel the skin away from the cross.

Slice the tomatoes in half crossways and remove the seeds and juice. Chop finely and place in a bowl. Add the onion mixture and parsley, and salt and pepper to taste.

Make the potato cakes as instructed in Batata Charp I, using the vegetable filling in place of the meat filling.

TIMMAN Z'AFFARAN

Saffron rice

SERVES: 5–6

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati rice ½ teaspoon saffron threads

2 tablespoons rosewater

85 g (3 oz/⅓ cup) oil

40 g (1½ oz/⅓ cup) blanched split almonds 1 onion, finely chopped

250 g (9 oz) minced (ground) lamb or beef ½ teaspoon Baharat

½ teaspoon salt, plus extra to season 30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) sultanas (golden raisins) 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) chicken stock Place the rice in a sieve and wash well until the water runs clear. Cover with cold water and leave to soak for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, pound the saffron threads and place in a small bowl. Add the rosewater and leave to steep until required.

Heat half the ghee or oil in a frying pan, add the almonds and fry until golden. Remove to a plate with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Add the onion to the pan and fry gently until translucent. Increase the heat, add the meat and cook, stirring often, until the meat is crumbly. Fry until the juices evaporate, then add the Baharat, salt and sultanas. Fry for 1 minute longer, then remove the pan from the heat. Cover and set aside.

Heat the remaining ghee or oil in a deep, heavy-based saucepan. Add 2 teaspoons of the saffron mixture and the chicken stock. Bring to the boil.

Drain the rice and add to the boiling stock with salt to taste. Stir occasionally until the stock returns to the boil, then reduce the heat to low and cover the pan tightly. Simmer gently for 30 minutes.

Fold the meat mixture gently through the rice. Cover the rim of the pan with a cloth or two paper towels and set the lid on tightly. Leave over low heat for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and leave for another 5 minutes, or longer if necessary. The rice should not spoil, though this depends on its quality.

Pile the rice in a serving dish or platter and sprinkle with the almonds and the remaining saffron–rosewater mixture.

Excellent served with roast chicken and lamb, or as part of a buffet.

TIMMAN

Steamed white rice

SERVES: 5–6

Iraqi steamed rice is rather like the chelou of neighbouring Iran, but there is sufficient difference in the preparation to warrant its inclusion. As with chelou, it can be just steamed to a light fluffy grain, or cooked in such a way as to achieve a crisp golden rice crust on the base of the saucepan.

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati, or other good-quality long-grain white rice

85 g (3 oz/½ cup) oil

2 tablespoons salt

Wash the rice well in cold water. Drain well.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the ghee or oil in a heavy-based saucepan and add the rice. Stir over high heat for 2 minutes, then add 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) warm water and the salt. Bring to the boil, stirring occasionally. Boil for 5 minutes, then drain.

Heat another tablespoon of the ghee or oil in the same pan. Add the drained rice and spread evenly. Pour the remaining ghee on top of the rice.

Cover tightly with a lid. For rice without a crust, cook over constant low heat for 40 minutes. For rice with a crust, cook over medium heat for the first 10 minutes, then reduce the heat to low and cook for a further 30 minutes.

To remove the crust easily, place the pan in cold water for 5 minutes to loosen the rice from the base. Otherwise, fluff up the rice with a fork and pile it into a serving dish. If the crust is present, break it into pieces and place it on the dish around the rice.

TASHREEB DIJAJ

Pot-roasted chicken

SERVES: 6

1 chicken, about 1.7 kg (3 lb 12 oz)

1 lemon

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

2 tablespoons ghee or oil

1 garlic bulb, left whole and unpeeled

Timman (left) or Timman Z'affaran, to serve

Clean the chicken and wipe dry with paper towels. Cut half the lemon into quarters and rub them over the chicken, inside and out. Season the cavity and the outside of the chicken with salt and pepper and leave for 30 minutes to absorb the flavours.

Remove the outer dry layers from the garlic bulb, exposing the cloves, but leaving them unpeeled and attached to the root. Wash well and set aside.

Heat the ghee or oil in a heavy-based saucepan and brown the chicken on all sides. Add the garlic bulb to the pan. Reduce the heat to low, then cover and cook for 10 minutes.

Juice the remaining lemon half and add to the pan with 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water. Cover the pan tightly and simmer gently over low heat for 2 hours, turning the chicken twice during cooking.

When tender, remove the chicken to a platter and keep hot. Skim the fat from the juices in the pan; remove and discard the garlic. Cook the juices over high heat until reduced by half, then adjust the seasoning.

Cut the chicken into serving portions and pour the juices over the chicken. Serve with Timman (left) or Timman Z'affaran.

DIJAJ ALA TIMMAN

Roast stuffed chicken

SERVES: 6

1 chicken, about 1. 7 kg (3 lb 12 oz) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) butter or ghee

125 ml (4 fl oz/1/2 cup) light stock or water

Rice stuffing

100 g (3½ oz/½ cup) basmati, or other good-quality long-grain white rice 60 g (2 oz/⅓ cup) ghee

1 small onion, finely chopped

40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) pine nuts or slivered almonds 30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) chopped walnuts

30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) sultanas (golden raisins)

½ teaspoon Baharat or ground allspice salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

To make the rice stuffing, wash the rice in a sieve until the water runs clear, then drain well and set aside.

Heat the ghee in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in all the nuts and the rice and fry for 5 minutes, stirring often.

Add the sultanas, Baharat, 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir well, then cover and cook over low heat for 10 minutes, or until the water has been absorbed. Remove from the heat and leave to cool.

Clean the chicken and wipe dry with paper towels. Fill the cavity with the rice stuffing then truss the chicken. Rub the chicken with salt and pepper.

Melt the butter or ghee in a baking dish. Put the chicken in the dish and baste well. Pour the stock or water into the dish.

Roast the chicken for 2 hours, basting often with the juices in the dish.

Serve the chicken cut into portions, with the stuffing piled in the centre of the platter. Though not usual, the juices in the dish may be skimmed, diluted with a little stock, brought to the boil and served separately in a sauceboat.



HABEET I

Stewed lamb

SERVES: 6

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) lamb shoulder, cut into 6 pieces on the bone 1 noomi (dried lime), or thinly peeled rind of ½ lemon salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

6 garlic cloves, chopped

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) cider or malt vinegar

Place the lamb in a large saucepan and cover with cold water. Add the dried lime, pierced twice with a skewer, or the lemon rind.

Bring slowly to the boil, skimming frequently as the froth rises. When well skimmed and simmering, add about 2 teaspoons salt, a good grinding of pepper, the garlic and vinegar.

Cover and simmer gently for 2½–3 hours, or until the liquid is reduced to a thick sauce and the meat falls off the bones.

Remove the bones and the lime or lemon rind. Serve on a platter with flat breads.

HABEET II

Spiced stewed lamb SERVES: 6

Reduce the garlic in the recipe for Habeet I (above) to 3 cloves and omit the pepper and vinegar. When the broth is well skimmed, add some salt, the chopped garlic, 1 teaspoon ground turmeric and 1 tablespoon [Baharat](#). Cover and simmer as before. Serve with [Timman](#).

KHOUZI ALA TIMMAN

Lamb shanks and rice

SERVES: 6

A restaurant speciality in Baghdad, this dish is a scaled-down version of the festive Arabic khouzi (whole lamb stuffed with rice). The cooking method and the stuffing vary according to the region; see for [khouzi](#) as prepared in the Gulf States. Although the lamb is not stuffed in this recipe, the final dish has the basic components of khouzi.

6 lamb shanks, cracked 1 noomi (dried lime), or thinly peeled strip of lemon rind 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) oil 1 large onion, finely chopped 1 teaspoon Baharat

1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric 500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 2 teaspoons salt

2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

Timman or Timman Z'affaran, to serve Rinse the lamb shanks in cold water and place in a large saucepan. Pour in enough cold water to just cover the meat. Add the dried lime, pierced twice with a skewer, or lemon rind and bring slowly to the boil, skimming as required.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the Baharat and turmeric and fry for a further 1 minute. Add the tomatoes, salt and pepper.

When the lamb shank liquid is well skimmed and simmering, add the tomato mixture. Cover and simmer gently for 1½–2 hours, or until the meat is very tender. Towards the end of cooking, place the lid at an angle so the liquid can reduce to a thick sauce.

Arrange the lamb shanks on a bed of Timman or Timman Z'affaran and pour the sauce over.

Serve with salad and flat breads.

MUMBAR

Lamb and rice sausage

SERVES: 6–8

Mumbar is another Iraqi innovation, popular during winter when the variety of available vegetables is limited.

Lamb filling

**1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb, with a little fat
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 small onion, finely chopped**

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

**60g (2 oz/ ¼ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée) 100 g (3½ oz/ ½ cup) long-grain white rice,
washed 1 teaspoon Baharat**

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season To finish

**750 g (1 lb 10 oz) lamb breast (riblets) 1 noomi (dried lime), optional salt and freshly ground black
pepper, to season thick lamb or beef sausage casing, about 60 cm (24 inches) long Combine the
lamb filling ingredients in a mixing bowl. Mix thoroughly, then cover and refrigerate until required.**

If the lamb breast is in one piece, cut it into strips between the bones. Place in a large saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring slowly to the boil, skimming as required.

When the broth is well skimmed and simmering, add the dried lime, pierced twice with a skewer, if using.

Season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Rinse the sausage casing and leave in one piece. Open the casing under running water and slip it onto the end of a large funnel. Push the length of the casing onto the funnel.

Place the filling in the funnel and push it through using the end of a wooden spoon. As the filling comes through, pull the end of the casing over it and make a knot. Fill the casing as evenly as possible.

When filled, run your hands along the casing to distribute the filling evenly, then knot the other end.

Remove the pan of lamb from the heat. Coil the mumbar into the pan on top of the lamb, keeping the coil flat. Invert a heavy plate on top to keep the mumbar in place.

Place the pan back over low heat. Cover and simmer for a further 1½ hours. Check the liquid after 30 minutes and add water if necessary to just cover the mumbar.

When cooked, set the pan to one side for 15 minutes, then remove the mumbar to a plate. Slice into 4 cm (1½ inch) pieces and serve with [Murag](#) and [Timman](#).

DOLMAS

Stuffed vegetables

MAKES APPROXIMATELY 60

Dolmas are as popular in Iraq as in other countries of the region. The filling given for Mumbar (left) is used in the Iraqi version of dolma, along with the usual vegetables — eggplant (aubergine), tomatoes, capsicums (peppers), zucchini (courgettes), cabbage, grape vine and silverbeet (Swiss chard) leaves. The Iraqis, still the innovators in Arabic cuisine as they were centuries ago, also fill egg shells with any meat mixture left after preparing the vegetables. These are placed on top of the vegetables for cooking.

Use the lamb filling as for the Mumbar recipe (left). Prepare the vegetables as directed in the Khareni Litzk Bulghourov recipe in the Armenia chapter [Vegetables stuffed with lamb](#), then fill with the lamb filling.

Place in an oiled baking dish, brush with oil, cover with foil and bake in a 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) oven for 30 minutes.

Remove the foil and bake for a further 20–30 minutes.

HAMUTH HELOO

Lamb with dried fruits

SERVES: 5–6

When dates are being dried, they exude a thick, molasses-like syrup. The Iraqi cook adds some of this syrup when making this dish, but the addition of brown sugar gives a somewhat similar flavour.

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) boneless stewing lamb 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) oil 1 onion, chopped

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

1 noomi (dried lime), or thinly peeled rind of ½ lemon salt, to season

80 g (3 oz/½ cup) chopped dates 135 g (4½ oz/¾ cup) dried apricots 185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) chopped pitted prunes 30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) sultanas (golden raisins)

2 tablespoons brown sugar

Timman, to serve Cut the lamb into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes. Heat half the ghee or oil in a large, heavy-based saucepan and brown the lamb over medium–high heat, in batches if necessary.

Return all the lamb to the pan and push to one side. Add the onion and cook for 5 minutes. Add 250 ml (8½ fl oz/ 1 cup) water, the cinnamon, and the dried lime, pierced twice with a skewer, or lemon rind. Season with salt, then reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, place the dates in a small saucepan with 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water and heat until the dates soften. Press through a sieve to purée.

Add the date purée to the stew with the apricots, prunes, sultanas and sugar. Stir, then cover tightly and simmer for a further 1 hour, or until the lamb is tender. Check during cooking to ensure the fruit does not stick to the pan, adding a little more water if necessary.

Remove the cinnamon and lime or lemon rind. Serve hot, with a dish of Timman.



LAHAM AJEEN

Flat lamb pies

MAKES: 24

Many Middle Eastern countries have their favourite version of these pies. In Iraq they are made in great quantities and sold as between-meal snacks. As I rather enjoyed these in Baghdad, this is the version I have chosen to include.

These pies freeze well, so it is worthwhile having a quantity on hand for the lunchbox or picnic hamper, as they are equally good served cold. Another way to present them is to make smaller versions and serve them hot as a finger food with pre-dinner drinks.

750–900 g (1 lb 10 oz–2 lb/5–6 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour 2 teaspoons active dried yeast 2 teaspoons sugar

2 teaspoons salt

2 tablespoons oil

Lamb topping

2 tablespoons oil

1 large onion, finely chopped 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb 375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 200 g (7 oz/1½ cups) grated zucchini (courgette)

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

½ teaspoon dried thyme

1 small red chilli, seeded and finely chopped salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Sift the flour into a large mixing bowl and warm in a low oven.

In a bowl, dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water. Stir in another 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) warm water with the sugar and salt.

Remove about 300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) of the flour from the warmed bowl and set aside. Pour the yeast mixture into the centre of the warmed bowl and mix in a little of the flour to thicken the liquid. Cover with a cloth and leave until frothy.

Stir in enough of the remaining flour to make a soft dough, gradually adding the oil. Beat by hand for 10 minutes, or use an electric mixer with a dough hook for 5 minutes.

Turn out onto a work surface dusted with flour and knead until smooth and elastic, using just enough flour to stop the dough sticking. Shape into a ball. Place in an oiled bowl and turn the dough over to oil it all over. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and leave the dough in a warm place until doubled in size — about 1 hour.

Meanwhile, make the lamb topping. Heat the oil in a saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the garlic. Increase the heat to high, add the lamb and stir until the juices evaporate and the meat begins to brown.

Stir in the remaining topping ingredients. Cover and simmer over gentle heat for 30 minutes, removing the lid towards the end of cooking so that the excess moisture can evaporate — the mixture should be thick. Leave to cool.

Preheat the oven to 220°C (430°F/Gas 7).

Punch down the dough and turn it out onto a floured surface. Knead for 2 minutes, then divide into 24 equal portions, shaping each into a ball.

Roll out each ball to a 12 cm (5 inch) round and place on greased baking trays. Spread a generous tablespoon of topping on each. Bake for 12–15 minutes, or until cooked.

Serve hot or cold.

TASHREEB

Stewed lamb shanks and tripe

SERVES: 6

For a genuine tashreeb, lambs' feet are required. As these are difficult to obtain, often being prohibited from sale by health regulations, I have used lamb shanks instead. This is just one version of tashreeb as prepared in Iraq.

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) tripe

4 lamb foreshanks, cracked

110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) dried chickpeas, soaked overnight, then drained 2 noomi ([dried lime](#)), or the thinly peeled rind of ½ lemon 1 garlic bulb, left whole and unpeeled

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) oil 1 large onion, finely chopped

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 2 teaspoons [Baharat](#)

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

2 large flat breads

Wash the tripe well and cut into 3 cm (1¼ inch) squares. Place in a large saucepan with the lamb shanks and chickpeas, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Drain off the water.

Add enough fresh water to the pan to just cover the tripe and lamb shanks. Add the dried limes, each pierced twice with a skewer, or the lemon rind.

Wash the garlic bulb well and strip off the outer layers of papery skin, leaving the unpeeled cloves exposed. Leave the garlic intact and add to the pan. Bring to a slow simmer, skimming as required.

Meanwhile, heat the ghee or oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the tomatoes and Baharat.

When the lamb mixture is well skimmed and simmering, add the tomato mixture and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 2–2½ hours, or until the lamb and tripe are tender.

Remove and discard the garlic bulb and the limes or lemon rind. Lift out the lamb shanks and strip the meat from the bones. Cut the meat into pieces and return to the pan. Bring to the boil to reheat the meat.

Cut the bread into squares and place in the base of a deep serving dish or casserole. Pour the liquid from the stew over the bread, then top with the stew. Serve hot, in deep plates.

MURAG

Meat stew

SERVES: 5–6

Though the literal translation of murag is sauce or gravy, it is the Iraqi version of the popular Middle Eastern meat stew. A vegetable is usually added — green beans, peas, eggplant (aubergine) or okra being the most popular. When murag is served with rice, as it almost always is, the dish is then called timman murag.

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) boneless stewing beef or lamb 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) oil

2 large onions, finely chopped

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes, or 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée)

1 teaspoon sugar

1 teaspoon Baharat, optional salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

your choice of prepared vegetable (see note) Timman or Timman Z'affaran, to serve Trim the meat and cut into 4 cm (1½ inch) cubes. Heat half the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and brown the meat in batches over high heat. Remove to a plate.

Reduce the heat, add the remaining oil and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the tomatoes or tomato paste. If using tomatoes, also add 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water; if using tomato paste, add 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water.

Stir in the sugar, and Baharat if using. Season with salt and pepper and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and return the meat to the pan. Cover and simmer for 45 minutes for lamb, or 1¼ hours for beef.

Add your choice of vegetable, then cover and simmer for a further 1 hour, or until the meat is tender. Serve with Timman or Timman Z'affaran, flat breads and pickles.

✿ Note: Add any one of the following vegetables to the stew:

- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) green beans, topped, tailed and cut in half
- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) okra, prepared as directed; also add 2 chopped garlic cloves when frying the onion
- 310 g (10¾ oz/2 cups) shelled green peas
- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) eggplant (aubergine), cubed, salted for 30 minutes, then rinsed.



MURABBA TRINGE

Citron peel in syrup

**2 citrons (or lemons or limes)
660 g (1 lb 7 oz/3 cups) sugar**

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Lightly grate the entire surface of each citron. Deeply score the peel, from the stem end to the base, into six or eight segments, depending on the size of the citrons. Carefully remove the peel.

Cut each segment into three pieces. As the piece from the centre will be square, cut it in half diagonally so that all the pieces are triangular.

Place the peel in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil, then pour off the water.

Cover with fresh cold water, then boil again and drain.

Do this five times in all, then cover with more fresh cold water and leave to stand for 6–8 hours.

Drain and cover again with fresh cold water. Bring to the boil and boil gently until tender — about 45 minutes.

Drain again and spread out on paper towels to dry.

In a clean saucepan, dissolve the sugar in 750 ml (25 fl oz/ 3 cups) cold water over medium heat, stirring occasionally. When dissolved, bring to the boil and add the lemon juice. Boil without stirring for 5 minutes.

Add the citron peel to the syrup and bring back to the boil. Leave to boil over medium heat for 10 minutes, skimming when necessary. Remove the pan from the heat, then cover and leave overnight.

The next day, bring the pan contents back to the boil and boil gently for 15–20 minutes, or until the syrup is thick when tested on a cold saucer.

Cool a little, then ladle the peel and syrup into warm, [sterilised jars](#). Seal when cold and store in a cool, dark place.

Serve as a confection in small dishes with a spoon.

KLAICHA

Date-filled pastries

MAKES: 30

Klaicha dough

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour 115 g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) unsalted butter

3 teaspoons orange flower water or rosewater

Date filling

250 g (9 oz) dried pitted dates

40 g (1½ oz) butter

To make the Klaicha dough, sift the flour and sugar into a large mixing bowl. Cut the butter into pieces and rub into the flour with your fingertips until distributed evenly.

Combine the orange flower water or rosewater with 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) water and sprinkle onto the flour mixture. Mix to a firm dough, then knead lightly until smooth. Rest the dough for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the date filling. Chop the dates and place in a saucepan with the butter. Heat gently until the dates soften, stirring often. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Preheat the oven to 170°C (340°F/Gas 3).

Roll the dough into balls the size of large walnuts.

Working one at a time, flatten a ball of dough in the palm of your hand and place a teaspoon of the date filling in the centre. Mould the dough around the filling and reshape it into a ball.

Press the ball into a carved mould, similar to a tabi (a Lebanese mould for shaping pastries), and place on an ungreased baking tray. Alternatively, place the filled pastries on a tray, flatten slightly, then press the tines of a fork obliquely around the sides and across the top, giving a slightly conical shape.

Bake for 30–35 minutes, until lightly browned.

Leave to cool on a tray; the pastries will become firm and crisp on cooling. Store in a sealed container when cool.

★ Note: For an alternative shape, divide the pastry into three equal portions and roll each portion into a rectangle 1 cm (½ inch) thick and 10 cm (4 inches) wide. Put one-third of the date mixture, shaped in a long roll, along one pastry edge and roll up to enclose the filling. Press the edges and ends to seal. Place the rolls, seam side down, on an ungreased baking tray. Decorate the top with a pastry crimper or any other means to make a design. Bake as above, then cool and slice at an angle to serve. Store in a sealed container.

MURABBA TAMAR I

Dates in syrup

Cooking dates are required for this confection. The fresh dates available in non-date growing countries are table varieties, usually imported frozen. These are too soft to be prepared in the traditional way. If these are the only dates available, then follow the directions for [Murabba Tamar II](#).

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) fresh cooking dates walnut halves, for filling the dates

660 g (1 lb 7 oz/3 cups) sugar

1 thin strip of lemon rind

juice of

½ lemon, strained

4 cloves

small piece of cinnamon bark

Wash the dates and remove the stems. Peel off the skin using a sharp knife. Place the dates in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil, then boil gently for 15 minutes, or until the dates are tender. Drain, reserving the cooking liquid.

When the dates are cool enough to handle, push the date seeds out with a chopstick.

Cut the walnut halves in half to give quarters, about the size of the date seed. Insert a piece of walnut in each date.

Place the filled dates in a bowl in layers, sprinkling the sugar generously between each layer and over the top. Leave for 12 hours, or overnight.

Measure the reserved date cooking liquid and make up to 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) with water if necessary. Pour over the dates and leave for 2 hours to dissolve the sugar, shaking the bowl contents occasionally.

Drain the sugar liquid into a heavy-based saucepan and bring to the boil. Add the lemon rind and juice, the cloves and cinnamon. Boil, uncovered, over medium heat for 10 minutes without stirring. Skim off any froth as required.

Add the dates and return to the boil. Boil for 10 minutes, or until the syrup is thick when tested on a cold saucer.

Remove the lemon rind and cinnamon. Pack the dates into [sterilised jars](#) and pour the syrup over them. Seal when cold and store at room temperature.

Serve in small dishes with a spoon, or as a sweetmeat.



MURABBA TAMAR II

Table dates in syrup

Use the same ingredients as for the [Murabba Tamar I](#) recipe, substituting table dates for the cooking dates. Leave the dates unpeeled and wash well. Either push the date seeds out with a chopstick and insert walnut pieces in each date, or slit the side of the date to remove the seed and then insert a walnut piece.

Combine 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water with the sugar and dissolve over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Add the lemon rind, juice and spices and boil, uncovered, for 10 minutes without stirring. Add the prepared dates and return to the boil, then remove from the heat and set aside for 12 hours.

Remove the dates from the syrup and place in a heatproof bowl. Bring the syrup to the boil, then boil without stirring for 10 minutes, skimming when necessary. Strain the syrup over the dates and leave until cool.

Pack into [sterilised jars](#), seal and store in the refrigerator.

HOLWAH TAMAR

Date sweetmeat

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) dried pitted dates 60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee 250 g (9 oz/2 cups) walnut pieces

2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

Chop the dates roughly and place in a heavy-based saucepan with the ghee. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until the dates soften and are combined with the ghee.

Spread half the date mixture in a 23 cm (9 inch) square cake tin. Sprinkle the walnut pieces over the dates, pressing them in lightly. Place the remaining date mixture on top, spreading it evenly.

Sprinkle the top with the sesame seeds, pressing them on lightly. Leave until cold, then cut into small squares or diamond shapes.

Store in a sealed container and serve as a sweetmeat.

Walnut-filled pastries

MAKES: 30

Klaicha dough icing (confectioners' sugar, for dusting Walnut filling

230 g (8 oz/2 cups) coarsely ground walnuts 55 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) caster (superfine) sugar Make the dough as directed in the Klaicha recipe and leave to rest for 30 minutes.

Combine the walnut filling ingredients, kneading by hand to form a coarse paste.

Preheat the oven to 170°C (340°F/Gas 3).

Roll the dough, a tablespoon at a time, into balls the size of large walnuts. Working one at a time, flatten them out in the palm of your hand and put a generous teaspoon of nut filling in the centre. Close the dough around the filling, sealing well.

Press the ball into a carved mould, similar to a tabi (a Lebanese mould for shaping pastries), and place on an ungreased baking tray. Alternatively, place the filled pastries on a tray, flatten slightly, then press the tines of a fork obliquely around the sides and across the top, giving a slightly conical shape.

Bake for 30–35 minutes, or until very lightly browned. Leave to cool on the baking tray for 10 minutes.

Sift a layer of icing sugar onto a sheet of greaseproof (parchment) paper and place the pastries on the sugar. Sift more icing sugar on top to coat them thickly.

Leave the pastries until thoroughly cooled, then store in a sealed container.

ZLABIYA

Fried sweet rosettes

MAKES: ABOUT 30

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

375 g (13 oz/2½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour ½ teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons sugar

corn or peanut oil, for deep-frying

Syrup

440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar

2 teaspoons lemon juice

2 teaspoons rosewater or orange flower water Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water.

Sift the flour into a bowl and make a well in the centre.

Add the salt and sugar to the yeast mixture, along with 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) warm water. Pour the yeast mixture into the centre of the flour. Gradually stir in the flour to form a thick liquid batter, then beat vigorously for 10 minutes. (This can be done using ordinary electric beaters.) Cover the batter and leave to rest in a warm place for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the syrup. Dissolve the sugar in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water in a saucepan over medium heat. Bring to the boil, add the lemon juice and boil briskly for 15 minutes. Add the rosewater or orange flower water, boil for 1 minute longer, then set aside to cool.

Beat the batter again for 5 minutes, then let it rest for a further 30 minutes.

Heat enough oil for deep-frying in a wide saucepan — a depth of 4 cm (1½ inches) is sufficient. Heat the oil to 190°C (375°F), or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 10 seconds; the pastries must fry without colouring too much.

Beat the batter again briefly. Spoon some of the batter into a piping bag fitted with a 5 mm (¼ inch) plain nozzle. Hold a finger over the nozzle while filling the bag.

Squeeze the batter into the oil in a 10 cm (4 inch) circle, and fill in the circle with a lacy pattern of squiggles or zig-zags, ensuring that the batter touches the outer circle in places. The finished pastry must look like a rough, lacy rosette.

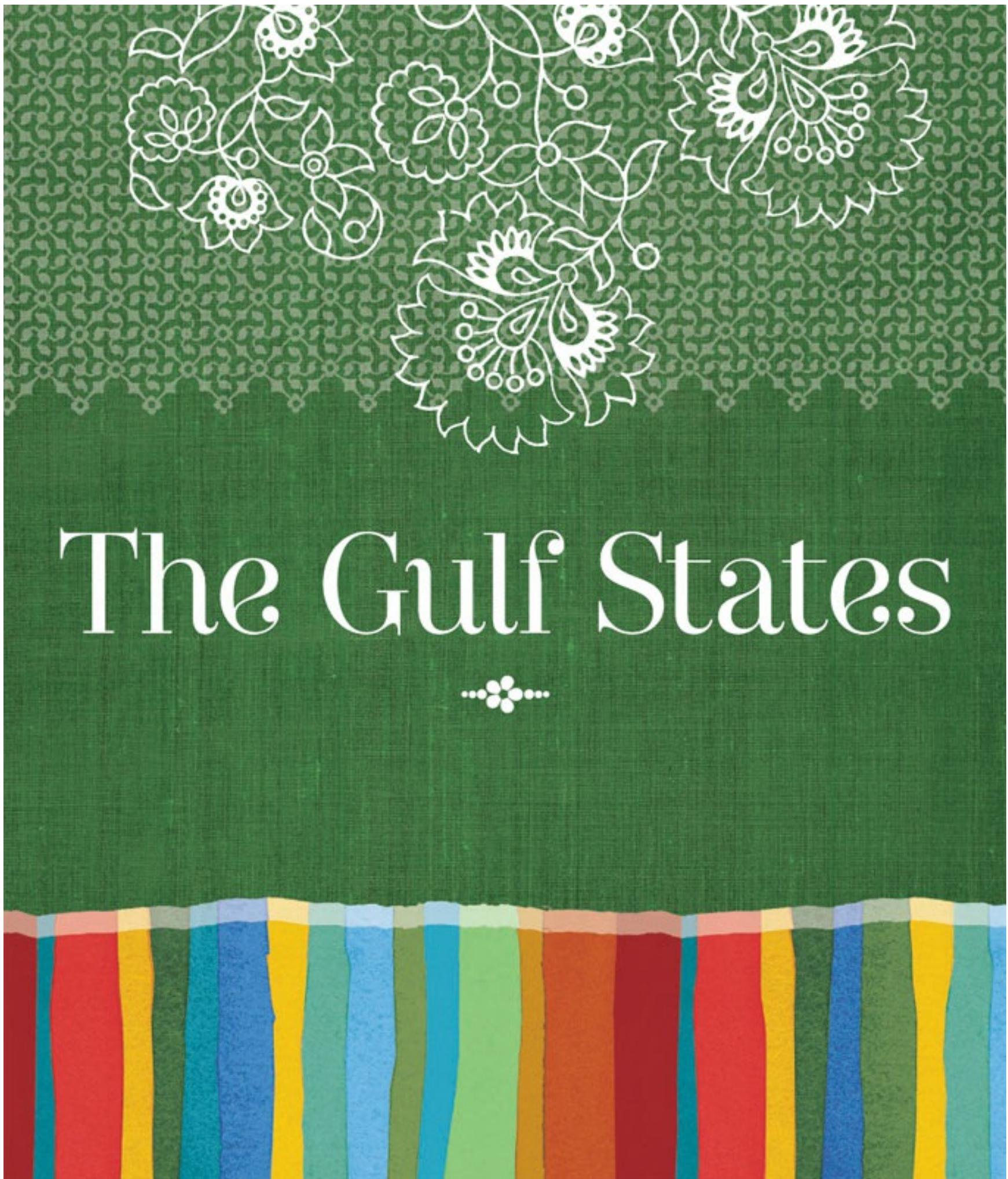
Fry for about 3 minutes, turning once to cook evenly. When golden, lift out the rosette with a slotted spoon,

drain briefly, then place into the cooled syrup.

Using a second spoon or a fork, turn the pastry in the syrup and lift it out onto a plate. (A second pair of hands will make the process much less complicated.) Continue cooking and turning the rosettes in the syrup until all the batter is used.

Serve the rosettes piled on a plate. They will remain crisp for some time if the syrup is very thick.







THE GULF STATES

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, SAUDI ARABIA, BAHRAIN, KUWAIT, QATAR, OMAN

While the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman are separate countries, the collective grouping in one chapter is necessary as their cooking is very similar. One can trace the origin of certain recipes to one particular place, but you would also find the same dish prepared in the other countries.

The aspect of Arabic life that impresses one most is their hospitality, and the single food — if it could be called such — with which this is expressed is coffee. The coffee pot is ever present, though nowadays coffee is likely to be prepared early in the day and kept hot in a vacuum flask ready in case a guest should drop in.

There are certain rules that should be observed if ever you are offered coffee in this region. First, do not refuse a cup; to do so is an insult to the host. Your cup will be replenished a second time and a third, and more if you do not indicate to the host that you are satisfied. A simple little jiggle of your empty cup from side to side indicates that you have had sufficient. Only a small portion of coffee is served — a third of a cup is poured each time, and the handle-less cups are very small. Coffee is always served unsweetened and flavoured with cardamom. Taking three cups of coffee is expected of you, rather than just one.

The first impressions of the food of the Gulf States — particularly in the souk (market) — quash any notion originally held that the staple diet is boiled meat (lamb, mutton or camel) served on a huge mound of spiced rice. While this might be true of the nomadic Bedouin, camped far from places which could provide anything else, it is not so of the food of townspeople. The variety of fresh vegetables, fruits, spices, meat, fish and poultry from which to choose would delight any serious cook and amaze at the same time, as an aerial view of the region with its vast, arid landscape does not indicate abundance — not of the edible kind anyway.

THE FLAVOUR OF ARABIC COOKING

The Gulf Arabs are very fond of skewered meats, either succulent cubes of lamb similar to the kebabs of other Middle Eastern countries, or [Kabab Mashwi](#), a meat paste moulded onto flat skewers and grilled over coals. These are often served folded into khoubiz (flat bread) together with salad ingredients.

Their rice dishes are of the kind one would expect, knowing the colourful history of the Arabs, as it was the Arabs who opened the spice routes to India and the East, and to the West, trading their cardamom, coriander seeds and cumin for cinnamon, nutmeg, cassia, ginger, pepper, turmeric and cloves. The most popular spicing is a mixture of most of these, called [Baharat](#), and it is used in rice, soups, fish, poultry and meat dishes, usually with the addition of whole spices to emphasise certain flavours, and turmeric or saffron for colour. Often the saffron is steeped in rosewater and poured over the dish towards the end of cooking, or as it is, served for a final dash of colour and fragrance.

Shades of near-Indian cooking are to be expected, with the historical links probably going even further back than those already documented. The Indus Valley civilisation mysteries have yet to be unravelled, but recent archaeological finds in Bahrain and elsewhere in the Gulf region reveal seals similar to those found in the Indus Valley.

[Machbous](#) is a particularly interesting dish of meat, fish, prawns (shrimp) or chicken, cooked in spices with rice. The rice itself must be basmati as the Arab refuses any other substitute. Basmati is an aromatic rice from Pakistan, hard of grain, which holds up to the long cooking involved. However, cooking times have been shortened in the recipes, in anticipation of possible substitutes.

One ingredient that intrigued me is the loomi (dried lime). In the Gulf region it is used extensively, either whole or pounded into a powder, and it imparts an interesting and unusual flavour to foods. It is difficult to give a substitute, but in some recipes the thinly peeled rind of a lemon may be used instead. The lime itself is dried naturally on the tree; it is grown in Oman and also imported from Thailand. Loomi is also to be found in Iran and Iraq, where it is called limu omani and noomi respectively, but in these countries it is only used whole. I have given details in this chapter on how to prepare your own dried limes.

The cucumbers of the Gulf are much loved by the people, and after tasting them I could understand why. The familiar long green cucumber is picked before it reaches maturity, and this is when cucumbers are at their best. One other variety, a long slender cucumber with a dark green and deeply grooved skin, is available in Western countries under a variety of names. In the Gulf it is called trooh; the locals claim that when the moon is full one can hear the cucumber groaning as it twists itself into the circles and other squiggly shapes in which it comes.

The waters of the Gulf are teeming with prawns (shrimp) and an infinite variety of fish. The most popular fish for the table are gugurfan and shehen (similar to bream), wahar (called flathead in the waters of Australia), beyah (mullet), chanad (mackerel) and a popular Kuwaiti fish called zubaidi (pomfret). Generally, fish is cooked over glowing coals, oven-baked, fried or stewed.

The khoubiz of the area is made in a similar way to the Iranian nane lavash and taftoon. Although the general term is khoubiz, the breads are known as [Mafrooda](#) and [Mafrooda Burd](#), depending on the flour used. Quite often Iranian bakers run the bakeries, and the same ovens and equipment are used as in Iran. [Samouli](#), a white bread similar to long French baguettes, is baked in a conventional oven.

EATING ARABIC STYLE

Today the region, while still keeping its traditions, is likely to cater also to Western tastes. A town house is likely to have a living room with one part furnished with floor and wall cushions for Arabic visitors, and a table and seating for Western visitors, emphasising the innate hospitality of the Arab.

Whether served on a cloth spread over a carpet on the floor or on a dining table, the food is presented in the

same way. All the components of the meal are placed in dishes and platters, with plates, spoons, forks and glassware. Only in a Bedouin tent is one likely to have the experience of eating from a communal platter, using the fingers of the right hand.

The main dish could be meat, fish or chicken, either cooked in a rich sauce, or roasted, baked or grilled. Muhammar ([sweet rice](#)), Mashkoul ([rice with onions](#);) or Muaddas ([rice with lentils](#);) is served separately, unless rice is incorporated with the meat dish. A dish of fresh salad is always served, consisting of cos (romaine) lettuce, crisp firm cucumbers, tomatoes, green or red capsicums (peppers), radishes and a cress-like green herb. The salad is simply dressed with vinegar. Bowls of yoghurt and pickles accompany the meal and bread is always served.

If you want to serve a meal with all the exotic elements of a feast in a desert sheikh's tent, then the dish to prepare is [Khouzi](#). While khouzi is prepared throughout the Gulf States and other Arabic countries, the Saudi Arabian khouzi reigns supreme. First you require a whole lamb, including the head. A rice stuffing, redolent with nuts, onions, sultanas and spices, is prepared. Some of this is packed into a chicken with shelled hardboiled eggs; then the chicken is placed in the cavity of the lamb with the bulk of the rice mixture. The cavity is sewn up and the lamb trussed. Although frequently roasted on the spit, it is traditionally placed in a large tray, with the ribs of palm leaves serving as a rack. Water is added to the tray and a lid is sealed over the tray with a flour-and-water paste. It is then oven-baked to succulent perfection. The lamb is cooked until it is so tender that the meat comes away from the bones easily. The stuffing is removed and spread on a serving platter with the lamb resting on top.

The khouzi is served with great ceremony. Servants present pitchers and bowls for guests to wash their hands before the meal. All the components of the meal are spread on a cloth over a colourful and usually expensive carpet, with cushions scattered around. The guests sit in their places with the most important guest seated next to the host, and the host delights in selecting the most succulent pieces of lamb to offer to the principal guest. The most highly regarded parts of the lamb are the eyes, which the Arabs consider great delicacies. I should imagine it would be somewhat like tackling your first oyster. To serve such a feast in the traditional manner would of course mean that only men would be present, but this problem is overcome by proclaiming any woman guest to be an honorary male. (There are most reputable precedents for this: the Queen of England was accorded this honour during a visit to Saudi Arabia in 1979.) At feasts of this type, eating is regarded as a serious business and there is little, if any, conversation. When the meal is finished hands are washed again, and the guests adjourn to another area for coffee, conversation and the water pipe.

INGREDIENTS FOR GULF COOKING

Basmati rice is a necessary ingredient for authentic Gulf cooking. The meat is usually lamb, but now that more food is imported, beef is gaining in popularity. Coarsely ground coffee (preferably moccha), cardamom, saffron, turmeric, flat-leaf parsley, coriander seeds, rosewater, loomi and dates are frequently used. Tamarind is still used in certain dishes, though tomato has replaced tamarind to a great extent. A large quantity of onions should be on hand, as they are much used in Gulf cooking. The recipes, Glossary and recipe notes give more detail on Gulf foods.

ACHAR LEFET

Pickled turnips

**80 g (3 oz/1/4 cup) rock salt 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) small white turnips (about 8) 1 small beetroot (beet)
1 garlic clove, peeled and cut in half lengthways 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) white vinegar**

Put the salt in a saucepan with 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water. Bring to the boil, stirring until the salt has dissolved. Cool.

Peel the turnips and cut into quarters or sixths. Peel the beetroot and cut into thick strips.

Pack the turnips in a large [sterilised jar](#), placing the beetroot strips and garlic between the layers.

Stir the vinegar into the cooled brine and pour over the turnips. Remove the air bubbles by inserting a fine skewer down the sides of the jar. Seal with a glass or plastic lid; if using a metal lid, place a doubled piece of plastic wrap over the top of the jar before securing the lid.

Leave in a cool place for at least 3 weeks before opening. Once opened, store in the refrigerator. Unopened pickles will keep in a cool, dark place for up to 3 months.



ACHAR TAMAT

Pickled tomatoes

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) firm, ripe, small or medium tomatoes 80 g (3 oz/1/4 cup) rock salt 3 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper 3 teaspoons paprika

2 teaspoons ground coriander

6 garlic cloves, halved lengthways 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) white vinegar Choose tomatoes with no sign of decay; wash them well. Cut a slit almost halfway through each tomato at the stem end, then fill the slits with salt. Place upright in a bowl and leave for 3 days. Drain off the liquid as it accumulates.

Invert the tomatoes in a colander to drain the excess liquid.

Combine the pepper, paprika and coriander and sprinkle about 1/2 teaspoon of the mixture into each tomato.

Pack the tomatoes into [sterilised jars](#), adding the garlic pieces between the layers. Fill the jars with the vinegar and seal with glass or plastic lids; if using metal lids, place a doubled piece of plastic wrap over the top of the jars before securing the lids.

Leave for 1 week before opening. Use within 6 weeks.

ACHAR FILFIL

Pickled peppers

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) green or red capsicums (peppers) 80 g (3 oz/¼ cup) rock salt 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) white vinegar 2 garlic cloves, halved

1 hot chilli, washed and trimmed

Wash the capsicums well and dry them. Trim the stems, but do not remove. Cut a long slit in each capsicum.

Put the salt in a saucepan with 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water. Bring to the boil, stirring until the salt has dissolved. Add the vinegar and return to the boil.

Pack the capsicums into a warm [sterilised](#) glass jar, adding the garlic and chilli. Pour the boiling hot brine mixture over the capsicums, filling the jar to overflowing. Let them absorb the brine, then top the jar up when they settle. Remove the air bubbles by inserting a fine skewer down the sides of the jar.

Seal the jar with a glass or plastic lid; if a metal lid is used, place a doubled layer of plastic wrap over the top of the jar before securing the lid.

Leave in a cool place for 3 weeks before opening. Once opened, store in the refrigerator. Unopened pickles will keep in a cool, dark place for 3–4 months.

BAHARAT

Mixed spices

MAKES: ABOUT 225 G (8 OZ) 70 g (2½ oz/½ cup) black peppercorns 25 g (¾ oz/¼ cup) coriander seeds 10 g (½ oz/¼ cup) cassia bark 20 g (¾ oz/¼ cup) cloves 35 g (1¼ oz/⅓ cup) cumin seeds 2 teaspoons cardamom seeds

4 whole nutmegs

50 g (2 oz/½ cup) paprika Grind the peppercorns, coriander seeds, cassia, cloves, cumin and cardamom seeds to a powder in a blender. (It may be necessary to combine all the ingredients, then grind about ½ cup of the mixture at a time.) Grate the nutmeg and blend it into the spices with the paprika. Store in an airtight jar and use as directed in recipes.

✿ Note: You can also use the same quantities of ready-ground spices. Four nutmegs yield approximately 20 g (¾ oz/½ cup) ground nutmeg. It will yield a greater amount of spice mix than the quantity above.

DUKKOUS AL-TAMAT

Tomato sauce

MAKES: ABOUT 375 ML (12½ FL OZ/1½ CUPS)

1 tablespoon oil

**4–6 garlic cloves, crushed 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) ripe tomatoes, peeled and chopped salt, to season
1½ teaspoons Baharat (left) Heat the oil in a saucepan, add the garlic and cook for a few seconds only.**

Add the tomatoes and season with salt. Cover and leave to simmer on low heat for 30 minutes.

Stir in the Baharat and cook with the lid off for 2–3 minutes.

Serve with rice, or as directed in recipes.

The sauce may be stored in a sealed jar in the refrigerator and heated for use as required.

DUKKOUS AL-BADINJAN

Eggplant sauce

MAKES: ABOUT 375 ML (12½ FL OZ/1½ CUPS) 2 oval eggplants (aubergines), each about 250 g (9 oz) 4 garlic cloves

1 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons oil

¼–½ teaspoon ground hot chilli or chilli powder

1 teaspoon paprika

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4). Place the eggplants on a baking tray and bake for 30 minutes, or until soft.

Crush the garlic with the salt using a mortar and pestle. Alternatively, crush it in a garlic press and mix it with the salt.

While the eggplants are still hot, peel off the skin and place the flesh in a bowl. Roughly chop the flesh, then mash with a fork. Stir in the crushed garlic mixture and remaining ingredients. Taste and adjust the spices if necessary.

Serve warm with [Muaddas](#) or other rice dishes.

LOOMI

Dried limes

Gulf cooks use dried limes (loomi) either whole or powdered, but in Iran and Iraq they are only used whole. When using intact loomi, they must be pierced with a skewer on each side so the cooking liquid can travel through the lime to take the flavour. In the dry heat of the Middle East the limes are very brittle and the holes can be made by simply pressing with a finger. I live in a humid climate and find that the humidity toughens the lime, so more forceful means of piercing and powdering need to be adopted. To powder loomi, pound them using a mortar and pestle, or process in a blender.

As loomi are not readily available outside the Middle East, instructions for preparing them are given below. The species of lime used alters the flavour a little, but it is still a most interesting spice. A sprinkling of powdered loomi also does wonders for steaks — rub some in before grilling or pan-frying!

small fresh limes, preferably Tahitian limes

1 tablespoon salt

Leave the limes whole, but if they are very large they can be halved to speed the drying process.

Put the limes in a saucepan of boiling water with the salt. Return to the boil, then allow to boil rapidly for 3–5 minutes, depending on size. Drain.

Spread the limes on a wire rack and place them in the sun to dry. This takes up to a week, depending on the strength of sun. Turn the limes daily.

If there is insufficient heat in the sun (which could be the case, as limes are a late autumn and winter fruit), it might be necessary to resort to other means. In this case place the rack of limes in the oven, set on the lowest possible heat. Place the rack in the coolest part of the oven and leave for 3–4 days. A warming drawer would be even better — or if you can get one, use an electric food dryer.

The limes are ready when they are dark and the flesh is completely dehydrated, but take care not to leave them until they are too dark. Store in an airtight container.

KHOUBIZ

Flat bread

Although khoubiz is a general term for bread in the Arabian Gulf region, there are more precise names for the various breads. As there are so many similar bread recipes already given, it will suffice to give the names and tell you which bread recipe to follow to make them Gulf-style breads.

MAFROODA

White flat bread Mafrooda is a white flat bread without a pocket. Follow the [Khoubiz](#) recipe, but do not rest the bread after shaping, and instead prick it with a fork or pinwheel.

Bake on a hot griddle or baking tray for 4 minutes, pressing the bread with a cloth if it looks as though a pocket is forming. Turn to brown the other side after 2 minutes, or brown under a hot grill (broiler) after baking.

MAFROODA BURD

Wholemeal flat bread

Follow the same directions as for Mafrooda (below left), using 600 g (1 lb 5 oz/4 cups) wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour and 300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) white flour.

SAMOULI

White bread

This is similar to the French baguette, and comes in sizes ranging from short sticks to very long ones. The top is glazed with water or egg glaze and sprinkled with coarse salt, sesame seeds or caraway seeds.

Follow the [Kouloura](#) recipe, and roll the dough into a 40 cm (16 inches) circle. Cut the circle into quarters. Beginning at the curved side, roll up to the point of the section. Put the loaves on baking trays, cover with a cloth and leave in a warm place until doubled in size. Glaze with beaten egg or water, sprinkle with coarse salt, sesame or caraway seeds, then sprinkle lightly with cold water.

Bake in a 190°C (375°F/Gas 5) oven for 15 minutes, or until the loaves sound hollow when tapped.

MUHAMMAR

Sweet rice

SERVES: 5–6 (1 IF YOU ARE DIVING)

Known as the Bahraini pearl divers' rice, muhammar is one of those recipes that falls into the 'necessity is the mother of invention' category.

Though early pearl divers were doubtlessly not aware of the physiological implications of diving, at some stage they must have found they could dive more frequently and with less ill-effect if they ate sweet foods (which maintained blood sugar levels) and sustaining foods (carbohydrates and fats). The combination of date juice, rice and fat in this dish fulfilled these requirements.

Diving enthusiasts might be interested in the skills of these intrepid men. Using a rope to guide them, they would rapidly descend to a depth of up to 40 metres (130 feet) with a weight tied to their toes. They would stay down for 10–15 minutes, scoop up any oysters in sight, then ascend.

Diving at such a depth even with modern scuba gear has its hazards, let alone with no breathing apparatus at all. Needless to say the mortality rate was high, with sharks, sea snakes and jellyfish adding to the dangers involved.

1/4 teaspoon saffron threads 3 cardamom pods, cracked

2 tablespoons rosewater

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati rice

1 tablespoon salt

55–75 g (2–2½ oz/¼–⅓ cup) sugar or honey 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee or butter

Add the saffron and cardamom to the rosewater and set aside to steep.

Pick over the rice, place in a sieve and wash under cold running water until the water runs clear. Drain.

Bring 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) water to the boil in a heavybased saucepan. Add the salt and rice and stir occasionally until the water returns to the boil. Leave uncovered and boil for 8 minutes. Strain and place in a bowl.

Pour the sugar or honey over the hot rice and mix through with a fork.

Heat the ghee or butter in the same pan in which the rice was cooked. Add the sugared rice and sprinkle the rosewater mixture over the top. Make three holes in the rice with the end of a wooden spoon.

Cover the rim of the pan with a paper towel and place the lid on tightly. Cook over low heat for 20–25 minutes, or until the rice is tender.

Serve with grilled fish and roast lamb.

MASHKOUL

Rice with onion SERVES: 5–6

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice

1 tablespoon salt

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) oil 1 large onion, finely chopped Pick over the rice, place in a sieve and wash under cold running water until the water runs clear. Drain.

Bring 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) water to the boil in a large saucepan. Add the rice and salt and return to the boil, stirring occasionally to keep the grains separate. Boil for 8 minutes, then strain into a large sieve.

Heat the ghee or oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Increase the heat and fry until the onion is crisp and lightly coloured. Remove half the onion and ghee mixture and set aside.

Add the strained rice to the pan and toss with a fork to mix the onion through the rice. Spread the reserved onion and ghee on top of the rice. Cover the pan tightly and cook over low heat for 35–40 minutes, or until the rice is tender.

Fluff up the rice with a fork and serve piled on a platter.

Mashkoul is a standard accompaniment to most Gulf meals.

MUADDAS

Rice with lentils

SERVES: 6

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice 95 g (3½ oz/½ cup) brown or green lentils 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) oil 1 large onion, finely chopped

2 teaspoons salt

Pick over the rice, place in a sieve and wash under cold running water until the water runs clear. Drain well.

Pick over the lentils to remove any small stones and discoloured seeds. Place in a bowl of water and remove any that float. Wash the lentils well and drain thoroughly.

Heat the ghee or oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent and lightly flecked with brown. Add the rice and lentils and stir over medium heat for 3 minutes.

Add 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) boiling water and the salt. Return to the boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat to low, then cover and simmer gently for 45 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat. Take off the lid and place two paper towels over the rim of the pan. Replace the lid and set aside for 10–15 minutes before serving.

Serve as a rice accompaniment to meat and fish dishes, or as directed in recipes.

SHAURABAT ADAS

Lentil soup

SERVES: 6

375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) small red lentils 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) oil

1 large onion, finely chopped

4–5 garlic cloves, crushed

2 teaspoons Baharat

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes

2 loomi (dried lime), or thinly peeled rind of ½ lemon 100 g (3½ oz/1 cup) crushed fine noodles, optional

salt, to taste

Pick over the lentils, place in a sieve and rinse under cold running water. Tip into a large saucepan and pour in 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) water. Bring to the boil, skimming if necessary.

Meanwhile, heat the ghee or oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent, but not brown. Stir in the garlic and Baharat, cook for a few seconds, then add the tomatoes.

Once the lentils have come to the boil, add the onion mixture to the pan. Pierce each dried lime twice with a skewer and add them to the pan.

Return to the boil and allow to boil gently, uncovered, for 40 minutes. Add the noodles, salt to taste, and a little more water if the soup looks too thick.

Simmer gently for a further 25–30 minutes, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the lentils and noodles are tender.

Serve hot in deep bowls with [Khoubiz](#), salad and [pickles](#).

MAZZA BISHURBA

Lamb knuckle soup

SERVES: 6

4 lamb shanks (knuckles) 1 loomi (dried lime;) **1 large onion, finely chopped**

40 g (1½ oz) ghee or 2 tablespoons oil 1 tablespoon Baharat

2 small pieces of cinnamon bark

375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

100 g (3½ oz/½ cup) good-quality long-grain white rice, preferably basmati

Wash the lamb shanks if necessary, place in a large saucepan and pour in 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) cold water. Pierce the dried lime on each side with a skewer and add to the pan.

Bring to a slow simmer over medium heat, skimming frequently as the scum rises. When well skimmed and almost boiling, cover and simmer over low heat for 30 minutes.

Heat the ghee in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the Baharat and cinnamon and fry for a further 3 minutes. Add the onion mixture to the soup.

Stir in the tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for 1½ hours.

Remove and discard the lime and cinnamon. Lift out the lamb shanks and trim off the meat. Cut the meat into small pieces and return to the soup.

Pick over the rice, wash well and stir into the soup. Cover and simmer gently for a further 30 minutes, or until the rice is very tender.

Serve hot, with [Khoubiz](#).

SAMAK QUWARMAH

Fish curry

SERVES: 6

**750 g (1 lb 10 oz) fish steaks or fillets salt, to season
40 g (1½ oz) ghee, or 2 tablespoons oil 2 onions, chopped**

1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger

**2 garlic cloves, crushed
½ teaspoon ground hot chilli or chilli powder 1 teaspoon Baharat
1 teaspoon ground turmeric**

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

**2 loomi (dried lime), or thinly peeled rind of ½ lemon 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes
For serving
Muhammar or Mashkoul**

Wipe the fish dry with paper towels, cut into serving pieces and sprinkle lightly with salt. Cover and set aside in a cool place.

Heat the ghee or oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the ginger, garlic, chilli, Baharat, turmeric and cinnamon and stir for 2 minutes.

Pierce each dried lime twice with a skewer and add them, or the lemon rind to the pan. Add the tomatoes and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water, season with salt and bring to a slow simmer. Cover and simmer gently for 15 minutes.

Place the fish pieces in the sauce, then cover and simmer gently for 15–20 minutes, or until the fish is cooked through.

Lift the fish onto a bed of Muhammar or Mashkoul. Remove the cinnamon and limes or lemon rind from the sauce and spoon the sauce over the fish.

SAMAK MAHSI

Fried stuffed fish

SERVES: 4–6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) small whole fish, scaled and gutted

1 teaspoon salt

**40 g (1½ oz) ghee or 2 tablespoons oil 1 large onion, finely chopped 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
½ teaspoon ground loomi (dried lime), or grated zest of ½ lemon 1½ teaspoons Baharat**

½ teaspoon ground turmeric To finish

oil, for pan-frying

flour, for coating

flat-leaf parsley sprigs, to garnish lemon wedges, to serve

Rub the cavity of the fish with a wad of paper towels dipped in salt to clean it thoroughly. Rinse the fish and dry well.

Heat the ghee in a frying pan and gently fry the onion and garlic until lightly browned. Stir in the ground loomi and 1 teaspoon of the Baharat. Season with salt and remove from the heat.

Stuff the fish with the onion mixture, placing a small wad of greaseproof (parchment) paper or foil in the opening to keep the stuffing in.

Combine the remaining Baharat with the turmeric and the 1 teaspoon salt. Rub the spice mixture over the fish, then set aside for 15 minutes to absorb the flavours.

Heat 1 cm (½ inch) oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Coat the fish lightly in flour and shallow-fry until cooked through.

Drain on paper towels and garnish with parsley. Serve hot, with lemon wedges.

 Note: In Bahrain, curry powder is often used instead of baharat.

CHEBEH RUBYAN

Prawn balls

SERVES: 4–6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) raw prawns (shrimp) **25g (¾ oz/¾ cup) coriander (cilantro) leaves** **½ teaspoon ground turmeric**

½ teaspoon ground loomi (dried lime), optional **150 g (5 oz/¾ cup) rice flour**

1 teaspoon salt

Filling

40 g (1½ oz) ghee or 2 tablespoons oil **1 large onion, finely chopped**

1 teaspoon Baharat

½ teaspoon ground loomi (dried lime), or grated zest of ½ lemon **Tamarind sauce**

1 piece of tamarind paste, the size of a small egg **1 small onion, finely chopped**

20 g (¾ oz) ghee or 1 tablespoon oil **1 large tomato, peeled** **Kefalotiri and chopped** **1 teaspoon Baharat**

¼–½ teaspoon ground hot chilli or chilli powder

2 teaspoons sugar

salt, to season

For serving

cooked prawns (shrimp), to garnish

coriander (cilantro) sprigs, to garnish **Muhammar**

Shell and devein the prawns, then rinse and dry well. Combine the prawns and coriander leaves and pass through a food grinder using a fine screen, or process to a paste in a food processor using a steel blade.

Empty the prawn mixture into a mixing bowl and sprinkle with the turmeric, ground loomi, if using, and rice flour. Add the salt and mix well with your hands until thoroughly combined. Cover and refrigerate until required.

To make the filling, heat the ghee in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the Baharat and ground loomi, or lemon zest. Remove from the heat and set aside while making the tamarind sauce.

Soak the tamarind in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) warm water for 10 minutes, then rub with your fingers. Pass the

mixtre through a sieve, pressing the pulp through with the back of a spoon. Reserve the tamarind liquid.

In a large, heavy-based saucepan, gently fry the onion in the ghee until translucent. Stir in the tamarind liquid, 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) warm water, the tomato, spices, sugar and salt to season. Cover and simmer gently for 15–20 minutes.

While the sauce is simmering, make the prawn balls. Take about 1 tablespoon of the prawn paste and flatten it in a moistened palm. Place 1 teaspoon of the filling in the centre and close it up, shaping it into a ball. Keep your hands moist during the shaping. Repeat with the remaining prawn mixture and filling.

Drop the prawn balls into the simmering sauce, then cover and simmer gently for 35–40 minutes. The prawn balls will swell during cooking.

Garnish with some cooked prawns and coriander sprigs and serve hot, with Muhammar.



MACHBOUS

Spiced prawns and rice

SERVES: 4–5

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) raw prawns (shrimp) 40–60 g (1½–2 oz) ghee or 2–3 tablespoons oil 2 garlic cloves, chopped

1 large onion, chopped

2 teaspoons Baharat

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes

1 tablespoon chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 teaspoon chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves

2 teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to taste

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice **Shell the prawns and devein them if necessary.**

In a large, heavy-based saucepan, heat 20 g (¾ oz) of the ghee with the garlic. Add the prawns and stir over medium–high heat until the prawns stiffen and turn pink — there is no need to cook them through. Lift them out of the pan and set aside.

Add the remaining ghee to the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent and lightly browned.

Stir in the Baharat and turmeric and fry for 1 minute.

Add the tomatoes, herbs and salt and season to taste with pepper. Bring to the boil and pour in 625 ml (21 fl oz/2½ cups) water. Cover and boil over medium heat for 5 minutes.

Place the rice in a sieve and wash under cold running water until the water runs clear. Stir the rice into the sauce and bring to the boil. Cover and leave to boil for 10 minutes. Reduce the heat to low.

Stir the pan contents, then place the prawns on top of the rice, stirring them in gently. Cover and simmer gently over low heat for 20 minutes, stirring halfway through cooking.

Stir again, then take the pan off the heat and leave covered for 5 minutes.

Serve with [Khoubiz](#), [pickles](#) and salad.



SAMAK MASHWI

Barbecued fish with dates

SERVES: 6

The traditional Gulf way to grill fish is in a special cut-away dome-shaped clay barbecue with glowing coals in the base. The fish is impaled on a firm stick, with the stick passing through the mouth and into the body.

The end of the stick protruding from the mouth is stuck into the earth under the bed of coals, at a 45 degree angle. Perhaps you could try a similar method, using a fire beneath a low grill, with galvanised iron set around three sides to deflect the heat.

The dates give the fish a very pleasant flavour.

180 g (6 oz/1 cup) dried pitted dates 6 whole firm-fleshed fish, each about 375 g (13 oz), gutted salt, for sprinkling

2 large onions, finely chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed, optional 1½ teaspoons Baharat

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

Cover the dates with cold water and leave to soak for 30 minutes, or until soft. At the same time, soak six wooden skewers or about 18 cocktail sticks in cold water for 30 minutes to stop them sorching.

Meanwhile, rinse the fish cavities and dry with paper towels. Sprinkle with salt, inside and out, and leave for 15 minutes or longer.

In a mixing bowl, combine the onion, garlic, if using, and the spices. Add a little water and mix together well.

Fill the fish cavities with the onion mixture and close the cavities with the soaked wooden skewers or cocktail sticks.

Rub the dates through a sieve to purée them, adding some of the soaking water, or purée in a blender or food processor, adding enough soaking liquid to make a soft paste.

Spread the date purée on each side of each fish and leave on a wire rack for 10 minutes.

Cook the fish over glowing charcoal for 4–5 minutes each side, depending on the thickness of the body.

Serve hot. The skin, with the scales attached, is removed before eating.

✿ Note: Choose a fish suitable for barbecuing, preferably a roundbodied variety such as red mullet. Do not have them scaled — the scales keep the flesh intact during grilling.

QUWARMAH ALA DAJAJ

Curried chicken

SERVES: 5–6

1 chicken, about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz), jointed salt, for sprinkling

1½ teaspoons Baharat

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee or 3 tablespoons oil 2 large onions, finely chopped 2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

¼–½ teaspoon ground hot chilli or chilli powder 2 loomi (dried lime), or thinly peeled rind of ½ lemon 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes For serving

Muhammar or Mashkoul

Cut the chicken joints into smaller pieces if desired. Wipe them dry and sprinkle with salt. Combine the Baharat and turmeric and rub half the mixture over the chicken pieces. Leave to absorb for 15 minutes.

Heat the ghee in a large, heavy-based saucepan. Working in batches if necessary, brown the chicken pieces on each side, removing each batch to a plate.

Add the onion to the pan and gently fry until translucent. Add the garlic, ginger, remaining spice mixture, cinnamon, and chilli to taste. Fry for 5 minutes, stirring often.

Pierce each dried lime twice with a skewer and add them, or the lemon rind to the pan. Add the tomatoes, 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) water and salt to taste, then bring to the boil.

Add the chicken pieces, reduce the heat to low and cover the pan tightly. Simmer very gently for 1½–2 hours, or until the chicken is tender and the sauce is thick.

Serve hot with Muhammar or Mashkoul.

MACHBOUS ALA DAJAJ

Spiced chicken and rice SERVES: 4–5

40 g (1½ oz) ghee or 2 tablespoons oil 2 large onions, chopped

1 tablespoon Baharat

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1 chicken, about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz), jointed 375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes

3 cloves

½ teaspoon ground loomi (dried lime), or grated zest of ½ lemon 2 pieces of cinnamon bark 6 cardamom pods

3 teaspoons salt

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice 2 tablespoons chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

Heat the ghee or oil in a large heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the Baharat and turmeric and cook for 2 minutes longer.

Add the chicken pieces and turn in the onion mixture over medium heat to brown lightly. Add the tomatoes, cloves, ground loomi, or lemon zest, cinnamon, cardamom pods and salt, stirring well to combine.

Pour in 625 ml (21 fl oz/2½ cups) water, then cover and simmer over gentle heat for 45 minutes.

Pick over the rice to remove any discoloured grains. Place in a bowl and wash with cold water until the water runs clear. Drain. Stir the rice gently into the stew, add the herbs and bring back to a slow simmer.

Cover and simmer over low heat for 35–40 minutes, or until the chicken is tender, stirring gently once or twice during cooking. Remove from the heat and leave for 10 minutes.

Pile the mixture onto a large platter, arranging the chicken pieces in the centre. Serve hot with [pickles](#), salad and [Khoubiz](#).

KABAB MASHWI

Minced meat kebab

SERVES: 8

It is quite a sight to see these flavoursome kebabs being prepared in the Gulf States, with many shops and food stalls specialising in them.

Lightning-quick hands shape the herbed and spiced meat paste onto long, flat skewers. Iron troughs running the length of the shop glow hotly with their charcoal fires ready to cook the kebabs quickly to juicy tenderness. The skewers sit across the top of the troughs in neat formation, with the cooks working their way up and down the passageway between, turning the skewers or removing them when cooked.

The finished kebab is deftly slid off the skewer onto soft, flat khoubiz; shredded lettuce, sliced tomato, chopped onion and cucumber are added and it is handed to the waiting customer. Hamburger Gulf style!

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) minced (ground) lamb or beef

1 handful coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 large onions, chopped

2 teaspoons salt

2 teaspoons Baharat

oil, for brushing

To serve

Khoubiz

cos (romaine) lettuce, in leaves or shredded sliced tomatoes

sliced cucumber

finely chopped onion or spring onions (scallions) In a mixing bowl, combine the meat, parsley, onion, salt and Baharat. Pass the mixture through a meat grinder twice, using a fine screen; alternatively, process the mixture in four batches in a food processor, using a steel blade.

Turn the mixture into a bowl. If a meat grinder was used, knead the mixture to a smooth paste by hand; if the mixture was processed, knead it to combine the flavours evenly.

Moisten your hands with water. Take generous tablespoons of the paste and mould it around flat, sword-like skewers, in finger shapes about 10 cm (4 inches) long. Place two such shapes on long skewers, or just one shape if the skewers are short. Keep your hands moistened during shaping.

As the skewers are prepared, set them across a baking dish, with the ends of the skewers resting on each side.

Have a charcoal fire at the glowing stage and remove the grill if possible. A rectangular barbecue such as the Japanese hibachi is an advantage here, as medium-length skewers will fit across it without the need for a grill.

Brush the kebabs lightly with oil and grill for 2–3 minutes, turning frequently. If it is impossible to cook the kebabs without a grill, then try to place the skewers so the meat lies between the grill bars.

Remove the cooked kebabs from the skewers and serve immediately in warmed Khoubiz, with salad ingredients.

They may also be served on a plate with a vegetable or salad accompaniment.



THARYD

Braised meat and potatoes

SERVES: 5–6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) boneless lamb or beef stewing meat 40 g (1½ oz) ghee, or 2 tablespoons oil 2 large onions, chopped

2 teaspoons Baharat

1 garlic clove, crushed

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) tomato paste (concentrated purée)

2 teaspoons salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper 3 teaspoons chopped flat-leaf parsley, plus extra to garnish
750 g (1 lb 10 oz) potatoes

Khoubiz

Trim the meat and cut into cubes. Set aside.

Heat the ghee or oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Increase the heat and add the meat. Stir until the meat loses its red colour, then add the Baharat and garlic and cook for 1 minute.

Add the tomatoes, tomato paste, salt, pepper and parsley. Cover and simmer very gently for 1½ hours.

Peel the potatoes, and halve them if large. Add them to the pan, then cover and simmer for a further 1 hour.

Cut the Khoubiz into small pieces and place in a serving dish. Ladle the meat, potatoes and sauce over the top and sprinkle with some extra chopped parsley.

Serve hot with salad and **pickles**.

LAHM BIL BAYD

Minced meat with hard-boiled eggs SERVES: 3–6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) minced (ground) lamb 1 small onion, chopped

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

40 g (1½ oz/½ cup) soft breadcrumbs salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste To finish

6 hard-boiled eggs

1 egg white

1 egg

100 g (3½ oz/1 cup) dry breadcrumbs oil, for deep-frying

Dukkous al-Tamat, to serve, optional Combine the lamb with the onion and pass it through a meat grinder twice using a fine screen; alternatively, process to a paste in a food processor, using a steel blade.

Turn the mixture into a bowl and add the parsley and breadcrumbs. Season with salt and pepper and knead to a fairly soft paste. Divide into six equal portions.

Shell the hard-boiled eggs. Beat the egg white and egg in separate small bowls; spread the breadcrumbs on a small plate.

Coat the eggs with the beaten egg white. Shape a portion of the meat paste around each egg, moulding it on smoothly.

Now brush the meat-coated eggs with the beaten whole egg, then roll them in the breadcrumbs to coat.

In a large saucepan, heat about 10 cm (4 inches) of oil to 160°C (320°F) or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 30–35 seconds. Deep-fry the meat-coated eggs, cooking for 5–7 minutes in all, and turning to brown evenly. Do not have the oil too hot, or it will brown the outside before the inside is cooked.

Cut in half and serve hot with Dukkous al-Tamat, if desired, or cold with salad.

KUBA AL-AISH

Stuffed meat rolls SERVES: 4

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lean lamb or mutton 280 g (10 oz/1½ cups) boiled and strained short-grain white rice

2 garlic cloves, chopped

1½ teaspoons Baharat

1½ teaspoons salt

1 egg, beaten

oil, for pan-frying Filling

55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) yellow split peas, washed 20 g (¾ oz) ghee

2 onions, finely chopped

30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) sultanas (golden raisins) ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom ½ teaspoon Baharat salt, to season

To make the filling, gently boil the split peas in a small saucepan with 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water for 45 minutes, or until tender. Drain.

Meanwhile, heat the ghee in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent and beginning to brown. Stir in the sultanas and spices.

Add the split peas, season with salt and set aside.

Chop the meat into small pieces and combine in a mixing bowl with the rice, garlic, Baharat and salt. Pass the mixture through a meat grinder twice, using a fine screen; alternatively, process the mixture in two batches in a food processor, using a steel blade. If a grinder was used, beat the mixture to a paste-like consistency.

Take a lump of the meat mixture, about the size of a small egg. Coat your palms with the beaten egg and shape the meat smoothly into a ball. Using a thumb, make a hollow in the ball, moulding the meat to a fairly thin shell. Fill with the filling, then press the opening firmly to close. Reshape into either an oval or an oblong shape with rounded edges. Place on a tray and repeat with the remaining meat mixture and filling.

Heat about 1 cm (½ inch) oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Fry the rolls for about 5 minutes each side. Drain on paper towels.

Serve hot with salad and flat bread.

BASAL MAHSI

Stuffed onions

SERVES: 6–8 AS A MAIN COURSE, 12 AS AN APPETISER

1 walnut-sized piece of tamarind paste **5 large onions**

1 tablespoon oil or melted ghee

salt, for sprinkling

2 teaspoons sugar

Stuffing

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) minced (ground) beef or lamb **100 g (3½ oz/½ cup) long-grain white rice, rinsed**
1½ teaspoons Baharat

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes **2 tablespoons tomato paste (concentrated purée)** **2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley**

1 tablespoon oil

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Soak the tamarind in 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) warm water for 30 minutes. Strain into a bowl, pressing with the back of a spoon to separate the pulp. Reserve the liquid and discard the seeds and fibres.

Peel the onions and carefully cut out the root with a pointed knife. Slit the onion on one side through to the centre, cutting from the top to the root end.

Drop the onions into a saucepan of boiling water and boil gently for 8–10 minutes, or until softened. Drain and cool.

In a mixing bowl, thoroughly combine the filling ingredients and season with salt and pepper.

Carefully separate the onion layers. The outer layers may be cut in half; leave the inner layers intact.

Place about a tablespoonful of the filling on each onion layer, then roll each one up firmly.

Grease a heavy-based saucepan with the oil or melted ghee. Pack the rolls in the pan, seam side down, lightly sprinkling each layer with salt.

Combine the reserved tamarind liquid with the sugar and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) warm water, then pour over the rolls. Invert a heavy plate on top of the rolls to keep them intact during cooking. Cover and bring to a simmer

over medium heat.

Reduce the heat to low and simmer gently for 1½ hours.

Serve hot with salads, [pickles](#) and [Khoubiz](#), or lukewarm as an appetiser.



KHOUZI

Baked whole lamb

SERVES: 20

1 small lamb, about 10–12 kg (22–26 lb) salt, for rubbing

2 tablespoons Baharat, plus extra for the chicken, if using 1 teaspoon ground turmeric, plus extra for the chicken, if using 1 small chicken, about 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz), optional 3 shelled hard-boiled eggs, optional 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) ghee, melted

Rice stuffing

2 teaspoons saffron threads, pounded 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) rosewater

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz/5 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) ghee

3 large onions, finely chopped

2 tablespoons Baharat

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

salt, to taste

155 g (5 oz/1 cup) blanched almonds or cashew nuts 80 g (3 oz/½ cup) pine nuts

75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) pistachio nuts

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) sultanas (golden raisins) Wipe the lamb inside and out with a damp cloth. Rub the cavity and outer surface with salt, the Baharat and turmeric.

If a chicken is being used, wipe it dry with paper towels and rub the cavity and skin with a little extra Baharat, turmeric and salt. Insert the shelled hard-boiled eggs in the chicken cavity.

Set the lamb and chicken aside while preparing the rice stuffing.

Soak the pounded saffron in the rosewater for 10 minutes. Pick over the rice, place in a sieve and wash well under cold running water. Drain and set aside.

Melt the ghee in a large saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the Baharat and turmeric, then add the rice and stir over medium heat for 5 minutes.

Pour in 1.25 litres (42½ fl oz/5 cups) water and bring to the boil, stirring occasionally. Add salt to taste, reduce the heat, then cover and simmer over low heat for 10 minutes.

Fold the nuts and sultanas through the rice, then sprinkle with half the rosewater mixture. Cover and leave off the heat for 10 minutes, until the liquid has been absorbed.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Spoon some of the rice stuffing into the chicken, filling it loosely. Secure the opening with wooden skewers.

Sew up the cavity of the lamb halfway with kitchen string and leave the thread hanging. Fill the cavity with some of the rice stuffing, put the chicken in, if using, and fill with the remaining stuffing. Finish sewing up the

cavity.

Place the lamb on a large rack over a very large catering-size baking dish. Brush the lamb with the melted ghee. Cover the dish with large sheets of foil, sealing the joins with double folds. Press the foil under the edge to seal completely.

Transfer to the oven and bake for 2 hours. Baste the lamb with the juices in the dish and pour the remaining rosewater mixture over the lamb.

Cover and bake for a further 2–3 hours, or until very tender, basting twice more with the baking juices, and removing the foil 30 minutes before the end of cooking.

Lift the lamb onto a large platter. Remove the string and spoon the stuffing out onto the platter. Set the chicken, if used, on top of the stuffing. The lamb can be carved — but it is much more fun to break off very soft tender chunks of meat.

Enjoy your feast and feel like a sheikh!

✿ Note: Kid may be used instead of lamb.

KEBAT AL BATATIS WAL BURKUL

Burghul and potato cakes with lamb and apricot filling SERVES: 6

4 potatoes, about 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) in total, scrubbed 130 g (4½ oz/¾ cup) fine burghul (bulgur) 35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 egg, beaten

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season oil, for deep-frying

Lamb and apricot filling

40 g (1½ oz) ghee, or 2 tablespoons oil

1 large onion, finely chopped

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb 40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) chopped almonds

90 g (3 oz/½ cup) chopped dried apricots ½ teaspoon Baharat, optional salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Boil the potatoes in their jackets until tender. Drain, allow to cool, then remove the skins. Place in a mixing bowl and mash.

Meanwhile, place the burghul in a bowl and cover with 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) cold water. Soak for 15 minutes. Strain through a fine sieve, pressing with the back of a spoon to extract the moisture.

Add the burghul to the potato, along with the flour and egg. Season with salt and pepper and mix thoroughly to a paste. Moisten your hands and shape tablespoons of the mixture into balls. Set aside.

To make the filling, heat the ghee or oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Increase the heat, add the lamb and cook over high heat, stirring often, until the lamb is crumbly and begins to brown.

Reduce the heat to low, stir in the remaining filling ingredients and season with salt and pepper. Stir in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) water. Cover and simmer over low heat for 10 minutes, then remove from the heat and cool a little.

Flatten a ball of the potato mixture in the palm of your hand and place a generous teaspoon of filling in the centre. Close up the potato mixture and reshape into a ball, then flatten to a thick cake. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Heat approximately 10 cm (4 inches) of oil in a saucepan to (180°C/356°F) or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 15 seconds. Deep-fry the cakes six at a time for 7–8 minutes, turning to brown evenly. Drain on paper towels and serve hot.

MARAQ AL-BAMIYA

Meat with okra

SERVES: 5–6

1 walnut-sized piece of tamarind paste

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) beef or lamb stewing meat **60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) oil** **2 large onions, chopped** **3 garlic cloves, crushed** **375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes** **2 teaspoons Baharat**

2 teaspoons sugar

salt, to season

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) okra

Mashkoul, to serve Soak the tamarind in 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) warm water.

Trim the meat and cut into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes. Heat half the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and brown the meat in batches, removing each batch to a plate.

Heat the remaining oil in the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the garlic, cook for a few seconds, then stir in the tomatoes, 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water, the Baharat and sugar. Season with salt.

Return the meat to the pan, then cover and simmer for 1–1½ hours, or until the meat is almost tender. The time will depend on the type of meat used.

Prepare the **okra** as directed. Rub the tamarind to separate the pulp from the seeds and fibres, then pass through a sieve, reserving the liquid.

Arrange the okra on top of the meat and pour the tamarind liquid over the top. Cover and simmer for a further 30 minutes, or until the meat and okra are tender. Do not stir once the okra is added — just shake the pan gently to distribute the flavours.

Serve with Mashkoul or another simple rice dish.



MACHBOUS

Spiced lamb and rice

SERVES: 4–5

40 g (1½ oz) ghee **2 large onions, chopped**

1 tablespoon Baharat

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) lamb shoulder, on the bone, cut into 4–5 pieces **375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes**

3 cloves

½ teaspoon ground loomi (dried lime) or grated zest of ½ lemon **2 pieces of cinnamon bark** **3 cardamom pods**

3 teaspoons salt

3 teaspoons chopped flat-leaf parsley or coriander (cilantro) **400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice** Heat the ghee in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent and beginning to brown. Stir in the Baharat and turmeric and cook for 2 minutes longer.

Add the lamb pieces and turn them in the onion mixture over medium heat, lightly browning the meat. Add the tomatoes, spices and salt, stirring well to combine. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Add 625 ml (21 fl oz/2½ cups) water and the parsley or coriander. Cover and simmer over gentle heat for 2–2½ hours, or until the meat is fork tender.

Pick over the rice if necessary, then place in a bowl or sieve and wash until the water runs clear. Drain and stir gently into the stew. Return to the boil, reduce the heat and cover tightly.

Simmer for 20 minutes, stirring once or twice during cooking. When the rice is cooked, stir carefully once more, then cover and leave off the heat for 5 minutes.

Pile the mixture onto a large platter, arranging the meat pieces in the centre. Serve hot with [pickles](#), salad and [Khoubiz](#).

TAMAR

Dates Not so long ago the date palm was the fountain of life to the people of the Gulf region — their fruit for trade and sustenance, the palm itself for building materials, household and personal articles, and for fuel. Indeed it is still revered by many today.

In Oman the date is enjoyed in simple ways, which is all this nectar-sweet fruit requires. Fresh dates are dipped in [Samneh](#) (clarified butter;) or ghee, or eaten with camel milk curds. The date molasses gathered after drying the fruit also features in Omani cooking, for making a sweetbread (right) or adding to [Muhammar](#).

To enjoy the date all year round, various sweetbreads are made. The simplest is dates formed into a ball and rolled in ash as a protection against insects. Other date recipes also follow.

TAMAR AL GIBNA

Dates with white cheese SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) fresh dates 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) Mizithra, Anari or ricotta cheese, or 500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) yoghurt Pit the dates and place in individual dishes. Serve with the cheese or yoghurt.

AL BATHEETH

Date sweetbread

MAKES: 20

150 g (5 oz/1 cup) wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour 60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee or Samneh

1 cardamom pod, bruised

160 g (5½ oz/1 cup) chopped dates ½ teaspoon ground ginger

icing (confectioners') sugar, for sprinkling Place the flour in a heavy-based saucepan and stir over medium heat until lightly browned — about 10 minutes.

While the flour is browning, heat the ghee or Samneh in a small saucepan with the cardamom pod. Heat for 5 minutes and leave aside.

Add the dates to the flour and heat for 2 minutes, stirring constantly, until the dates feel soft.

Remove the cardamom pod from the ghee and add the ghee to the date mixture. Sprinkle with the ginger and stir until the ghee is evenly distributed — the mixture will be crumbly. Remove from the heat and leave until cool enough to handle.

Take about a tablespoonful of the mixture at a time and knead by hand, tossing from one hand to the other. When the mixture holds together, squeeze it into an oval shape, moulding it smoothly. Place on a plate and repeat with the remaining mixture.

Leave until cool, then pack in an airtight container.

Serve sprinkled with icing sugar.

RANGINA

Fresh date sweet

SERVES: 6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) fresh dates 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter 110 g (3¾ oz/¾ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

Pit the dates and arrange them in individual dessert dishes.

Melt the butter in a heavy-based saucepan and stir in the flour. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the flour turns golden brown — take care not to burn it.

Remove from the heat and stir in the cardamom. Leave to cool a little, stirring occasionally as it cools.

Pour the warm butter mixture over the dates. Allow to cool to room temperature before serving.

✿ Note: Stirring chopped walnuts into the browned flour will add a delightful taste and texture.

MAKES: ABOUT 40

10 sheets fillo pastry

ghee or oil, for deep-frying

Nut filling

100 g (3½ oz/1 cup) finely ground cashew nuts 115 g (4 oz/1 cup) finely ground walnuts 115 g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar 1–1½ teaspoons ground cardamom Combine the nut filling ingredients in a mixing bowl, adding the cardamom to taste.

Cut the pastry sheets into quarters, into pieces about 15 cm (6 inches) wide and 20 cm (8 inches) long. Stack them and cover with a cloth.

Take a strip of pastry and place it on a work surface, with the narrow edge towards you. Thinly sprinkle 2 teaspoons of the nut filling across the base of the strip, keeping 1 cm (½ inch) of pastry clear of the filling at the sides and base.

Moisten the sides of the strip with water. Fold the sides over the filling, pressing the folds along the length of the sides. Roll up firmly to within 5 cm (2 inches) of the end of the strip. Moisten this section lightly and evenly with water, then complete the roll.

Repeat using the remaining ingredients, placing the completed rolls on a cloth.

Heat the oil or ghee in a deep saucepan to 180°C (356°F), or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 15 seconds.

Deep-fry the rolls, five at a time, for 2–3 minutes, turning to brown evenly. When the rolls are deep golden brown, remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

Allow to cool before serving. Store in a sealed container at room temperature.

Fried cardamom sweetbreads

MAKES: 24

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) milk 300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon ground cardamom

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter, melted oil, for deep-frying

sifted icing (confectioners') sugar, for sprinkling Bring the milk to the boil, then leave to cool.

Sift the flour, baking powder and cardamom into a mixing bowl. Add the melted butter and stir with a wooden spoon until combined and crumbly.

Pour in the cooled milk and mix to a soft dough. Knead lightly for 1 minute, or until smooth.

Roll the dough into walnut-sized balls. Roll them into thick fingers, then press each one around a forefinger to make a crescent shape.

Heat the oil to 180°C (356°F), or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 15 seconds. Add six salooq at a time and fry for 5 minutes, turning to brown evenly.

Lift out with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

After two batches are cooked, place the salooq in a bag of icing sugar and shake to coat. Lift them out.

Cook and coat the remaining salooq. Serve warm or cold.

GHIRAYBAH

Shortbread cookies

MAKES: 35–40

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) Samneh

125 g (4 oz/1 cup) icing (confectioners') sugar, sifted 375 g (13 oz/2½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

The Samneh needs to be firm, so chill it in the refrigerator if it is soft. Place the firm Samneh in a mixing bowl and beat until light. Gradually add the icing sugar, beating until very creamy and light.

Sift the flour and fold it into the Samneh mixture. Knead lightly until smooth. If your kitchen is hot, chill the dough in the refrigerator for 1–2 hours.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 170°C (340°F/Gas 3).

Roll the dough into walnut-sized balls and place on ungreased baking trays. Press a thumb into the centre of each ball to make a dimple and to flatten the dough slightly. Flour your thumb lightly if necessary.

Bake for 20–25 minutes, or until very lightly coloured. Allow to cool on the baking trays.

Store the biscuits in a sealed container. These biscuits are very delicate and must be handled carefully.

✿ Note: These cookies are prepared in most countries of the Middle East. Sometimes they are topped with pine nuts or a blanched almond instead of being dimpled; cooks in other areas prefer not to let the cookies colour at all; others finish them with a dusting of icing sugar. Outside the Gulf States, caster (superfine) sugar is often used in the mixture rather than icing sugar.



SAMBOOSA HOLWAH

Fried nut triangles

MAKES: ABOUT 60

Samboosa holwah should be very tiny and literally bulging with sugar and nuts. You might find it difficult to contain the nut filling in the narrow confines of the pastry strip as it is folded. Push the filling in during the first two or three folds — if you go off-course with the shaping, do not be concerned, as the final shape will be near enough to a triangle.

Try one or two strips before cutting all the pastry. If it proves too difficult, cut the remaining strips 5 cm (2 inches) wide, using the same amount of filling.

10 sheets fillo

pastry ghee or oil, for deep-frying **Nut filling**

100 g (3½ oz/1 cup) coarsely ground raw cashew nuts **55 g (2 oz/½ cup) coarsely ground walnuts**
115 g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar **½–1 teaspoon ground cardamom**

Combine the nut filling ingredients in a mixing bowl, adding the cardamom to taste. Add 2 teaspoons cold water and knead well by hand until the mixture clings together in a coarse paste.

Cut the pastry sheets into 4 cm (1½ inch) strips, across the width of the sheet. The strips may be a little longer or shorter, according to the size of the sheet. Cover the strips with a cloth.

Take a strip of pastry and place a teaspoon of filling on one end of the strip. Fold the pastry diagonally over the filling, forming a triangle, then fold it straight over, followed by another diagonal fold in the opposite direction to the first fold (see [diagrams](#)). Continue folding to the end of the strip. Moisten the end of the pastry with water and press together to seal.

Repeat using the remaining ingredients, placing the finished pastries on a cloth.

Heat 10 cm (4 inches) of ghee or oil in a deep saucepan to 180°C (356°F), or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 15 seconds.

Deep-fry the triangles, 10 at a time, for about 2–3 minutes, turning to brown evenly. The pastries must not cook too quickly, as the inner layers must cook before the outside becomes too brown.

When the pastries are a deep golden brown, remove them with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Leave until cold before serving.

The pastries will keep crisp for a number of days, stored in an airtight container at room temperature.

SABB AL-GAFSHA

Sweet puffs

MAKES: ABOUT 40

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

80 g (3 oz/3/4 cup) chickpea flour 75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour

3 teaspoons ground rice

5 large eggs, at room temperature ½ teaspoon ground cardamom ¼ teaspoon saffron threads, pounded 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee, melted and cooled oil, for deep-frying

Syrup

440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar

2 tablespoons strained lemon juice

½ teaspoon ground cardamom ¼ teaspoon saffron threads, pounded Add the yeast to 2 tablespoons warm water. Leave to soak, then stir to dissolve.

Sift the chickpea flour, plain flour and ground rice into a mixing bowl and make a well in the centre.

Beat the eggs well and stir in the cardamom, saffron and yeast mixture. Add the mixture to the dry ingredients, pour in the cooled ghee and gradually mix into a thick batter, beating until smooth.

Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and leave in a warm draught-free place for at least 4 hours.

To make the syrup, dissolve the sugar in 500 ml (17 fl oz/ 2 cups) water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Bring to the boil, add the lemon juice, cardamom and saffron and boil for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat and leave until cool.

Heat 10 cm (4 inches) of ghee or oil in a deep saucepan to 180°C (356°F) or until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 15 seconds. Stir the dough, then drop teaspoonfuls into the hot oil, pushing it off the end of the spoon with a round-bladed knife. Drop 10–12 balls in at a time and fry for 3–4 minutes, turning to brown evenly.

When golden brown and cooked through, lift the puffs out with a slotted spoon and place in the cooled syrup.

When all the puffs are cooked, stir them in the syrup to coat evenly, then lift out with a slotted spoon and pile onto a plate. Serve warm.

QAHWAT

Arabic coffee SERVES: 8

6 cardamom pods

20 g (1/4 oz/1/4 cup) coarsely pulverised dark roast coffee Bruise the cardamom pods by hitting them with a mallet, or pounding them briefly using a mortar and pestle.

Pour 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) cold water into a long-handled coffee pot and add the cardamom pods and coffee. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to low. Leave to simmer over low heat for 20 minutes, so that the coffee grounds settle.

Pour the coffee into Arabic coffee cups, only half-filling the cups. It is traditionally served without sugar.



QAHWAT AL-HILO

Sweet Arabic coffee SERVES: 6

Although called a coffee, there is no coffee in this exotic brew. It is actually a spice infusion!

3 whole cardamoms

3 teaspoons saffron threads

sugar, to taste Pound the saffron using a mortar and pestle. Add the cardamom pods and briefly pound them to bruise them.

Transfer the mixture to a small saucepan or large longhandled coffee pot. Add 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water, and sugar to taste. Stir to dissolve the sugar, then leave over low heat for 30 minutes, or until reduced and thickened.

Serve in Arabic coffee cups, filling them to the top.



Yemen





YEMEN

Once known as North and South Yemen, and later as the Arab Republic of Yemen and the Democratic People's Republic of Yemen, the two countries put aside their ideological differences and merged in 1990, becoming the Republic of Yemen. Yemeni hospitality is typically Arabic; indeed, many years ago in a remote part of the Hadramaut to the south, one Yemeni host would be so incensed if travellers passed by without calling that he would shoot over their heads. Perhaps that was going a little too far!

THE FLAVOUR OF YEMENI FOOD

Hot, spicy foods are particularly loved by the Yemenis, so be warned when tackling a recipe calling for chillies.

[Zhug](#), a hot relish fired with chillies and pepper and flavoured with cardamom, caraway, fresh coriander (cilantro) and garlic, is used as a bread dip. Breads and cereals are the staples of the Yemeni diet, and zhug, together with a fenugreek-based mixture called [Hilbeh](#), add flavour and interest to these foods. Hilbeh is used in southern Yemen, while another version called [Hulba](#) is used in the north. Though the basic ingredients are the same, the preparation is slightly different.

The basic sauce is combined with bone stock and placed on a small fire close to where the meal is eaten. At the end of the meal, any remaining food, such as rice, vegetables, lentils and meat, is added to the pot. The pot is heated and stirred and the resultant hash is scooped up with fresh-baked flat bread, usually [Khobz](#) or [Malvj](#). I have given a version in the recipes following as it is a good way to use up leftovers — rather like a Middle Eastern meal of bubble and squeak.

The Yemeni cook makes quite a variety of breads, some leavened with yeast, others somewhat similar to the Indian chapatti. One bread much loved by the Yemenis is Malvj, a barley bread, and though recipes vary considerably you will find my version [Malvj](#) an easy bread to make and quite delicious.

[Bint-al-Sahn](#) is a fine-textured yeast bread formed into very thin 'leaves' and smothered with samneh (ghee or clarified butter). The 'leaves' are placed one on top of the other, forming dough cakes, then baked. They are served hot from the oven with more samneh and honey, and served at the beginning of a meal on festive occasions and on Fridays, the Muslim holiday. In the early days honey was frequently poured over meat and rice; however, the men allowed this luxury only to themselves, as honey was considered an aphrodisiac and it was thought improper

for the womenfolk to partake.

While yoghurt is used in large towns and cities, the Yemenis in remote rural areas use sour milk instead. There is little difference in flavour and no doubt the Yemenis have their particular utensils set aside for making the sour milk. It is impossible for Westerners to make an equivalent, as Western milk is usually pasteurised, a process that kills the bacteria essential for the souring process. I have used yoghurt in these recipes.

Meat and chicken are popular foods, but so little is available that the Yemenis, particularly the poorer ones, would have meat perhaps once a week or even less. However, they do tend to use a lot of bones for basic stock.

Though Mocha is renowned for its coffee, few Yemenis can afford it. Instead they grind the husks and make a very pleasant brew called qishr with ground ginger.

EATING YEMENI STYLE

Of all the countries in this book, Yemen has been the least touched by Western customs. Generally, the men eat first and the women and children have their meal afterwards or in another room. A cloth is spread on a carpet and cushions are placed on the floor and around the walls. All the food is placed in pots, platters or bowls, with no separate plates for individual diners. Hands are washed before the meal, which is eaten using the fingers of the right hand. The food is likely to include boiled rice, a cereal dish made of ground sorghum or flour, a soup, cooked and raw vegetables, a hot relish such as zhug, and plenty of bread. Fruits are included, when available: though parts of the country are fertile and can grow a variety of fruits such as grapes, mangoes and bananas, the land is not fully productive.

After the meal, any food left is put into the hulba dish and heated on the small wood burner, called a mauqad, and then scooped out with fresh bread. Soup is passed around in a ladle so that each diner may sip from it to cleanse the palate.

The meal is eaten with little or no conversation and as soon as a person has had enough to eat, he leaves the table and retires to the mafraj, a sitting room furnished with carpets and cushions. Here coffee is taken, the mada'a (water pipe) shared, and conversation flows.

COOKING METHODS

Much of the cooking is done on fires out of doors. Bread is baked on the sides of a beehiveshaped oven, or on a flat iron over the fire. While traditional cooking vessels were made of iron or carved out of stone, aluminium saucepans and pottery vessels are more likely to be used today. The traditional shape is rather shallow, with a ridge halfway up the side of the vessel, forming two handles, rather like a shallow casserole dish. You will need a heavybased frying pan or griddle for cooking breads.

INGREDIENTS FOR YEMENI COOKING

Wholemeal (whole-wheat), barley and white flour for breads; dried beans and lentils; beef or lamb; any vegetable used in Middle Eastern cooking; fresh coriander (cilantro), hot chillies, fenugreek, cardamom, black cumin, caraway

seeds, turmeric and saffron — with these foods you will be able to duplicate Yemeni cooking. As you probably will not be able to obtain coffee husks, use finely ground moccha coffee for making [Qishr](#).

HULBA

Fenugreek paste

SERVES: 6

In this recipe you can substitute whatever you have on hand for some of the ingredients, such as diced boiled potatoes for rice, or cooked dried beans for lentils.

3 tablespoons ground fenugreek

2–4 hot chillies, to taste salt, to taste

1 tomato, peeled and chopped 3 tablespoons chopped onion or spring onions (scallions) 2 garlic cloves, crushed $\frac{1}{3}$ teaspoon Hawayij

175 g (6 oz/1 cup) finely chopped boiled lamb or chicken 185 g (6½ oz/1 cup) boiled lentils (see note) 185 g (6½ oz/1 cup) boiled rice 1 tablespoon chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves 2 tablespoons oil or 40 g (1½ oz) ghee bone or chicken stock, for moistening flat breads, to serve

* Note: To yield 185 g (6½ oz/1 cup) cooked lentils, simmer 125 g (4 oz/½ cups) water for 15–20 minutes, until thick.

Place the fenugreek in a bowl and add 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) cold water. Leave to soak for 5 hours. Pour off the excess water, then beat the fenugreek with a fork until frothy.

Remove the stalks and seeds from the chillies and chop finely — take care in handling them. Mix into the fenugreek paste with salt to taste and place in a saucepan. (This mixture is the actual hulba.) Stir in the remaining ingredients, except the stock, then stir in enough stock to moisten. Place over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until bubbling and thick. Add a little more stock during heating if necessary.

Adjust the seasoning with salt. Serve in a deep bowl, or in individual bowls if preferred, with flat breads such as [Khobz](#), [Malvj](#) or pitta breads for scooping up the mixture.



HILBEH

Fenugreek and coriander paste SERVES: 4

2 teaspoons fenugreek seeds

2 garlic cloves

1 handful chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves ½ teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons lemon juice

1 small hot chilli, seeded (optional) Soak the fenugreek seeds in 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) cold water for 12–18 hours, until a jelly-like coating is evident on them. Drain off the water.

Transfer the fenugreek seeds to a blender. Add the garlic and coriander and blend to a coarse purée, adding the salt, lemon juice and chilli, if using, and enough cold water to draw the ingredients over the blades.

Empty the paste into a [sterilised jar](#); seal and store in the refrigerator. Use as a bread dip or as directed in recipes.

Hot relish

3 cardamom pods 1 teaspoon black peppercorns

1 teaspoon caraway seeds

4–6 hot chillies, to taste 2 handfuls coriander (cilantro) sprigs, washed and drained 6 garlic cloves ½ teaspoon salt Place the cardamom pods, peppercorns and caraway seeds in a blender and blend to a coarse powder.

Cut the stems from the chillies, leaving the rest of the chilli intact. Add to the blender with the remaining ingredients and 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) cold water. Blend to a coarse purée.

Empty the purée into a small saucepan and bring to the boil. Simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes.

Spoon the relish into a [sterilised jar](#); seal and store in the refrigerator. Use as a bread dip, or as directed in recipes.

HAWAYIJ

Spice mix

6 teaspoons black peppercorns 3 teaspoons caraway seeds 1 teaspoon saffron threads 1 teaspoon cardamom seeds

2 teaspoons ground turmeric

Pound the peppercorns, caraway seeds, saffron and cardamom seeds to a coarse powder using a mortar and pestle, or in a spice grinder. Stir in the turmeric.

Store the spice mix in a clean sealed jar and use as directed in recipes.

SALUF BI HILBEH

Flat breads with fenugreek and coriander paste

MAKES: 12 ROUNDS

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour ½ teaspoon salt

oil or ghee, for greasing

Hilbeh

Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lukewarm water.

Sift the flours into a mixing bowl, then remove about 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) of flour and set aside.

Mix the salt into the yeast mixture with 375 ml (12½ fl oz/ 1½ cups) warm water, then pour the yeast mixture into the flour. Mix in a little of the flour to thicken the liquid. Cover and leave in a warm place for 10–15 minutes, or until frothy.

Work in the remaining flour in the bowl, then beat by hand for 10 minutes, or with an electric mixer using a dough hook for 5 minutes.

Turn out onto a floured work surface and knead in enough of the reserved flour to make the dough smooth and satiny. Return the dough to the bowl and sprinkle the top lightly with flour. Cover with plastic wrap and leave the dough in a warm place until doubled in size — about 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 220°C (430°F/Gas 7).

Place a heavy flat griddle or baking tray on the centre shelf of the oven and leave to heat for 10 minutes.

Grease with a wad of paper towels dipped in oil or ghee.

Punch down the dough and turn it out onto a surface. Knead it a little, then divide into 12 equal portions.

Roll out each portion to a 15 cm (6 inch) round and prick with a fork. Brush the top lightly with oil or ghee and spread on 1 teaspoon hilbeh.

Cooking two breads at a time, lift two rounds onto a lightly floured, flat-edged baking tray or plywood board, then slide them onto the heated griddle or baking tray.

Bake for 4 minutes; the tops may be lightly browned under a hot grill (broiler).

As the breads are removed, wrap them in a cloth to keep them warm and soft. Serve warm.

✿ Note: If the breads begin to puff up during cooking, press the top down with a folded cloth. The breads should be bubbly, but should not form a pocket.



LAHUUH

Sourdough flat breads

MAKES: ABOUT 10 ROUNDS

This sourdough bread is cooked in a frying pan, as you would cook pancakes. It is favoured during Ramadan and other Muslim feasts when enormous quantities of food are prepared and consumed. No doubt its popularity lies in the simplicity of its ingredients and preparation.

300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour

1 teaspoon salt

oil, for pan-frying

Sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl. Add 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water and stir to make a thin batter.

Cover with plastic wrap and leave at room temperature for 2–3 days, until the batter is fermented. The length of time depends on the temperature. You will know it is fermented when bubbles pepper the surface and the batter has a sour smell.

Pour just enough oil into a heavy-based frying pan to finely coat the base and place over medium heat.

When the oil is heated, stir the batter, then pour about 85 ml (3 fl oz/⅓ cup) into the pan, shaping it into a round with the back of a spoon.

Cook for 2–3 minutes, or until the batter has browned and the surface looks dry. Turn over and cook for a further 2–3 minutes. Lift the bread out and place on a plate.

Repeat with the remaining batter, stacking the breads on the plate as they are cooked, and adding more oil to the pan as required.

Serve warm, either as an accompaniment to Yemeni meals, or drizzled with melted butter and honey.

KHOBZ

Wholemeal flat breads MAKES: 12 ROUNDS

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour

1 teaspoon salt

oil, for pan-frying

Combine the flour and salt in a mixing bowl. Pour in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) tepid water and mix to a soft dough.

Knead in the bowl for 10 minutes. The dough will feel slightly sticky at first, but will become smooth as it is kneaded. Form it into a ball. Cover with plastic wrap and leave to rest for 2 hours, or even longer.

Divide the dough into 12 even portions, each the size of a large egg. Roll out to rounds 15 cm (6 inches) in diameter. The dough can be shaped without flour — but if it sticks, dust the work surface and dough very lightly with white flour.

Place the rounds side by side on a cloth. Cover and leave to rest for 20 minutes.

Heat a heavy-based frying pan or flat griddle over medium–high heat. The cooking surface is hot enough when a little sprinkled water bounces off it. Rub the pan using a cloth dipped in oil.

Add a round of dough and cook for about 1 minute, pressing the top lightly with a folded cloth to encourage even bubbling. When it is browned on the base, turn it over and cook for a further 1 minute, or until the bread looks cooked.

Cook the remaining breads in the same way, wrapping them in a cloth to keep them soft and warm, and rubbing the cooking surface occasionally with the oiled cloth.

Barley bread

MAKES: 8 BREADS

1 teaspoon active dried yeast

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) skim milk yoghurt, at room temperature ½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) 125 g (4 oz/1 cup) barley flour

**150 g (5 oz/1 cup) wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour ½ teaspoon salt
oil, for greasing**

Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water.

Stir the yoghurt until smooth, then mix in the bicarbonate of soda — the yoghurt will froth.

Combine the flours and salt in a mixing bowl. Add the yeast mixture and the yoghurt and stir to a soft dough. Knead the dough by hand for 10 minutes.

Cover with plastic wrap and leave the dough in a warm place for 1–1½ hours, or until almost doubled in size.

Turn the dough out onto a work surface and knead it a little. Divide into eight equal portions, then roll into balls. Press or roll each ball into a flat 15 cm (6 inch) round. Place the rounds on a cloth, then cover and rest for 20 minutes.

Heat a griddle or electric frying pan to medium–high heat. Rub the pan with a wad of paper towels dipped in oil. Add one round of dough. After a few seconds, press the dough with a folded cloth to encourage small bubbles. (If the dough is not pressed, the bread forms a pocket.) Cook for 1½ minutes, then turn and cook for a further 1 minute, or until done — the bread will have a slightly moist appearance around the edges.

Cook the remaining breads in the same way, wrapping them in a cloth to keep them soft and warm, and rubbing the cooking surface occasionally with more oil. Serve warm.

FATUT

Fried bread with eggs SERVES: 4

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee 2 Khobz, or pitta breads, broken into small pieces

4 eggs, lightly beaten

salt, to season Heat the ghee in a large frying pan. Add the broken bread pieces and stir over medium heat until the bread is beginning to crisp and lightly brown.

Pour in the eggs. Season with salt and stir over the heat for 2 minutes, as you would for scrambled eggs. When the egg is just set, pile it onto plates and serve hot.

This is a great breakfast dish — scrambled eggs and toast from the one pan!

FATUT BIL HULBA

Fried bread with eggs and fenugreek SERVES: 4

This is a combination of Fatut (above) and the [Hulba](#) from. Make the basic fenugreek paste (hulba) with the chillies and salt as directed in the Hulba recipe, to the end of paragraph 2. Stir 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) chicken stock into the hulba, then pour it into the pan with the cooked fatut. Bring to the boil and serve in bowls with lemon juice added to taste.

SHOURBA BILSEN

Thick lentil soup

SERVES: 6

250 g (9 oz) beef or lamb soup bones 370 g (13 oz/2 cups) dried brown lentils, rinsed 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) oil 1 large onion, finely chopped

3 garlic cloves, chopped

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 3 tablespoons coriander (cilantro) leaves salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste Rinse the bones and place them in a saucepan with 1.75 litres (59 fl oz/7 cups) cold water. Bring to a slow simmer, skimming when necessary. When the broth is well skimmed and boiling, add the lentils and return to the boil.

Meanwhile, in a separate saucepan, heat the oil and gently fry the onion until soft and lightly browned. Add the garlic and cook for a further 1 minute. Stir in the tomatoes, coriander, and salt and pepper to taste.

Remove the bones from the broth pan and discard. Add the onion mixture to the lentils, then cover and simmer gently for a further 1 hour, or until the lentils are thickened. Take care that the soup does not catch on the base of the pan.

Serve hot in small bowls, with flat bread and salad.

YEMEN SHOURBA FUL

Dried bean soup Follow the Shourba Bilsen recipe (left), but use 400 g (14 oz/ 2 cups) dried haricot (navy) beans instead of lentils. First rinse the beans and place in a saucepan with 1.75 litres (59 fl oz/ 7 cups) cold water. Bring to the boil and boil for 2 minutes, then remove from the heat and leave until the beans are plump.

Rinse the bones and add them to the pan. Return to the boil, skimming as required. When the broth is well skimmed and boiling, cover and simmer for 1 hour.

Now continue with the Shourba Bilsen recipe, frying the onion and finishing the soup as described.

BANADURA SALAT A BIL KIZBARA Tomato and coriander salad

SERVES: 6

6 firm tomatoes

**1 small handful chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves 1 small hot chilli, or freshly ground black pepper
juice of ½ lemon**

1 teaspoon salt

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil Score a cross in the base of each tomato. Place in a heatproof bowl and cover with boiling water. Leave for 30 seconds, then transfer to cold water and peel the skin away from the cross.

Slice the tomatoes into a bowl and sprinkle with the chopped coriander.

If using the chilli, cut off the stalk, slit it open and remove the seeds. Take care not to put your fingers near your eyes or mouth after handling the chilli. Chop the chilli finely.

Combine the chopped chilli or plenty of black pepper with the lemon juice and salt. Beat in the olive oil.

Pour the dressing over the tomatoes and leave for 15 minutes before serving.



SHAWAYUH

Spiced charcoal-grilled meat SERVES: 6

Though very little meat is available for the Yemeni diet, when it is possible to obtain meat suitable for grilling, these cuts are spiced with hawayij and cooked over glowing charcoal. If the meat is tough, it is simmered after the grilling in a little water flavoured with onion or spring onion (scallion). We are more fortunate in that we can choose suitable cuts of meat.

6 thickly cut grilling steaks or lamb chops

**2–3 teaspoons Hawayij
oil, for basting salt, to taste**

Slit the fat selvedge on the steaks or chops to prevent the meat curling while cooking. Sprinkle the meat on each side with the hawayij and leave for 30 minutes at room temperature.

When your barbecue coals are red-hot, dab the meat with oil and place it over the fire. Cook until seared on each side, then move the meat to a cooler part of the barbecue.

Continue to cook until done to your taste, though the Yemeni prefer well-done meat. Brush occasionally with oil during cooking. Season with salt and serve immediately.

HOR'EE

Stewed beef shank

SERVES: 5–6

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) beef foreshanks, on the bone 2 large onions, quartered

6 garlic cloves

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes 2 teaspoons Hawayij

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 1–2 hot chillies, optional Ask your meat retailer to cross-cut the foreshanks on the bone, into thick slices.

Place the meat in a large saucepan and just cover with cold water. Bring slowly to the boil, skimming when necessary. When well-skimmed and boiling, add the onion, garlic, tomatoes and hawayij. Add salt and plenty of pepper or 1–2 whole chillies, depending on how hot a dish you enjoy.

Cover and simmer gently for 4 hours, or until the meat is very tender and the liquid is reduced to a thick sauce. Serve hot.



AKUW'A

Oxtail stew SERVES: 5–6

2 oxtails, jointed

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes

3 small onions, peeled

4–5 garlic cloves 2 teaspoons Hawayij

salt, to season Wash the oxtail and place in a large pan. Cover with cold water and bring to a slow simmer, skimming when necessary. When boiling gently and well skimmed, add the tomatoes, whole onions, garlic, hawayij and salt. Cover and simmer gently for 3–3½ hours, or until the meat is tender and the liquid reduced.

Serve hot, with rice or boiled potatoes, flat bread and salad.

KIRSHUH

Stewed liver and kidney SERVES: 5–6

Though kirshuh is usually made with a selection of variety meats (offal), depending on what is available to the Yemeni cook, it is just as good using liver and kidney — or liver and lung, if you don't mind the sound of lung frying.

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lamb liver

2 lamb kidneys

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) oil 1 large onion, finely chopped 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes

1 teaspoon ground coriander seeds

½ teaspoon ground cumin

2 cardamom pods

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste 1 tablespoon finely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves or flat-leaf parsley Soak the liver in cold salted water for 30 minutes. Drain, dry with paper towels and pull off the fine skin. Cut into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes, removing any large tubes.

Skin, core and dice the kidneys, rinse briefly under cold running water, then drain and dry with paper towels.

Heat the oil in a deep saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the garlic and turmeric, cook for 2 minutes longer, then add the liver and kidney. Increase the heat and fry quickly until the colour changes, stirring often.

Reduce the heat and add the tomatoes, ground coriander, cumin and cardamom pods. Stir in 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently over low heat for 1–½ hours, or until the liver and kidneys are tender. As the mixture should be thick, add more water only if the stew looks like scorching.

Stir in the chopped coriander or parsley and serve hot.

BINT-AL-SAHN

Dough cake with honey

SERVES: 8

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour 1 teaspoon salt

4 eggs

**185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) ghee, melted melted butter, for drizzling
warm honey, for drizzling**

Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water.

Sift the flour and salt into a mixing bowl and make a well in the centre. Beat the eggs well and pour into the flour with the yeast mixture. Stir to combine, then knead well.

Gradually add 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) of the ghee (this should be just warm), kneading well into the dough. Keep kneading until the dough is smooth and fairly elastic. If the dough looks too dry, add a little water; this depends on the size of eggs used.

With floured hands, divide the dough into 16 balls, each the size of a large egg, placing them on a tray.

Take a ball of dough, place on a lightly floured work surface and form a very thin round shape by working the heel of your hand in a rotary motion on the dough. (I am right-handed, and I find that I can best do this with my left hand, using the right hand to move the dough around in order to flatten it evenly.) If you have any trouble flattening it, resort to a rolling pin.

Brush a baking tray well with some of the remaining ghee and place the completed round on one side of this. Brush the top of the dough generously with more ghee.

Shape another seven balls of dough and place them on top of the first round. As each round is placed on the previous round, press the edges with your fingertips, then brush generously with more ghee.

Shape the remaining eight balls of dough in the same way and stack them on the baking tray in another pile, pressing the edges together and brushing with ghee as before. The top layers should also be coated with ghee.

Leave the dough in a warm place for 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Bake the cakes for 25–30 minutes, or until lightly golden and cooked. Tap the base of the tray — it should sound hollow when the cakes are cooked.

Serve the cakes hot on a platter, drizzled with melted butter and warm honey — the amount should be generous, but depends on your taste.

The Yemenis break the cake off in flakes with their fingers, dipping pieces in the butter–honey mixture on the

platter. You may serve it cut in wedges if preferred, with butter and honey from the platter spooned on top.

Coffee with ginger SERVES: 6 IN ARABIC COFFEE CUPS, 4 IN DEMITASSE CUPS

Though coffee is a major export from Mocha in the Republic of Yemen, the locals can rarely afford it. They generally use the ground coffee husks and flavour it with ground ginger. As you are unlikely to have access to ground coffee husks, the recipe given uses coffee and ground ginger for a delightfully different brew.

1½ tablespoons ground coffee 1½ tablespoons sugar

2 teaspoons ground ginger

Pour 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) cold water into a long-handled coffee pot. Add the coffee, sugar and ginger and stir well to combine. Place over medium heat and bring to the boil.

Remove from the heat until the bubbling subsides, then return to the boil. Do this three times in all.
Pour into Arabic coffee or demitasse cups and serve.



Egypt





EGYPT

With a history so ancient and so awesome in its magnificence, perhaps too much is expected of Egypt's foods. Last century saw a more cosmopolitan Egypt, with culinary influences of the French, Italians, Turks and Greeks. However, the new Egypt has loosened her links with the West and regained her national identity and food preferences.

Bread stands out as the most important component of the Egyptian diet. Vendors, flat wicker baskets piled high with aish and perched precariously on their heads, wind their way through the crowded streets of Cairo to their favourite selling spots. Aish, the flat bread of Egypt, is usually made from a combination of plain (all-purpose) and wholemeal (wholewheat) flour with sufficient leavening to form a pocket and a soft crust, its basic character unchanged by the passage of millennia, and a constant reminder of the role Ancient Egypt played in developing the staff of life.

Barley, millet and wheat were the principal grains of earliest civilisations. Bread baked during these times was hard and chewy, as barley and millet do not contain adequate amounts of the gluten-forming proteins essential for making a light-textured bread. Wheat, on the other hand, does contain these proteins, but their nature can be altered if heat is applied at the wrong stage of preparation. The early wheat strains had to be heated before threshing so that the husk could be removed, so destroying these essential properties in the grain and giving wheat bread characteristics similar to those of barley and millet.

The Ancient Egyptians developed a strain of wheat that could be threshed without the preliminary heating. Whether by accident or by design, they also found a means to leaven bread made from this wheat. Because of the shortage of the new grain, some centuries passed before other civilisations were introduced to leavened bread.

THE FLAVOUR OF EGYPTIAN FOOD

Even expatriate Egyptians living in countries where vast varieties of food are constantly available will still yearn for the nostalgic bean dishes of their homeland. They are likely to remember the vendors of their native homeland with their huge idras of ful — tiny broad beans (fava beans) — simmering day and night, ready to provide a

satisfying breakfast, a midday meal, or just a snack at any time. [Ful Medamis](#), the brown bean purée made with ful, is served as a mazza, or as a substantial meal with hard-boiled eggs mashed into it, tart with lemon, pungent with garlic, subtly flavoured with cumin, crowned with golden olive oil and topped with a generous sprinkling of parsley. This simple peasant dish is of a kind that Westerners now endeavour to duplicate. Flat or crusty bread is a must and a variety of salad vegetables may be served with it, plus [Salata Tahina](#). Similar foods that will equally stir the Egyptian far from home are Tameya ([broad bean patties](#)), [Ful Nabed](#) and [Besara](#), a soup and a purée respectively, both made with skinned broad beans. A prized vegetable is okra (bamia), mostly favoured in meat and vegetable stews.

Many of Egypt's favoured recipes also appear in the cuisines of other countries, so if you are looking for a particular dish you may find it in another chapter, under another name. For example, the popular lissan al assfourthe is known as yiouvetsi in Cyprus and Greece (see recipe [Yiouvetsi](#)). If you can buy specially raised pigeons and wish to try an Egyptian recipe using them, then prepare the [Farroog Mahshi](#) recipe using four pigeons instead of the two chickens specified. The stuffing for this particular recipe is usually made with a green wheat called fireek or freekah, available from specialist food stores. Coarse burghul (bulgar) or barley are substitutes, burghul the best for this recipe.

Whatever the occasion, aish is served with all meals. Aish is similar to the saluf of Yemen. Follow the [Saluf](#) recipe, omitting the potent hilbeh topping. Allow the shaped bread to rise for 15 minutes before baking and do not prick it with a fork; this ensures that a pocket forms when cooked. Even if you include the hilbeh topping, you will not be far from the flavour of Egyptian food, as hilbeh is used as a bread dip in Alexandria.

EATING EGYPTIAN STYLE

The Western influence is still in evidence in Egypt. The dining table is spread with a cloth and all the components of the meal are placed in their dishes and set on the table at the beginning of the meal. Individual plates or bowls are set out, with knives, forks and spoons. The meal could comprise a soup, chicken, fish or meat stew such as Bamia (417), rice, pickles, olives, salad and bread. If a bean purée or soup is served, then lemon wedges, chopped onions, salad vegetables and [Salata Tahina](#) accompany it. Quite often such a meal is served without other foods — except plenty of bread, of course.

COOKING METHODS

In many homes, a single burner is often the only means by which to cook. For making [Ful Medamis](#), the Egyptians use a small electric hotplate. This keeps a constant low heat and is just large enough to take the small idra — a special pot that tapers at the top, in which the beans are cooked slowly for several hours. A casserole dish with a wide base tapering to a narrow opening will substitute for the idra. For any other Egyptian cooking, modern pots, pans and casserole dishes can be used successfully.

INGREDIENTS FOR EGYPTIAN COOKING

The dried beans, ful and ful nabed, are available at Greek and Middle Eastern food stores and specialist food stores. Broad beans (fava beans), are now available already skinned, and are also called ful beans. These look white (the unskinned ones are green to almost purple) and should be used for [Besara](#), [Ful Nabed](#) and [Tameya](#), which will save considerable time. A shorter soaking time is required, and though your yield will be greater, you can still use the quantities given in the recipes, adjusting the flavourings slightly. Ground cumin, dried mint, fresh dill, flat-leaf parsley and garlic are the principal flavour-givers, with butter and olive oil the favoured fats.

TA'LEYA I Garlic sauce

SERVES: 2–4

This is more of a condiment to be added to cooked dishes than a sauce in the accepted sense. I have given a somewhat modified version — usually six or seven garlic cloves are used in Egypt for adding to a dish that serves six or so.

As garlic increases in pungency when cooked as directed, be warned and decrease the number of cloves even further if you wish. Of course, it depends on the size of the garlic cloves used and the pungency of the variety.

3–4 garlic cloves 1/4 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons ghee

1 teaspoon ground coriander

pinch of ground hot chilli or chilli powder Crush the garlic with the salt using a mortar and pestle.

Alternatively, crush it in a garlic press and mix it with the salt.

Heat the ghee in a small saucepan and add the garlic. Cook, stirring constantly, until golden brown, then remove the pan from the heat and stir in the coriander and chilli.

Use sizzling hot, as directed in recipes.

TA'LEYA II Onion sauce

SERVES: 2–4

2 large onions

60 ml (2 fl oz/ ¼ cup) olive oil 1–2 garlic cloves, finely chopped Cut the onions in half from top to bottom, then slice each half into thin semi-circles.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the onion over medium heat until golden brown.

Add the garlic and cook for a minute longer.

Use hot, as directed in recipes.

BESARA

Broad bean purée

SERVES: 5–6

Large dried broad beans (fava beans) (ful nabed) are used for this purée. Those sold skinless are creamy white and are well worth using if you can find them. Soak the skinned beans for 24 hours in a cold place and use the soaking water in the cooking. The beans with skin intact require longer soaking, so that the tough seed covering can be removed (see [skinning](#) directions).

Use a stainless steel, tin-lined copper or an enamelled cooking vessel if possible, as an aluminium one is likely to discolour the purée.

The melokhia in the recipe is optional; it imparts a green colour to the purée without affecting the flavour.

525 g (1 lb 2½ oz/3 cups) dried broad beans (fava beans)

3 teaspoons dried mint

1 teaspoon dried melokhia, optional salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste For serving

Ta'leya II

olive oil, for drizzling chopped onions

lemon wedges

Cover the beans well with cold water and soak for 48 hours, changing the water two or three times. Remove the skins.

Place the beans in a saucepan with 1.25 litres (42½ fl oz/5 cups) water and bring to a slow simmer. Cover and simmer gently for 1½ hours, or until very soft.

Pass the beans through a sieve, or purée in a blender and return to the pan. Rub the dried mint into the beans, and the well-rubbed melokhia, if using. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Gently cook without the lid on until bubbling.

Serve hot in small bowls, garnishing each with Ta'leya. Have on hand some olive oil, chopped onions and lemon wedges so that these may be added to individual taste.

Serve with flat bread or crusty bread.

Broad bean patties MAKES: 30

Dried broad beans (fava beans) (ful nabed) are normally used for these patties, but the lengthy soaking takes time, as does removing the skins. Fortunately dried skinned broad beans are available at Middle Eastern and Greek food stores — ask for these as they will save a lot of preparation time. They are creamy in colour.

350 g (12 oz/2 cups) dried broad beans (fava beans) 120 g (4 oz/1 cup) chopped spring onions (scallions)

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 tablespoons chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves

3 garlic cloves

1½ teaspoons salt

¼ teaspoon ground hot chilli or chilli powder ¼ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) freshly ground black pepper sesame seeds, optional

oil, for deep-frying

Place the skinned beans in a bowl and cover well with cold water. Leave to soak for 2 days in a cool place, changing the water two or three times.

Drain the beans but do not cook them. Place in a food processor and blend to a paste. Add the spring onion, parsley, coriander, garlic, salt, chilli and bicarbonate of soda. Season with black pepper and process again to a thick paste, scraping down the side of the bowl. Let the mixture rest for 30 minutes.

With wet hands, shape about a tablespoon of the mixture at a time into thick patties about 4 cm (1½ inches) in diameter.

Dip each side in sesame seeds if desired. Place on a tray and leave at room temperature for 20 minutes.

Heat the oil to 170°C (338°F), or until a cube of bread dropped in the oil browns in 20 seconds. Fry the patties a few at a time until deep golden brown, turning to brown evenly; each batch should take about 5 minutes to cook. Drain on paper towels.

Serve hot, with flat bread such as [Khoubiz](#), [Salata Tahina](#) and assorted salad vegetables such as tomato, cucumber, sweet capsicums (peppers) and lettuce.



SALATA TAHINA Tahini salad

MAKES: ABOUT 500 G (1 LB 1 OZ/2 CUPS)

2 garlic cloves

½ teaspoon salt

205 g (7 oz/¾ cup) tahini

1 tablespoon white vinegar

juice of 1 lemon

½ teaspoon ground cumin

1 small handful chopped flat-leaf parsley

Crush the garlic with the salt using a mortar and pestle. Alternatively, crush it in a garlic press and mix it with the salt.

Place the tahini in a mixing bowl and beat well. This preliminary beating reduces the strong flavour of the tahini.

Beat in the garlic mixture and vinegar. Gradually add the lemon juice alternately with 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water. (To make a creamy salad of good consistency, add enough lemon juice to make the tahini very thick before adding water. This way you have more scope in adjusting the flavour and consistency of the sauce.) Add more salt to taste, and more lemon juice if a sharper sauce is required. Mix in the cumin and parsley, then cover and chill until required.

Serve as a mazza or as directed in recipes.

ROZ

Boiled rice

SERVES: 6

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) long-grain white rice, or 440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) short-grain white rice

2 teaspoons salt

40 g (1½ oz) ghee or butter Place the rice in a sieve and wash under running water. Tip into a bowl and sprinkle with 1 teaspoon of the salt. Cover with cold water, soak for 10 minutes, then drain in the sieve. Do this well ahead of the time required for cooking so that the grains can dry. Spread them out in a dish if you like.

Heat the ghee or butter in a heavy-based saucepan and add the rice. Stir over medium heat for 2 minutes, or until the grains are well coated. Pour in 875 ml (29 fl oz/3½ cups) water and the remaining 1 teaspoon salt and bring to the boil, stirring occasionally.

Reduce the heat to low. Cover the pan tightly and leave to simmer for 15–20 minutes.

Turn off the heat and leave the lid on for a further 5–10 minutes. Fluff up the grains with a fork and serve.

✿ Note: For an alternative cooking method, drain the rice after soaking – no need to let the grains dry. In a heavy-based saucepan, combine the ghee or butter, the 2 teaspoons salt and 875 ml (29 fl oz/3½ cups) water; bring to the boil and add the rice. Return to the boil, stirring once or twice, reduce the heat, cover and finish as above.

COUSCOUS

Couscous

SERVES: 4

Though couscous is the national dish of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, it is also popular in Egypt. The other North African nations serve steaming mounds of couscous with their flavoursome stews; in Egypt it is generally prepared as a dessert, and only occasionally makes an appearance with stews.

While couscous is now widely available, I have given directions for making your own. Allow plenty of time and give yourself lots of space. Once you have mastered the art, increase the ingredients proportionately to make a larger quantity and store in an airtight container.

125 g (4 oz/1 cup) fine semolina (farina)

35–50 g (1½–2 oz/¼–⅓ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour

¼ teaspoon salt

Place the semolina in a large round baking dish or a basin with a flat base. Form into a circle, leaving the centre clear.

Pour 2 tablespoons cold water into the centre, flick the semolina into the water with your fingers, then work with the palm of your hand in a circular motion to moisten the semolina evenly.

Mix the flour with the salt and sprinkle half of this over the semolina. Work it into the semolina, again using the palm of your hand and circular movements. Add a little more water and flour so that small, round grains about the size of sesame seeds begin to form. The aim is to coat the semolina grains with flour.

Turn the mixture into a wide, medium-meshed wire sieve (a wooden-framed sieve is ideal), set over a large cloth. Sieve the grains and return them from the cloth to the dish or basin, leaving any large lumps in the sieve. The smaller grains in the sieve are the couscous; tip these into a bowl.

Work a little more flour and water into the dish or basin contents. Sieve, sort and work again until the ingredients are formed into pellets of couscous, adding more flour and water as required. No more than 50 g (2 oz/⅓ cup) flour and 85 ml (3 fl oz/⅓ cup) water should be used per 125 g (4 oz/1 cup) semolina.

Line the top section of a couscoussier or a colander with a piece of muslin (cheesecloth) and spread the couscous in it evenly.

Bring about 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water to the boil in the bottom section of the couscoussier or a deep saucepan, then place the container with the couscous on top. If using a colander that does not fit snugly, drape a cloth around the edge so that steam does not escape. The container with the couscous must not touch the water. Cover the couscous with a lid and steam for 10 minutes.

Turn the couscous onto a cloth and break up any lumps with your fingers. Spread it out and leave for several hours in an airy place to dry thoroughly.

Store in an airtight container and use as directed in recipes.

KOUSHARI

Lentils, macaroni and rice in oil

SERVES: 6

This is classed as an 'oil' dish by Coptic Egyptians, and is prepared during periods of fasting when animal products cannot be eaten. You may cook the lentils, macaroni and rice simultaneously in three saucepans – or if, like me, you prefer to keep pans to a minimum, use the method given.

185 g (6½ oz/1 cup) brown lentils

1 tablespoon salt

155 g (5 oz/1 cup) small macaroni noodles

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) short-grain white rice

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 quantity [Ta'leya II](#)

250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) Place the lentils in a sieve and wash well under running water. Tip them into a large saucepan. Add 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water and 1 teaspoon of the salt. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 1 hour, or until the lentils are tender but still intact. Drain and set aside.

Clean out the pan and pour in 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) water. Bring to the boil and add another 2 teaspoons of the salt and the macaroni. Stir constantly until the water returns to the boil. Now cook, uncovered, for 15 minutes, or until the macaroni is tender, stirring occasionally. Drain and set aside. Clean out the pan again and dry.

Place the rice in a sieve, wash well under running water, then drain. Heat the oil in the saucepan and fry the rice over medium heat for 2–3 minutes, stirring to coat with the oil. Add 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and the remaining 1 teaspoon salt and bring to the boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer for 15 minutes, or until tender. Remove from the heat and leave the lid on for 5 minutes to allow the grains to separate.

Prepare the Ta'leya following the directions [Ta'leya II](#), then add the passata and bring to the boil.

Add the lentils and macaroni to the cooked rice and toss together lightly with a fork. Pour the hot Ta'leya and tomato mixture on top, toss again and cover the pan. Leave over low heat for a final 10 minutes.

Serve hot with salads, grilled fish or prawns (shrimp).



FUL MEDAMIS

Simmered broad beans

SERVES: 6

Ful medamis, Egypt's national dish, is also enjoyed in other countries of the region. In Egypt the ful — small broad beans (fava beans) — are cooked very slowly in an idra, a special pot that tapers to a narrow neck. The shape ensures that the small amount of water used in the cooking is not lost: as steam condenses on the upper sloping sides, it drops back into the pot. There are casserole dishes with a somewhat similar design, and these may be used successfully for preparing ful. Otherwise use a heavy-based saucepan with a tight-fitting lid.

175 g (6 oz/1 cup) dried small broad beans (fava beans) 185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) red lentils, optional

3 garlic cloves

salt and pepper, to taste pinch of ground cumin

For serving

6 hard-boiled eggs, optional finely chopped flat-leaf parsley lemon wedges

olive oil, for drizzling freshly ground black pepper, to taste Wash the beans well, then cover with 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) cold water. Leave to soak overnight, in a cool place if the weather is warm.

Place the beans and their soaking water in a heavy-based saucepan; add the lentils if using. Cover tightly and simmer very gently for 5–6 hours. Alternatively, place the ingredients in a casserole dish with tapering sides, cover tightly and cook in a 120°C (250°F/Gas ½) oven for 6 hours.

Check the beans occasionally, and add a little water if they look dry. Do not stir during cooking, as this will cause them to stick to the pot.

Crush the garlic with a little salt and add to the beans. Add the cumin and additional salt to taste. If desired, the beans may be passed through a sieve to purée them; otherwise, serve them as they are.

Serve in soup bowls, adding a quartered hard-boiled egg if desired, and a sprinkling of chopped parsley to each. Each diner squeezes on lemon juice and adds olive oil and pepper to individual taste. The beans and egg are then usually crushed with a fork and the bowl contents combined.

Serve with flat or crusty bread, crisp salads and [Salata Tahina](#).

* Note: To serve as an appetiser, purée the beans, add the garlic, salt, pepper and cumin and mix in the lemon juice and olive oil to taste. Serve spread on a dish, with a good sprinkling of parsley; offer flat bread on the side, cut into quarters.

SEMIT

Sesame bread rings

MAKES: ABOUT 18

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

600 g (1 lb 5 oz/4 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) milk, boiled and cooled to lukewarm

1 teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons sugar

2 teaspoons olive oil

1 small egg, beaten

sesame seeds, for sprinkling

Soak the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water and stir to dissolve.

Sift the flour into a mixing bowl. Remove and reserve about 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) of the flour.

Add the warm milk and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) warm water to the yeast with the salt and sugar. Stir to dissolve the sugar.

Pour the liquid into the centre of the flour and stir in a little of the flour to thicken the liquid. Cover and leave in a warm place for 10 minutes, or until the liquid is frothy.

Mix in the flour remaining in the bowl, then beat until smooth. Beat by hand for 10 minutes, or use an electric mixer with a dough hook for 5 minutes. Gradually beat in the oil, adding a little of the reserved flour.

Turn out onto a floured work surface and knead in as much of the reserved flour as the dough will take. Knead for 10 minutes, or until smooth and satiny. Shape into a ball.

Oil a bowl lightly, add the dough and turn it in the bowl to oil the whole ball. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and leave the dough in a warm place for 30 minutes, or until doubled in size.

Punch down the dough and turn it onto a lightly floured surface. Knead a little, then break off pieces the size of a small egg.

Roll a piece of dough into a rope 1 cm (½ inch) thick and 20 cm (8 inches) long. Form the rope into a ring, overlapping the ends and pressing to seal. Make about five rings, then glaze with the beaten egg and dip the tops in a dish of sesame seeds. Place on a lightly oiled baking tray.

Shape the remainder of the dough into rings, five at a time, finishing each batch with egg glaze and sesame seeds.

Cover the bread rings with a cloth and leave in a warm place for about 30 minutes, until they double in size.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 220°C (430°F/Gas 7). Place a baking dish of hot water on the bottom shelf of the oven.

Bake the bread rings on the centre shelf of the oven for 15 minutes, or until they sound hollow when tapped on the base.

Brush the hot bread rings with water and leave on the baking trays to cool; this crisps the crust.

✿ Note: Normally each bread ring is shaped, glazed and coated separately, but preparing them in small batches speeds up the job. However if you shape all of them before glazing, the first ones you make will begin to rise and will be more difficult to handle.

SHOURBA ADS

Lentil soup

SERVES: 6

375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) red lentils 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) meat or chicken stock, or water 1 onion, grated

1 teaspoon ground cumin

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 tablespoon lemon juice

For serving

Ta'leya II

lemon wedges

olive oil, for drizzling Place the lentils in a sieve and wash under running water.

Bring the stock or water to the boil in a large saucepan and add the lentils and onion. Return to a slow boil, cover and simmer over low heat for 45–60 minutes, or until the lentils are tender. Do not stir during cooking.

By now the lentils should have formed a purée; for a finer texture, pass them through a sieve, or purée in a blender.

Add the cumin and season to taste with salt and pepper. If a thinner soup is required, add water to achieve the desired consistency. Stir in the lemon juice and heat gently until bubbling.

Serve hot in deep bowls, topping each serving with Ta'leya. Add more lemon juice according to individual taste. Have olive oil on hand, as the amount in the Ta'leya may not be sufficient for some tastes.

FUL NABED

Broad bean soup SERVES: 6

525 g (1 lb 2 oz/3 cups) dried broad beans (fava beans)

1 teaspoon ground cumin

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil

1 tablespoon lemon juice

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste For serving

finely chopped flat-leaf parsley lemon wedges

Cover the beans well with cold water and soak for 48 hours, changing the water two or three times. Remove the skins as directed in the preparation instructions.

Place the beans in a large saucepan with 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) water and bring to a slow simmer. Cover and simmer gently for 1½ hours, or until very soft.

Press the beans through a sieve, or purée in a blender. Return them to the pan and add the cumin, oil and lemon juice, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir over gentle heat until bubbling.

Serve hot in deep bowls, garnished with chopped parsley. Lemon juice is squeezed on according to individual taste.

Flat bread or other bread should accompany this soup.

FATA

Lamb and bread soup

SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) lean boneless lamb

1 large onion, finely chopped

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

1 clove or pinch of ground mastic, optional

110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) short-grain white rice ½ teaspoon salt

20 g (¾ oz) ghee or butter

To finish

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee or butter 2–3 garlic cloves, crushed

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) vinegar

2 rounds Khoubiz, toasted finely chopped flat-leaf parsley Cut the lamb into small cubes and place in a large saucepan with 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) cold water. Slowly bring to the boil, skimming when necessary. Add the onion and season with salt and pepper. If you find the aroma of boiling lamb unpleasant, add a clove or mastic (I find it unnecessary).

Cover and simmer gently for 1½ hours, or until the lamb is tender, but not falling apart.

Meanwhile, place the rice in a sieve, wash well under running water, then drain.

In a separate saucepan, bring 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water to the boil. Add the salt, ghee and rice and return to the boil, stirring occasionally. Cover and simmer over low heat for 15–20 minutes, or until the rice is tender.

Lift the cooked lamb from the soup with a slotted spoon and allow to drain briefly.

To finish the dish, melt 20 g (¾ oz) of the ghee or butter in a frying pan. Add the lamb and fry until lightly coloured; remove from the pan and keep hot.

Melt the remaining ghee or butter in the frying pan and fry the garlic until lightly coloured. Take the pan off the heat and pour in the vinegar, then place back over the heat and boil for a few seconds. Set aside.

Place a round of toasted bread in a large tureen or casserole dish; you can first cut it into quarters if you like. Spoon a little of the garlic mixture over the bread and top with half the cooked rice. Pour on some of the soup and add another layer of bread and the remaining rice.

Arrange the lamb on top and spoon the remaining garlic mixture over. Pour in the remaining soup and garnish with chopped parsley before serving.

* Note: To simplify the rather complex preparation of this dish, the rice may be boiled in the soup after the meat has been removed.

MELOKHIA

Green herb soup

SERVES: 6

Though in Egypt a stock made from any available vegetables is often used in this soup, it is preferable to use lamb, beef or chicken stock. If chicken is used, the bird is roasted with butter after the initial boiling and served separately as part of the meal. Egyptians living abroad find our mass-produced chickens lack flavour, and many add a stock (bouillon) cube so that the end result is just like 'back home'. For more information on melokhia, see the [Glossary](#).

1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) chicken or meat stock, flavoured with onion, strained 1 chicken stock (bouillon) cube, optional salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste 45 g (1½ oz/1½ cups) dried melokhia leaves 2 silverbeet (Swiss chard) leaves 1 quantity [Ta'leya I](#)

For serving

chopped onion

vinegar or lemon juice

Bring the stock to the boil in a large saucepan. If using chicken stock, crumble in the stock cube. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.

Finely crumble the melokhia leaves and add to the boiling stock. Remove the white stalks from the silverbeet. Chop the leaves finely and add to the stock. Return almost to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes. The melokhia swells and stays suspended in the stock.

Prepare the Ta'leya following the directions [Ta'leya I](#). Stir it into the soup, then cover and simmer for 2 minutes.

Serve piping hot, with a bowl of chopped onion bathed in vinegar or lemon juice, to be added to individual taste.

* Note: If a whole chicken has been simmered for the stock, ovenroast with butter and serve it at the same meal, with plain boiled rice ([Roz](#)).



SAYYADIAH

Fish with rice

SERVES: 4

**4 whole fish, each about 375 g (13 oz), scaled and gutted juice of 1 lemon
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season**

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 onions, finely chopped 400 g (14 oz/2 cups) long-grain white rice 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped or crushed

1 teaspoon ground cumin

flour, for coating oil, for pan-frying parsley sprigs, to garnish lemon wedges, to serve Rinse each fish and wipe dry. Leaving the heads on, rub the surfaces and cavities with the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Cover and set aside for 30–45 minutes.

Heat the oil in a deep saucepan and gently fry the onion for 15–20 minutes, or until very soft and golden. Wash the rice, drain and add to the pan. Stir over medium heat for 2–3 minutes, or until coated.

Pour in 875 ml (29 fl oz/3½ cups) hot water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low, then cover the rice and gently cook for 20 minutes.

Mix the garlic with the cumin. Make three or four deep slits on each side of each fish, fill the slits with the garlic and cumin mixture and coat the fish with flour. Coat a large frying pan with oil and place over medium–high heat. Pan-fry the fish in the hot oil for 4–5 minutes on each side or until golden brown and cooked.

Remove the fish and keep hot.

Add about 2 tablespoons of the oil in which the fish was cooked to the cooked rice. Stir it through with a fork, cover the pan and leave the rice for 5 minutes.

Pile the rice on a platter and arrange the fish on top. Garnish with parsley sprigs and serve with lemon wedges.

FARROOG MAHSI

Roast stuffed chicken

SERVES: 6

2 chickens, about 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) each; keep the livers, hearts and other giblets, or use an extra 125 g (4 oz) chicken livers salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) butter, melted

Stuffing

**175 g (6 oz/1 cup) coarse burghul (bulgur) livers and hearts from the chickens 40 g (1½ oz) butter
1 large onion, finely chopped**

2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 teaspoon dried mint, rubbed to a powder salt and freshly ground black pepper 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) chicken stock, made from the remaining giblets Wipe the chickens with paper towels and season inside and out with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate until required.

To make the stuffing, place the burghul in a bowl, cover with water and soak for 5 minutes. Strain in a sieve, pressing with the back of a spoon to extract all the moisture.

Meanwhile, clean the chicken livers and hearts, then finely chop. (Use the 125 g/4 oz chicken livers if you don't have the hearts.) Melt the butter in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the chopped liver and heart and fry just long enough for the colour to change. Remove the pan from the heat.

Stir in the drained burghul, parsley, mint, and salt and pepper to taste. Add the stock, then cover and cook over low heat for 5 minutes. Allow the stuffing to cool.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Fill the chickens with the stuffing, then truss.

Pour the melted butter into a baking dish. Add the chickens, breast side up, and baste them with the melted butter. Bake for 1½ hours, turning the chickens on their sides during cooking, then breast side up during the last 10 minutes to complete the browning.

Remove the chickens to a plate and spoon the stuffing onto a serving platter. Joint the chickens and place the pieces on top of the stuffing. Keep hot.

Dissolve the browned cooking juices in the baking dish with a little hot water. Bring to the boil and served strained over the chicken.



KOLKAS

Meat with taro

SERVES: 6

Of all the countries of the Middle East, only Egypt and Cyprus use the root vegetable taro, which is indigenous to the Pacific region. The Egyptians call the root kolkas, and call the dish they use it in by the same name (see of the Glossary for more detail on [taro](#)). Just remember not to wet the root once it has been peeled and cut, as it can go slimy. The Egyptians do not chip off the pieces as they do in Cyprus.

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) boneless beef or lamb stewing meat 60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) butter

2 teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) taro juice of 1/2 lemon

15 silverbeet (Swiss chard) leaves 1 tablespoon finely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves 2 garlic cloves, crushed Trim the meat and cut it into cubes. Melt 20 g (3/4 oz) of the butter in a deep heavy-based saucepan and lightly fry the meat — just enough for it to lose its red colour. Do not brown.

Add 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water and the salt. Season with pepper, then cover and simmer gently for 1 hour, or until the meat is half-cooked.

Wash the taro and dry well. Peel and cut it into squarish pieces about 2 cm (¾ inch) thick. Add to the stew with the lemon juice, making sure the taro is totally immersed in the liquid, otherwise it could discolour. Cover and simmer for a further 1 hour, or until the meat is tender. Do not stir once the taro is added.

Wash the silverbeet well and strip the leaves from the white stalks (the stalks can be used as a vegetable for later meals). Drain the leaves.

Melt the remaining butter in a large frying pan and add the silverbeet leaves. Stir over medium heat until they are well wilted and darkened in colour. Chop finely while in the pan. Add the coriander and garlic and stir over the heat for 1 minute.

Stir the silverbeet mixture into the stew. Cover the pan and leave off the heat for 5 minutes before serving. Serve with bread.

KORUMB MAHSI

Cabbage rolls

SERVES: 6

24 cabbage leaves

250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) **125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) meat stock juice of ½ lemon**

2 garlic cloves, chopped **½ teaspoon sugar**

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season **40 g (1½ oz) butter**

Stuffing

40 g (1½ oz) butter

1 onion, finely chopped **750 g (1 lb 10 oz) finely minced (ground) beef** **110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) short-grain white rice**

1 tablespoon chopped dill

½ teaspoon ground cumin **60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes)** **salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season** If the cabbage leaves are large, halve them and count as two leaves. Bring a large saucepan of salted water to the boil and blanch a few cabbage leaves at a time for 3–5 minutes each batch, or until softened enough to roll. Drain the leaves in a colander.

Remove the hard centre rib from the cabbage leaves. Line the pan with these cabbage ribs and add extra leaves if needed to fill any gaps.

To make the stuffing, melt the butter in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until soft. Tip the onion into a mixing bowl and add the remaining stuffing ingredients. Season with salt and pepper and mix together well.

Place a generous tablespoon of filling on one edge of a cabbage leaf. Roll it into a neat package, folding in the sides. Repeat with the remaining leaves and stuffing, placing the rolls in the lined pan, seam side down.

Combine the passata with the stock, lemon juice, garlic and sugar; add salt and pepper to taste. Pour the mixture over the rolls and add the butter to the pan.

Invert a heavy plate on top of the rolls. Cover and bring to a slow simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 1 hour. Serve hot.

BAMIA

Lamb and okra casserole

SERVES: 5–6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) boneless lamb or beef stewing meat 40 g (1½ oz) ghee or butter

1 large onion, finely chopped

½ teaspoon ground cumin

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes 2 tablespoons tomato paste (concentrated purée) 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) stock or water ½ teaspoon sugar

salt and freshly ground black pepper *Roz*, to serve To finish

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) fresh okra 20 g (¾ oz) ghee

1 quantity *Ta'leya I*

Preheat the oven to 150–160°C (300–320°F/Gas 2–3).

Trim the meat and cut into 3 cm (1¼ inch) cubes. Melt the ghee or butter in a heavy-based saucepan and brown the meat on all sides, adding a single layer of meat to the pan at a time. Transfer to a casserole dish.

Reduce the heat, add the onion to the pan and fry gently until translucent. Add the cumin, tomatoes, tomato paste and stock and stir well to dissolve the browned sediment.

Pour the mixture over the lamb. Add the sugar and season with salt and pepper. Cover tightly and bake for 1½ hours.

To finish the dish, prepare the *okra* as directed. Dry very well with paper towels or a cloth. Melt the ghee in a frying pan, add the okra and fry over medium heat for 3 minutes, tossing gently.

Arrange the okra over the stew, then cover and bake for a further 40 minutes, or until the meat is tender.

Prepare the *Ta'leya* following the directions *Ta'leya I*, and pour while hot over the okra.

Serve from the casserole dish, with a separate dish of *Roz*.



BASBOUSA

Semolina cake

SERVES: 8–10

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) butter, preferably unsalted 170 g (6 oz/¾ cup) caster (superfine) sugar 1 teaspoon vanilla essence

2 eggs

250 g (9 oz/2 cups) fine semolina (farina)

1 teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) 185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) plain yoghurt blanched split almonds

Syrup

440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar

1 tablespoon lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4). Grease a 20 × 30 cm (8 × 12 inch) slab cake tin.

Cream the butter, sugar and vanilla until light and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time and beat well after each addition. Sift the semolina, baking powder and bicarbonate of soda twice, then fold into the butter mixture alternately with the yoghurt.

Spread the batter into the cake tin. Evenly arrange the almonds in rows on top of the cake, placing four rows across and seven down — so that when the cake is cut, an almond will be centred on each piece.

Bake for 30–35 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean.

Meanwhile, make the syrup. In a saucepan, dissolve the sugar in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water over medium heat. Add the lemon juice and bring to the boil, then allow to boil rapidly for 10 minutes. Cool the syrup by standing the pan in cold water.

Spoon the cooled syrup over the hot cake. Allow the cake to cool thoroughly.

To serve, cut into diamond shapes or squares. Serve with thick whipped cream if desired.



COUSCOUS BI SUKKAR

Sweet couscous with nuts

SERVES: 6–8

370 g (13 oz/2 cups) couscous

125 g (4 oz/½ cup) unsalted butter, melted

For serving

icing (confectioners') sugar, for sprinkling

toasted peanuts or almond slivers

Place the couscous in a bowl and cover with cold water. Stir with your fingers, then drain off the water. Leave the couscous to stand for 15 minutes. The grains will swell.

Place the couscous in the top section of a couscoussier and set over 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) boiling water. Alternatively, place the couscous in a fine sieve or muslin (cheesecloth)-lined colander that fits snugly over a deep saucepan of boiling water, ensuring that the bottom of the sieve or colander does not touch the water.

Drape a cloth over the top of the couscous container and fit the lid on, bringing the ends of the cloth over the top of the lid. Steam for 15 minutes, then tip the couscous into a bowl.

Break up any lumps with your fingers or a fork and sprinkle with 2 tablespoons cold water. Fluff up the couscous with a fork and return it to the steaming container, adding more boiling water if necessary.

Cover as before and steam for 30 minutes, regulating the heat so that the water boils gently. When the cooking is completed, the couscous should be tender but not mushy.

Tip the couscous into a bowl and fluff it up with fork, breaking up any lumps. Add the melted butter and toss through to coat the grains evenly.

Serve warm, piled in individual sweet dishes, and sprinkled with icing sugar and peanuts or almonds.



Iran





IRAN

While Iran is its official name, I cannot help referring to the country as Persia, as this seems to me to be an expression of the essence of the country and its people. Do not be confused with my Irans and Iranians, Persias and Persians: they are all one and the same. Most countries of the Middle East were influenced in one way or another by Persia, particularly in terms of cuisine. The dolmeh of Persia, for instance, became the dolma and other sundry variations of Iraq, Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Armenia, Lebanon, Syria and the Gulf States.

THE FLAVOUR OF PERSIAN FOOD

One of the most popular dishes in Tehran is chelou kebab, and there are restaurants that specialise in its preparation. It is simple, and its success depends on the quality of the basic elements, which are melded into a culinary delight with a simple stir of the diner's fork.

My first taste of chelou kebab won me over to Persian cooking, for in it I could see the true art and dedication of the Persian cook. To behold, it is a dish of rice and grilled lamb. But once tasted it is much, much more. Only the best portion of the lamb will do — the tender, lean eye of the rib, trimmed so that not a trace of fat or gristle mars its purity, sliced thinly and marinated in lemon and onion juice to melt-in-the-mouth tenderness. Charcoal-grilled only seconds before, it is served nestling in a pile of steaming hot chelou (rice), with a tomato or two for colour. Pats of butter, a generous dusting of sumac and raw egg yolk accompany it, to be stirred into the rice for an amalgamation of subtle flavours complementing the lamb. The rice is the most important element of the dish; Persian rice is aromatic, hard-grained and almost without equal. Pakistan's basmati rice is the nearest and certainly the best substitute. Once you make chelou and taste it, you will never cook plain rice any other way again.

Polous (another rice dish) are an extension of chelous and are well worth trying. The imaginative use of fruits is another high point in Persian cooking, with sweet-sour flavours the Western palate has learned to appreciate. Fruits are frequently combined with meats in Iran's polous. Persian cooks, like their Western counterparts, do take shortcuts, and if you find chelous and polous are too time-consuming in their preparation, then try [Kateh](#) in place of chelou, and [Dami](#) instead of polous. The most important factor is using the right rice. Experiment by trying basmati rice first, so you have a yardstick against which to measure the success of future efforts using another more readily

available long-grain white rice. The quantities of rice have been trimmed to suit Western tastes and appetites, but the essence of the dishes has not suffered.

The Persian khoresh, loosely translated as ‘sauce’, is a combination of meat or poultry with vegetables, fruits, herbs and spices, to make a substantial ‘sauce’ for serving with rice dishes. Abgusht, on the other hand, is a meat stew that can become, with the addition of more liquid, a substantial meat-based soup, while aashe is always regarded as a soup.

The fruits of Persia are highly regarded and are served during the day, preceding meals. The cucumber is regarded as a fruit — and if you have ever tasted a Persian cucumber you will understand why.

Herbs are an important part of Persian cooking. [Sabzi Khordan](#) is a platter of mixed herbs served with [Nane Lavash](#) bread, panir (goat’s milk cheese) and Mast Va Khiar ([yoghurt and cucumber salad](#),) as a refreshing start to a meal. More detail is given in the recipe [Sabzi Khordan](#).

Spinach is native to Persia; how it came to be known as English spinach I cannot say. It features in salads, stews and kuku (egg casseroles or omelettes).

Sweet–sour flavours are essentially Persian in character, with dishes featuring fruit such as pomegranates, peaches, sour cherries, apples and quinces, and lime or lemon juice added for good measure. Verjuice — the juice of green (unripened) grapes — is widely used in Iran for a really sour flavour.

The samovar is an essential item in every Persian household, as tea ranks with abdug (yoghurt drink) as Persia’s principal beverage. Tea is taken in small, slender glasses and served with lumps of sugar. To drink it in the Persian way, one must hold the lump of sugar between the teeth and sip the tea through it. The sugar can be conventional cube sugar or small ‘cushions’ of clear white toffee.

NOW ROOZ

Though Iran is predominantly a Muslim country, their most joyous feast has its origins long before Islam, in the time of the prophet Zoroaster and the great kings of Ancient Persia. It is the celebration of Now Rooz, the Persian new year, actually beginning on the first day of spring, 21 March. The new year means new life, and this celebration places constant emphasis on the newness of life. About two weeks before Now Rooz, wheat or other grain is sown in a sandy bed. By Now Rooz Eve the green shoots are well in evidence and the clump is usually divided according to the number of family members. Each piece is tied with a colourful ribbon and set on the haft seen (seven S’s) table, symbolic of the roots of life. Altogether, seven food items whose names begin with an ‘s’ must be placed on the table. The number seven probably relates to the seven days of the week, or the seven planets of the solar system. Apples (sib), garlic (sir), sumac (a kind of spice), herbs (sabzi), vinegar (sarkh), coin (sekeh), and a samanoo (a sweet pudding made with a special wheat) are the usual items. The table would also have a bowl of water with a green leaf floating in it, fresh fruit, eggs, meat, fish, fowl, sweetmeats, pastries, grains and nuts — in other words a harvest festival in miniature. These are the raw foods used for meals throughout the holiday period.

We arrived in Iran on the thirteenth day of Now Rooz. On that day every person who is able leaves their home and travels as far away as possible so that their bad luck can be left behind. Persians love picnics and this is one massive picnic day. Food is packed along with the samovar to supply the copious amounts of tea consumed. A clump of green shoots is placed jauntily on the bonnet, roof or trunk of the family car, and during the picnic it is thrown into a running stream. In Tehran, the deep gutters that carry the spring water from the mountains behind

the city were dotted with these clumps, as those who cannot get to the country, picnic instead at one of the city's beautiful parks or gardens. Now *Rooz* celebrations last for about two weeks.

PERSIAN BREADS

Bread is the staff of life: in Iran, as in most other Middle Eastern countries, you are constantly aware of the importance of this most ancient of foods.

As Persia has influenced the bread-making of so many of the countries surrounding it, a description of the process should be part of this chapter.

Bread is still baked traditionally, though the oven is more likely to be heated by oilfed burners than by wood.

One bakery we visited in Shiraz was baking *nane lavash*. In one room was the doughmaker, tending the modern breadmixer in the centre. Along the full length of three walls ran a waist-high bench structure made of a stone compound, with straight-sided holes 50 cm (20 inches) in diameter formed into the structure. There were at least thirty of these proving vats, each with softly rounded cushions of dough gently billowing above the level of the bench. We were looking at just one of the three 'bakes' of the day.

Next door was a room filled with cream-coloured flour, shovel at the ready. Then came the bakehouse. The heat exuding from this area was sufficient to keep the proving room warm enough for the dough to rise, though with the flat breads the rising of the dough is not necessary.

The procedure in the bakehouse goes something like this: one person breaks off lumps of dough from the huge mass on his table, shaping them into balls. These are rolled out to an oval shape by another worker. A more experienced baker takes the rolled-out dough, expertly throws it back and forth across the backs of his hands, enlarging it even further, runs a *jella* (a spiked wheel on a handle) across the dough three times, then throws it onto the *manjak* — a slightly domed oval cushion about 60 cm (24 inches) long and 30 cm (12 inches) across. After all the rolling, throwing and tossing, the sheet of now-thin dough covers this cushion completely. The baker then slips his hand into a pocket in the back of the *manjak*, takes it up and presses the dough deftly onto the scorching hot wall of the *tannour*, the beehive clay oven of the Middle East and India. In 30–40 seconds the bread bubbles and cooks to golden brown crispness. Another baker, armed with a *mengash* (a long rod finished with a metal hook), pulls off the cooked bread and flicks it through a waist-high opening into the actual shop, where it is sold immediately.

The whole procedure is carried out with rhythmic precision and at a pace so rapid that the onlooker almost becomes mesmerised. The aroma of the baking bread alone is enough to keep one in a state of euphoria.

Other breads baked in Iran are:

Taftoon: Similar to *nane lavash* in preparation and baking, but round and slightly smaller. Usually made with flour resembling wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour with the bran removed.

Sangyak: About 75 cm (30 inches) long and 30 cm (12 inches) wide. The top is oiled and well indented by fingertips. Baked in a traditional oven on a bed of hot pebbles, it is a bubbly, crisp flat bread, usually made with wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour. At its best when warm.

Barbari: Shaped in long loaves about 60 cm (24 inches) long, 25 cm (10 inches) wide and 4 cm (1½ inches) thick when cooked. The top is oiled, and four grooves running the length of the bread are made with the fingers. Baked on trays in a traditional oven, it is the most popular breakfast bread. Excellent when warm, but not as pleasant cold as the texture is rather coarse. Plain (all-purpose) flour is used for *barbari*.

EATING PERSIAN STYLE

The midday and evening meals are almost identical, with the same variety of foods served.

The Persians serve their meals on carpets. The carpet is spread with a leather cover called a *sofreh*, which serves as protection and provides a firm base for the dishes. This is covered with a white cloth *sofreh* and the carpet is surrounded with cushions for seating. China dinner plates are set out with spoons and forks, which have now replaced the traditional method of eating from the fingers of the right hand. A rice dish, either *chelou*, *polou*, *dami* or *kateh*, is always served with a *khoresh*. *Abgusht*, either as a soup or as a stew, could also be served, or perhaps a baked chicken or fish. A *borani* (salad), if made with a yoghurt base, often replaces the *khoresh*, particularly in summer. A mixed green salad with *cos* (romaine) lettuce, cucumber, tomatoes, radishes and herbs, and dressed with olive oil and vinegar, is frequently included. Yoghurt, pickles, flat bread and fresh fruit complete the meal. *Abdug* (yoghurt drink) is usually served as the beverage.

Tea, *sharbat* (fruit sherbet) and *sekanjabin* (a sweet-sour mint-flavoured beverage) are usually taken as refreshments between meals. *Kuku* (an egg casserole or omelette) is often included at the table, particularly for festive occasions, or served as the main dish for a light meal. Kababs and *kuku* are favourite picnic foods.

INGREDIENTS FOR PERSIAN COOKING

Basmati rice or a suitable substitute is a must for Persian cooking. The meats that are generally preferred are lean lamb, veal, venison if available, lean beef and poultry. Though recipes may list a particular meat and may give two choices, often any other of these meats may be used. Turmeric, cinnamon, saffron, sumac and dried mint are the popular spices and seasonings. For cooking, ghee (clarified butter) is preferred, though oil, butter or margarine may be substituted. *Limu omani* (dried lime) is used whole in Persian cooking, generally when the cook wishes to remove strong flavours from meats. Directions for preparing your own dried limes are given in the chapter on the Gulf States (see the [Loomi](#) recipe).

SABZI KHORDAN

Mixed herb platter Herbs feature prominently in Iranian cuisine. Sabzi Khordan is a popular appetiser, often served at the beginning of a meal. In many restaurants in Iranian cities this platter is placed on the table as soon as you are seated, whether you order it or not. I found it delightfully refreshing and appetite-stimulating, and certainly most welcome. The plates are left during most of the meal for between-course nibbles.

Herbs

flat-leaf parsley mint sprigs

tender radish leaves spring onion (scallion) tops chives or garlic chives (tareh) tarragon

coriander (cilantro) leaves watercress or shahat fenugreek

Serve with

panir (Iranian goat's milk cheese) [Mast Va Khiar](#), optional [Nane Lavash](#) or other flat bread Select a variety of herbs from those listed. Wash them well and remove any coarse and discoloured leaves. Cut the bladed herbs into finger lengths; break the other herbs into small sprigs; separate the radish leaves. Drain and wrap in a cloth. Place the leaves in a plastic bag and refrigerate for 3–4 hours to crisp them.

Arrange the herbs attractively on a platter or in a flat basket. Dice the cheese and place in a bowl. Prepare the [Mast Va Khiar](#), if using, as directed, then place in a bowl and chill.

Cut the flat bread into 8 cm (3½ inch) squares and place in a napkin-lined basket. Arrange the ingredients on the table before guests are seated. Alternatively, serve with predinner drinks.

* Note: To eat Sabzi Khordan, wrap a selection of herbs and a piece of cheese in bread; if desired, add a little Mast Va Khiar. Panir is the goat's milk cheese of Iran, similar to feta.



NANO DOK

Spicing mix

MAKES: 30–60 ML (1–2 FL OZ) Persian cooks frequently spice their soups and boranis (yoghurt salads) just before serving. Nano Dok is a favourite, and one I found to my liking. Sometimes this basic mix is combined with crisp fried onion, and where this is the case I have included the spicing within the recipe, as the onion is often used both in and on top of the prepared dish.

Another popular seasoning for soup is a combination of dried mint, cinnamon and pepper (no ghee), but as these ingredients are often used in the soup, the Nano Dok given here is the one I recommend for a final dash of colour and fragrance to soups and boranis 1–3 tablespoons ghee

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1½ teaspoons dried mint Heat the ghee in a small saucepan, stir in the turmeric and cook for a few seconds, until the turmeric turns golden brown.

Crush the mint, add to the pan, stir and immediately remove from the heat. The heat in the pan will be sufficient to bring out the flavour of the mint.

✿ Note: Use the amount of ghee according to the recipe the Nano Dok is accompanying — the smaller amount if a lot of ghee has been used in the soup, and for boranis; the larger amount if only a little ghee has been used in the soup.

BORANIS

These simply prepared, cooling Persian salads are most versatile. While they may replace the traditional salad at a meal, they also serve as appealing appetisers. In this role the only accompaniment necessary is a flat bread, such as [Nane Lavash](#) or [Nane Sangyak](#), or the readily obtainable khoubiz, the Arabic flat bread (see also the recipes for [Khoubiz](#)). Cut the bread into manageable squares for scooping up the borani.

The other role of boranis, popular in summer, is as a substitute for a khoresh when serving a full Persian meal; they also make an interesting 'sauce' for polous and kababs served with chelou

Always be sure to use a thick, [drained yoghurt](#) when preparing boranis

BORANI ESFANAJ

Spinach salad

SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) spinach

1 tablespoon oil

1 onion, finely chopped 2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to taste 500 g (17 oz/2 cups) drained yoghurt

Nano Dok

Trim the roots and coarse stalks from the spinach. Wash the leaves well, discarding any that are discoloured or damaged. Drain and shred them coarsely.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the spinach and toss over medium heat until wilted. Cook until the moisture evaporates. Add the garlic, salt and pepper to taste. Remove from the heat and cool a little.

Pour the yoghurt into a mixing bowl and add the spinach mixture. Toss well and adjust the seasoning.

Prepare the **Nano Dok** as directed, using a small amount of ghee.

Turn the borani into a serving dish and drizzle with the Nano Dok. Serve at room temperature.

BORANI CHOGONDAR

Beetroot salad

SERVES: 6–8

**3 cooked or pickled beetroot (beets) 500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) drained yoghurt
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste vinegar or lemon juice, optional 1 tablespoon chopped
fresh mint, or 1 teaspoon dried mint fresh or dried mint, to garnish Peel and cool the beetroot if
freshly cooked. Cut the fresh or pickled beetroot into 1 cm (½ inch) cubes.**

Reserve about 35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) of the diced beetroot. Place the remainder in a bowl, gently mix in the yoghurt and season to taste with salt and pepper. If using freshly cooked beetroot, it may be necessary to add a little vinegar or lemon juice to sharpen the flavour.

Mix in the mint; if using dried mint, first rub it to a coarse powder. Cover and chill.

Place the salad in a serving bowl. Garnish with the reserved beetroot, and some mint leaves or powdered dried mint.

BORANI BADEMJAN

Eggplant salad

SERVES: 6–8

2 large, oval eggplants (aubergines), each about 375 g (13 oz) salt, for sprinkling

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) oil 500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) drained yoghurt

2 garlic cloves, crushed

freshly ground black pepper, to taste chopped walnuts, to garnish, optional Cut the eggplants in half lengthways, then slice crossways to 5 mm (¼ inch) thick. Sprinkle the slices liberally with salt, stacking them if necessary. Leave for 30 minutes, then rinse and dry with paper towels.

Heat half the oil in a large frying pan. Fry the eggplant in batches, over medium heat, until golden brown on each side, adding more oil to the pan as required. Drain on paper towels.

Mix the yoghurt and garlic with salt to taste.

Place a layer of cooled eggplant in a serving dish, overlapping the slices a little. Season with pepper and spread some yoghurt mixture on top. Repeat the layers, finishing with a layer of yoghurt.

Cover and chill. Serve garnished with chopped walnuts if desired.

✿ Note: Borani Bademjan may be layered in individual dishes to serve as a first course. If serving in place of a khoresh, dice the eggplant, fry until cooked through, and fold into the yoghurt with the other ingredients.



MAST VA KHIAR

Yoghurt with cucumber and sultanas

SERVES: 6–8

This dish is classed as a borani. Another version of this recipe is served as a [soup](#).

2 slender, firm green cucumbers

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) drained yoghurt

2 spring onions (scallions), finely chopped 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) sultanas (golden raisins), washed if necessary 30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) chopped walnuts, optional salt and freshly ground white pepper, to taste 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh mint, or 1 teaspoon dried mint Peel the cucumbers and halve them lengthways. If they are very seedy, remove the seeds with the end of a teaspoon. Slice the cucumber thinly and leave to drain.

Combine the cucumber and yoghurt in a bowl. Stir in the spring onion (including some of the green tops), sultanas and walnuts, if using. Season to taste with salt and white pepper.

Mix in the mint; if using dried mint, first rub it to a coarse powder. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour.

Serve with flat bread, cut into squares.

TORSHI HOLU

Peach pickles

375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) wine vinegar or cider vinegar 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) fresh peaches 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger

3 teaspoons ground coriander

3 garlic cloves, crushed 1½ teaspoons tamarind paste 110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) sugar ¼ teaspoon ground hot chilli or chilli pepper ¼ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper Pour 250 ml (8 ½ fl oz/1 cup) of the vinegar into a preserving pan. Peel and slice the peaches, placing the slices in the vinegar as they are prepared. Add the ginger, coriander and garlic.

Dissolve the tamarind paste in the remaining vinegar, then add to the preserving pan with the remaining ingredients.

Bring slowly to the boil, stirring gently until the sugar has dissolved. Boil gently for 5 minutes.

Ladle the pickles into warm, [sterilised jars](#). Seal with glass or plastic lids and leave for 1 week before opening.

✿ Note: You can also use 250 g (9 oz) dried peaches instead of fresh peaches. Rinse them well in cold water, then drain and chop. Soak them overnight in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) wine vinegar or cider vinegar and proceed as directed in the recipe.

TORSHI BADEMJAN

Eggplant pickles

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) eggplants (aubergines) 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) cider vinegar 1 piece of dried tamarind (pulp), the size of an egg

1 tablespoon white mustard seeds

1 tablespoon coriander seeds, toasted

2 teaspoons fennel seeds

4–6 garlic cloves

1 teaspoon chopped fresh ginger

½ teaspoon ground hot chilli or chilli pepper 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

2 teaspoons salt

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F/Gas 6).

Pierce the eggplants with a fork and place them directly on an oven shelf. Place a dish underneath to catch the juices. Bake for 20 minutes, or until soft.

Holding onto the stem, peel the skin from the eggplants, then remove the stems. Chop the flesh into a bowl and immediately mix in 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) of the vinegar to stop the eggplant discolouring.

Soak the tamarind in 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) hot water for 10–15 minutes, or until softened. Rub with your fingertips to separate the pulp, then press it through a sieve, into the eggplant.

In a blender, combine another 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) of the vinegar with the mustard, coriander and fennel seeds, garlic and ginger. Blend to a smooth paste.

Stir the paste through the eggplant mixture, along with the chilli, pepper and salt. Mix in the remaining vinegar. Ladle the pickles into [sterilised jars](#). Seal with glass or plastic lids and store in a cool place.

TORSHI KHRAMLU

Persimmon pickles

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) ripe persimmons

2 dried limes ([Loomi](#))

2 teaspoons black peppercorns

4 cloves

3 teaspoons white mustard seeds

1 teaspoon cardamom seeds

3 teaspoons toasted coriander seeds

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

2 small pieces of cinnamon bark

10 garlic cloves, cracked

12 fresh or dried dates, pitted and halved

750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) white vinegar

55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) sugar

2 teaspoons salt

Wash the persimmons and dry them well. Remove the stems and core using a pointed knife. Cut them in half, then slice into wedges.

Break the dried limes into small pieces.

Grind the peppercorns, cloves and mustard, cardamom, coriander and fennel seeds to a coarse powder using a spice grinder or mortar and pestle.

Place some persimmon wedges in a large, [sterilised jar](#). Add a piece of cinnamon. Add a few pieces of dried lime and two garlic cloves. Add a few date halves and some of the ground spices. Repeat in layers until all the ingredients have been used, placing the second piece of cinnamon near the top of the jar.

Combine the vinegar, sugar and salt in a saucepan and bring to the boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar.

Pour the hot vinegar mixture into the jar. Remove any air bubbles by inserting a fine skewer down the sides of the jar.

Seal with a glass or plastic lid and leave for 1 week before opening. Use within 3 months of making.

KOTAH DOLMEH

Fried dough with lentils MAKES: 72

185 g (6½ oz/1 cup) brown lentils 90 g (3 oz/⅓ cup) ghee

2 large onions, finely chopped salt, to season

2 tablespoons brown sugar

oil, for deep-frying

Dough

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

2 teaspoons rosewater

525 g (1 lb 2½ oz/3½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon ground cardamom 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) melted, cooled ghee or oil To make the dough, dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water. Add another 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) warm water and the rosewater.

Sift the flour, salt and cardamom into a mixing bowl, then set aside 75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) of the flour mixture.

Add the yeast liquid to the flour and mix to a soft dough. Work in the ghee or oil with the reserved flour, then knead for 10 minutes, or until smooth and elastic. Cover and leave in a warm place for 1 hour, or until doubled in size.

Meanwhile, wash the lentils well, place them in a saucepan and add 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) cold water. Bring to the boil, then cover and simmer over low heat for 1–1¼ hours, or until the water is absorbed and the lentils are soft. Mash with a fork.

Heat the ghee in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent and lightly browned. Add the lentils and fry for a further 5 minutes. Season with salt and stir in the sugar. Leave to cool.

Punch down the dough and divide it into two portions. Thinly roll out each portion to a 45 cm (18 inch) circle, as described [Homemade fillo pastry](#).

Cut the dough into 8 cm (3¼ inch) rounds with a biscuit cutter. Place a generous teaspoon of the lentil mixture in the centre of each round. Moisten the edge of the dough lightly with water, fold over and press firmly to seal. Press around the edge with the tines of a fork.

Heat the oil in a deep saucepan to 160°C (320°F) or until a cube of bread dropped in the oil browns in 30

seconds. Beginning with the dough pieces that were shaped first, deepfry six to eight pieces at a time for 3 minutes, or until golden brown and puffed, turning to brown evenly. Lift out with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

Serve hot or warm as a snack, or as part of a meal, particularly a picnic.



PERSIAN BREADS

With patience, and a high-powered mixer with a dough hook attachment (or a strong arm), it is possible to achieve acceptable results when making these delicious breads.

In bakers' language, Persian breads are classed as 'lean' — that is, not of definite flavour — as their role is to aid the eating of other foods, rather than being enjoyed for their own sake. Personally, I find the breads absolutely delicious on their own, but I like mine buttered — in Iran this is never done.

You will need a little extra equipment, such as a small cushion wrapped in a tea towel (dish towel) and fastened on one side with a safety pin. The other side should be smooth, as the dough has to be placed on this. A cast iron or aluminium smooth-surfaced griddle is also necessary, as the bread has to cook as quickly as possible.

The bread freezes and reheats well, so once you have mastered the art, you can attempt larger quantities when you feel in the mood for bread-making.

SANGYAK

Pebble-baked wholemeal bread

The ingredients and method for making this fascinating bread are the same as for Nane Lavash (opposite). Instead of the griddle, you will require enough well-washed blue metal baking trays to cover the base of a large, shallow baking dish. Brush the blue metal with peanut oil when first making this bread. Once a few loaves have been cooked on it, the metal absorbs enough oil for further bakings.

Place the blue metal in its dish on the lowest shelf in the oven and heat the oven to 250°C (480°F/Gas 9). If using a gas oven, the centre shelf may be a better position, as these ovens do not have the advantage of having a heating element directly under the dish.

Divide the dough into six equal portions. Roll one piece out to an oval shape, or as near to oval as you can; do not roll too thinly. The rolled-out dough should not rest before being baked, so prepare each round just before you are ready to bake it.

Place a dough round on the cushion and turn onto the hot blue metal. Bake for 1 minute, then press the dough with the cushion. Bake for a further 3 minutes, then turn over and bake for 2 minutes more, or until the bread is cooked.

Remove from the oven and pull off any pieces of blue metal, returning them to the dish. (After a few breads have been baked, the metal is less likely to stick.) Wrap the bread in a cloth as it comes out of the oven.

If the bread has not browned sufficiently, place it under a hot grill (broiler) for a few seconds on each side.

Bake the remaining dough rounds in the same way, allowing the oven temperature to return to the set heat before baking the next dough round.

NANE LAVASH or TAFTOON

Wholemeal flat bread

MAKES: 6 ROUNDS

The only difference between nane lavash and taftoon is their size. Nane lavash is the better known of the Persian breads, but it is a very large bread and impossible to cook in the domestic oven because of its size. Taftoon is the same dough shaped in a smaller round, so you will be making taftoon. Call it nane lavash if you like.

150 g (5 oz/1 cup) plain (all-purpose) flour

450 g (1 lb/3 cups) wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

1½ teaspoons salt

oil, for greasing

Sift the flours into a large mixing bowl, discarding any husks left in the sieve.

Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water, then add another 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water and the salt. Pour the yeast mixture into the centre of the flour and gradually work in the flour.

Beat by hand for 20–30 minutes, or use the dough hook of an electric mixer and beat for 20 minutes, gradually beating in 185 ml (6½ fl oz/½ cup) water, or as much of that amount as the dough will take. As the dough is beaten, its ability to absorb water increases.

Preheat the oven to 250°C (480°F/Gas 9) and place the griddle on the centre shelf for 10 minutes to heat. When hot, rub with a wad of cloth dipped in oil.

As there is no need to prove this dough, turn it out of the bowl onto an oiled work surface when the oven is ready.

Oil your hands and divide the dough into six equal portions, shaping each into a ball. The rolled-out dough should not rest before being baked, so prepare each round just before you are ready to bake it.

Roll out one ball of dough as thinly as possible with an oiled rolling pin. Prick it well all over with a fork, or run a pinwheel three or four times across the surface. Flip the dough across the backs of your hands to stretch it a little. Place it on the smooth side of your cushion.

Pull out the oven rack with the heated griddle, quickly turn the cushion over and press the dough onto the griddle. Close the oven and bake for 1 minute, then pat the dough down again with the cushion to stop the bread puffing up.

Bake for 3 minutes, or until the surface is bubbly, then turn the bread over and cook for 2 minutes more. Remove the bread from the oven and wrap it in a cloth.

Let the oven temperature return to the set heat before baking the next dough round.

MAKES: 4 LOAVES

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

1½ teaspoons salt

750 g (1 lb 10 oz/5 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour 1 tablespoon oil, plus extra for brushing Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water, then add another 440 ml (15 fl oz/1¾ cups) water and the salt.

Sift the flour into a large mixing bowl, holding back 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) of the flour. Make a well in the centre and add the yeast mixture. Stir in a little of the flour to slightly thicken the liquid, then cover and leave in a warm place for 10 minutes, or until frothy.

Mix in the flour remaining in the bowl, then beat by hand for 20 minutes, gradually adding 1 tablespoon of oil and the reserved flour. Knead in the flour when the dough becomes too stiff for beating, only adding enough to stop the dough sticking. Alternatively, beat with an electric mixer using a dough hook for 15 minutes, adding the oil gradually, then the reserved flour.

Cover and leave to rise in a warm place for 30–60 minutes, or until doubled in size.

Turn the dough out onto an oiled work surface and divide it into four equal portions. Oil your hands and a rolling pin. Roll each portion into a ball. Shape each one into a rectangle, then lightly roll each into a long strip about 12 cm (5 inches) wide and 30 cm (12 inches) long. Each loaf should be about 1 cm (½ inch) thick.

Place the loaves on lightly oiled trays, cover with cloths and leave in a warm place for 15–20 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 220°C (430°F/Gas 7).

Brush the tops of the loaves with oil. Using the side of your forefinger, make four parallel grooves in each loaf, running the length of the loaf, and beginning and finishing 2 cm (¾ inch) in from the ends.

Bake the loaves on the centre shelf of the oven for 15 minutes, or until cooked and golden brown.



AASHE JOE

Barley soup

SERVES: 8–10

110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) dried chickpeas 105 g (3½ oz/½ cup) dried red kidney beans 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) lamb neck or shoulder, with the bone, chopped into chunky pieces by your butcher 165 g (5½ oz/¾ cup) pearl barley, rinsed 45 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) brown lentils, rinsed salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

1 small handful chopped flat-leaf parsley

**1–2 tablespoons chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves 60 g (2 oz) chopped garlic chives or spring onion (scallion) leaves 30 g (1 oz/1 cup) chopped watercress 20 g (¾ oz) ghee
1 large onion, halved, then sliced 1 teaspoon ground turmeric**

1 teaspoon dried mint

Wash the chickpeas and kidney beans and place in a bowl. Cover with 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water and soak overnight.

Rinse lamb in water and place it in a large saucepan. Add 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water, the chickpeas, beans and their soaking water. Bring slowly to a simmer, skimming when necessary. Cover and simmer gently for 1 hour.

Add the barley and lentils and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for a further 1½ hours, or until the meat is tender and the beans are soft.

Remove the meat from the pan and strip the flesh from the bones. Cut into small pieces and return to the pan with the herbs and greens. Cover and leave over low heat for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat the ghee in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until golden. Sprinkle with the turmeric and fry until the onion is crisp, ensuring it doesn't burn. Rub the mint to a powder, stir it through the onion and remove from the heat.

Stir half the onion mixture into the soup. Serve with flat bread as a main meal, garnished with the remaining onion.

MAST VA KHIAR

Cold yoghurt soup

SERVES: 6

2 green cucumbers

750 g (1 lb 10 oz/3 cups) yoghurt 3 spring onions (scallions), including the green tops 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) sultanas (golden raisins), washed if necessary 1 tablespoon finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 tablespoon finely chopped dill

2 shelled hard-boiled eggs, finely chopped 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) finely chopped walnuts, optional salt, to taste

250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) iced water extra flat-leaf parsley and/or dill, to garnish Peel the cucumbers thinly, then grate coarsely. Place the cucumber flesh and juice in a bowl with the yoghurt.

Thinly slice the spring onions, leaving on some of the green tops. Add to the yoghurt with the sultanas, herbs, egg and walnuts, if using. Season to taste with salt.

Mix in enough iced water to give a thick cream consistency, and adjust the flavour with more salt if necessary. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours.

Serve in bowls, garnished with additional chopped herbs or herb sprigs.

AASHE ANAR

Pomegranate soup

SERVES: 6

2 lamb or veal foreshanks, cracked 55 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) yellow split peas, rinsed 1 small beetroot (beet), peeled and diced 1 small onion, finely chopped salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 40 g (1½ oz/1 cup) finely chopped spinach 1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley 2 tablespoons finely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves, optional

2 tablespoons chopped garlic chives

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) chopped spring onion (scallion) tops 75 g (2½ oz/⅓ cup) short-grain white rice, washed 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) pomegranate juice sugar, to taste

1–2 tablespoons lemon or lime juice

1 quantity Nano Dok

Rinse the meat and place it in a saucepan with 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) water. Add the split peas and bring to a slow simmer, skimming when necessary.

When well skimmed and beginning to boil, add the beetroot and onion, and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer over low heat for 1½–2 hours, or until the meat is very tender.

Remove the shanks from the pan and strip the meat from the bones. Chop the meat into small pieces and return to the soup with the spinach, herbs, garlic chives, spring onion and rice. Add the sugar and lemon or lime juice to taste — the soup should have a tart but slightly sweet flavour. Cover and simmer for a further 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the Nano Dok as directed, using a larger amount of ghee. Stir half of it into the soup.

Ladle the soup into bowls, drizzling the remaining Nano Dok on top of each.

ABGUSHTE MIVEH

Dried fruit soup

SERVES: 6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lean lamb or beef stewing meat **500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lean lamb or beef stewing meat**
500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lamb or beef soup bones **1 dried lime (Loomi), optional salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season** **40 g (1½ oz) ghee or butter**
1 large onion, finely chopped

2 teaspoons ground turmeric

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) pitted prunes **90 g (3 oz/½ cup) dried apricot halves** **90 g (3 oz/½ cup) chopped dried peaches** **80–115 g (3–4 oz/⅓–½ cup) firmly packed brown sugar** **1–2 tablespoons lemon or lime juice** Cut the meat into small cubes and place in a saucepan with the bones and 1.75 litres (59 fl oz/7 cups) water. If using a dried lime, pierce the top and base using a skewer and add it to the pan. Bring slowly to the boil, skimming when necessary. Season with salt and pepper.

Cover and simmer gently for 1½ hours, or until the meat is almost tender. Remove the bones and dried lime.

Heat the ghee or butter in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the turmeric and cook until lightly browned. Add the mixture to the soup with the dried fruits (these may be washed if necessary, but do not require soaking). Cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Add the sugar and lemon or lime juice to taste, so that the soup has a pleasant sweet-sour flavour. Serve hot.

✿ Variation: Follow the directions above, replacing the dried fruits with 525 g (1 lb 2½ oz/3 cups) of chopped, peeled and cored quince. After the browned onion and turmeric have been added to the soup, heat another 2 tablespoons of ghee in the pan and fry the quince gently for 10 minutes, stirring often. Add to the soup, then cover and simmer for 30–45 minutes, or until the quince is tender. Adjust the sweet-sour flavour at end of cooking

ESHKANEH

Onion soup

SERVES: 6

Many versions of this soup are prepared in Iran. Basically it is a meatless soup with onion and a sour juice – lime, lemon, pomegranate or verjuice (the juice of unripened grapes) – as the principal ingredients, with the tartness counterbalanced by the addition of sugar. Sometimes apricots or sour cherries are used instead of fruit juice. Walnuts, spinach or diced potatoes are added to give substance.

In other words, the soup is composed of ingredients the cook might have on hand; once you have tried this version, experiment with other combinations.

The eggs, prepared in either of the two ways mentioned in the recipe, are essential.

5 onions

90 g (3 oz/½ cup) ghee

50 g (2 oz/½ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) finely chopped walnuts, or 130 g (4 oz/2 cups) finely chopped spinach, or 360 g (12½ oz/2 cups) diced potatoes 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) lime or lemon juice

95 g (3½ oz/½ cup) lightly packed brown sugar, approximately salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste 1 quantity Nano Dok

2–6 eggs

Cut the onions in half from top to bottom, then slice each half into semi-circles.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the ghee in a heavy-based saucepan over medium–high heat. Add about 80 g (3 oz/½ cup) of the onion slices and fry until brown and crisp. Remove and set aside for garnishing.

Heat the remaining ghee in the pan and gently fry the remaining onion until translucent. Stir in the flour and cook until golden.

Add the turmeric, and your choice of walnuts, spinach or potatoes. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring often. Stir in 1.25 litres (42½ fl oz/5 cups) water and cook until thickened and bubbling, stirring occasionally. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes.

Add the lime or lemon juice and the sugar. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for a further 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, prepare the [Nano Dok](#) as directed. Stir the Nano Dok into the soup.

Lightly beat two eggs and slowly pour them into the soup, stirring gently until the eggs set in shreds.

Alternatively, break six eggs into the simmering soup, one at a time, and simmer gently until the eggs have set.

Ladle the soup into bowls; if using whole eggs, add one to each bowl. Garnish with the reserved browned onions and serve with flat bread.



CHELOU

Steamed rice

SERVES: 6

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice

2 tablespoons salt

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter or ghee

Remove any discoloured grains and stones from the rice. Place the rice in a sieve and wash well under running water until the water runs clear. Drain.

Bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil in a heavybased saucepan. Add the salt and rice and stir until the water returns to the boil. Allow the rice to boil for 5 minutes, then drain immediately.

In a small saucepan, heat the butter with 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) water until bubbling. Pour half the mixture into the saucepan in which the rice was cooked, swirling to coat the base and side. Spread half the partly cooked rice in the pan and even it out with the back of a spoon.

Spoon the remaining rice on top in a mound. Make a hole in the centre with the end of a wooden spoon, then pour the remaining butter mixture on top.

Cover the rim of the pan with a doubled-over tea towel (dish towel) and put the lid on firmly. Cook over medium-low heat for 10 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and cook for a further 35 minutes. The cloth absorbs the steam and makes the rice fluffy and light.

Stir the rice gently with a fork to distribute the butter evenly. Serve with kababs and khoreshes, and use as a basis for polous.

CHELOU TA DIG

Steamed crusty rice

SERVES: 6

This is the rice dish by which the expertise of a Persian cook is gauged. While plain chelou gives a rice so light and fragrant, each grain glistening separately, chelou ta dig is all this, plus crusty, crunchy golden-brown rice for a completely new rice-eating experience — except to the Persians, of course.

Follow the basic Chelou method (left), to the stage where you have drained the partly cooked rice. Combine about 185 g (6 oz/1 cup) of the rice with a beaten egg yolk or 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) yoghurt, then spread it in the butter-swirled saucepan.

Spoon the remaining rice on top in a mound, and continue with the basic Chelou method, until you come to the cooking.

Cook over medium heat for 15 minutes, then reduce the heat to medium-low for a further 30 minutes. By this time the bottom of the rice should be golden brown and crisp.

Place the pan on a cold surface for a few minutes to loosen the rice from the base.

Spoon the fluffy rice into a heated dish. Break up the crusty layer into pieces and arrange around the rice, browned side up. Serve with kababs and khoreshes.

KATEH

Rice cake

SERVES: 6

This method of cooking rice is popular in the Caspian Sea region of northern Iran, where much of Iran's rice is grown. It is a simplified version of [Chelou Ta Dig](#), unmoulded like a cake and served cut into wedges.

Basmati rice is best for this dish.

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati rice

2 teaspoons salt

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee or butter

Remove any discoloured grains and stones from the rice. Place the rice in a sieve and wash well under running water until the water runs clear. Drain.

Place the rice in a heavy-based saucepan, preferably one with a non-stick coating. Add 875 ml (29 fl oz/3½ cups) water and the salt.

Bring to the boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cover, reduce the heat a little and cook for 25 minutes, or until the water is absorbed.

Stir the ghee or butter through, using a wooden spoon. Even out the top of the rice, pressing lightly. Cover and return to medium-low heat for 30 minutes. Move the pan over the hotplate or burner from time to time, so the base becomes evenly browned.

Remove the pan from the heat and place in cold water for 10 minutes. Run a spatula or knife around the side of the rice to loosen it, then invert a plate on top. Holding the plate firmly to the saucepan, turn the pan upside down, so that the rice cake comes out cleanly.

Cut into wedges and serve with khoreshes. The rice cake is often served cold in summer.

DAMI

Boiled rice

SERVES: 6

Here is yet another method for cooking rice. It is similar to Kateh (left), except that the heat is kept lower once the rice begins to boil, and the rim of the pan is covered with a cloth or two paper towels before the lid is placed in position.

After 30 minutes, pour the melted ghee or butter over the rice, replace the lid without the cloth, and leave over low heat for a further 30 minutes.

Fluff up the rice with a fork. Serve as an accompaniment to khoreshes, or mix with other ingredients before or halfway through cooking.

ESTANBOLI POLOU

Potato-crusted rice with lamb

SERVES: 6

For this recipe I have used a method that can be applied to other polous. Akhtar Ostowari, an Iranian residing in Sydney, Australia, makes many of her polous in this way. She has found that straight-sided utensils with a non-stick coating always ensure perfect unmoulding of any crusted polou, without the need to place the utensil on a cold surface to loosen the contents.

With the potato lining used in this recipe, a straight-sided pan of heavy-gauge aluminium works just as well. You can use the potato-crusted rice method for other polou recipes.

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) lean boneless lamb or beef, suitable for braising 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee or butter

1 large onion, finely chopped

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon paprika

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

Potato-crusted rice

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice

2 tablespoons salt

3–4 potatoes

90 g (3 oz/⅓ cup) ghee

Trim the meat and cut into 3 cm (1¼ inch) cubes. Heat half the ghee or butter in a saucepan and brown the meat on all sides. Transfer to a plate.

Heat the remaining ghee in the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Sprinkle in the cinnamon and paprika and return the meat to the pan. Add the passata and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 1 hour, or until the meat is just tender.

Meanwhile, prepare the potato-crusted rice. Remove any discoloured grains and stones from the rice. Place the rice in a sieve and wash well under running water until the water runs clear. Drain.

Bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil. Add the rice and salt and stir occasionally until the water starts boiling again. Allow to boil, uncovered, for 8 minutes, then drain.

Meanwhile, peel the potatoes and cut into 5 mm (1/4 inch) slices. Place them in cold salted water and leave to soak until the meat is cooked.

Drain the potatoes and dry well. Melt half the ghee in a heavy-based saucepan. Coat the potato slices in the ghee and arrange them around the base and side of the pan.

Add half the rice, spreading it evenly, and top with the cooked meat mixture. Spread the remaining rice on top and pour the remaining melted ghee evenly over the rice.

Cover the rim of the pan with two paper towels or a cloth and put the lid on tightly. Cook over high heat for 3 minutes, then reduce the heat to medium and cook for 30 minutes.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for a further 30 minutes. Move the pan on the hotplate or burner from time to time so that the potatoes brown evenly.

Run a knife around the rice to loosen it, then carefully invert it onto a serving platter. Cut into wedges to serve.



MIVEH DAMI

Rice with fruit

SERVES: 6

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice **60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee or butter** **1 small onion, finely chopped** **250 g (9 oz) lean lamb or veal stewing meat, diced** **1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon**

300 g (10½ oz/1½ cups) pitted sour cherries **60 g (2 oz/½ cup) chopped walnuts** **35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) currants**

40 g (1½ oz/¼ cup) chopped dried apricots

2 teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season Remove any discoloured grains and stones from the rice.
Place the rice in a sieve and wash well under running water until the water runs clear. Drain.

Heat the ghee in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion and meat until lightly browned. Stir in the cinnamon, cherries, walnuts, currants and apricots. Add the salt and season with pepper.

Add the drained rice and stir to combine. Pour in enough cold water to cover the rice by 2 cm (¾ inch).

Cover the rim of the pan with a cloth or two paper towels and put the lid on tightly. Cook over very low heat for 50 minutes.

HAVIJ POLOU

Rice with carrots

SERVES: 6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) chicken breasts, or 1 whole chicken 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) carrots

185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) ghee or butter salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 1 large onion, finely chopped

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice 55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) firmly packed brown sugar 1 quantity Chelou

Cut the chicken breasts into quarters; if using a whole chicken, joint the chicken and cut the larger pieces in half. Scrape the carrots and cut into batons 5 mm (¼ inch) thick and 5 cm (2 inches) long.

Heat half the ghee in a frying pan and brown the chicken pieces on each side, in batches if necessary. Remove to a plate and season with salt and pepper.

Heat the remaining ghee in the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Sprinkle in the turmeric, add the carrots and cook, stirring often, for a further 5 minutes.

Add the lemon juice, sugar and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water and stir to dissolve the browned sediment. Return the chicken to the pan, then cover and simmer gently for 10 minutes. Remove the chicken and set aside.

Meanwhile, prepare the Chelou recipe as directed, to the point where the rice is boiled for 5 minutes and drained. Swirl half the butter mixture from the Chelou recipe around the pan, then spread half the rice evenly over the base. Place the chicken pieces on top of the rice, then spread the carrot mixture over the chicken. Spread the remaining rice over the carrots, then add the remaining butter mixture from the Chelou recipe.

Cover the rim of the pan with two paper towels. Put the lid on tightly and cook over medium-low heat for 40 minutes. Alternatively, you can layer the polou in a casserole dish and bake in a 170°C (340°F/Gas 3) oven for 30 minutes.

KADO POLOU

Rice with pumpkin

SERVES: 4–5

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb, beef or veal 1 small onion, grated

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) butternut pumpkin (squash)

1 large onion

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter or ghee 1 quantity Chelou

3 teaspoons brown sugar

Combine the meat in a mixing bowl with the onion, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt and pepper and mix thoroughly. Shape into balls the size of large walnuts, then flatten into thick patties.

Peel the pumpkin and cut into slices 1 cm (½ inch) thick.

Halve the onion lengthways and slice thinly.

Heat half the butter or ghee in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent and lightly browned. Take care not to burn it. Remove from the pan and set aside.

Add the remaining butter to the pan and brown the meat patties on each side. Remove from the pan and set aside.

Meanwhile, prepare the Chelou recipe as directed, to the point where the rice is boiled for 5 minutes and drained. Swirl half the butter mixture from the Chelou recipe around the pan, then spread half the rice evenly over the base. Place the meat patties on top of the rice, cover with half the onion, then all the pumpkin. Sprinkle with the sugar, salt and pepper and top with the remaining onion. Spread the remaining rice over the top, then add the remaining butter mixture from the Chelou recipe.

Cover the rim of the pan with two paper towels, close the lid tightly and cook over medium for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to low and cook for 30 minutes, until the pumpkin is tender.

Alternatively, you can layer the polou in a casserole dish and bake in a 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) oven.

MORGH POLOU

Rice with chicken

SERVES: 4–5

1 chicken, about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz), jointed salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter or ghee

1 large onion, finely chopped

75 g (2½ oz/½ cup) chopped dried apricots 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) sultanas (golden raisins) ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon saffron threads

1 quantity [Chelou](#)

Wipe the chicken dry with paper towels. Season all the pieces with salt and pepper.

Heat half the butter in a frying pan and brown the chicken pieces on all sides, in batches if necessary. Remove to a plate.

Heat the remaining butter in the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the apricots and sultanas and cook for a further 5 minutes. Stir in the cinnamon and a little water to dissolve the browned sediment.

Meanwhile, prepare the [Chelou](#) recipe as directed, to the point where the rice is boiled for 5 minutes and drained. Swirl half the butter mixture from the Chelou recipe around the pan, then spread half the rice evenly over the base. Place the chicken pieces on top of the rice. Spread the apricot mixture over the chicken. Spread the remaining rice over the top, then add the remaining butter mixture from the Chelou recipe.

Cover the rim of the pan with two paper towels, put the lid on tightly and cook over low heat for 50 minutes, or until the chicken is tender.

While the polou is cooking, boil two tablespoons of water and mix it with the saffron. Set aside to steep.

Just before serving, sprinkle the saffron liquid over the rice and gently stir it in. Serve piled on a platter.

MOHI POLOU

Fish with herbed rice

SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) fish steaks salt, for sprinkling

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1 quantity Chelou

120 g (4 oz/1 cup) chopped spring onion (scallion) tops 95 g (3½ oz/1½ cups) chopped spinach

3 tablespoons chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves 3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 tablespoons chopped dill

freshly ground black pepper, to season Pat the fish dry with paper towels. Sprinkle lightly with salt and leave for 15 minutes.

Heat the ghee in a frying pan and quickly brown the fish steaks on each side — it is not necessary to cook them through. Transfer to a plate.

Add the turmeric to the ghee remaining in the pan. Fry for 2 minutes, then remove from the heat.

Prepare the Chelou recipe as directed, to the point where the rice is boiled for 5 minutes and drained. Tip the drained rice into a bowl, add the chopped vegetables and herbs and season with salt and pepper. Toss until thoroughly combined.

Swirl half the butter mixture from the Chelou recipe around the pan, then spread half the rice and herb mixture evenly over the base. Place the fish steaks on top of the rice, then pour the turmeric-flavoured ghee over the fish. Spread the remaining rice and herb mixture over the top, then add the remaining butter mixture from the Chelou recipe.

Cover the rim of the pan with two paper towels, put the lid on tightly and cook over low heat for 45 minutes.

Spoon the rice from the top of the dish around the edge of a serving platter. Lift the fish onto a plate. Spoon the remaining rice into the centre of the platter and arrange the fish on top. Serve hot, garnished with herb sprigs if desired.



SHEVID BHAGALA POLOU

Rice with lamb, broad beans and dill

SERVES: 6

**60 g (2 oz/½ cup) ghee or butter 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) lamb shoulder chops, cut 4 cm (1½ inches) thick
1 large onion, finely chopped**

½ teaspoon ground turmeric

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 600 g (1 lb 5 oz/3 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice

2 tablespoons salt

300 g (10½ oz) fresh shelled broad beans (fava beans), skins removed (see note)

1 handful chopped dill

Heat 1 tablespoon of the ghee in a heavy-based saucepan. Working in batches, brown the lamb chops on each side, removing each batch to a plate.

Heat another tablespoon of ghee in the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the turmeric and cook for 2 minutes longer.

Stir in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water, return the lamb to the pan and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 1 hour, or until the lamb is tender but not falling apart.

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

While the lamb is cooking, bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil in a large saucepan. Add the well-washed rice and the 2 tablespoons salt. Stir until the water returns to the boil, then allow to boil, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Drain immediately.

Mix the broad beans and dill in a bowl. Add half the hot rice, toss to combine and season with salt.

Melt the remaining ghee in a large casserole dish and add 1 tablespoon water. Swirl to coat the side of the dish, then pour most of the ghee into a container.

Place the remaining plain rice in the casserole dish and even it out. Top with the lamb mixture, including the juices. Spread the broad bean and rice mixture on top. Pour half the reserved ghee evenly over the rice. Cover and bake for 35–40 minutes, or until the beans are tender.

Spoon the broad bean and rice mixture from the top and arrange around the edge of a serving platter. Remove the lamb pieces to a plate. Spoon the rice from the bottom of the dish in the centre of the platter and top with the lamb pieces.

Pour the ghee from the dish over the lamb and rice. Serve with yoghurt and pickles.

* Note: Fresh shelled broad beans are skinned similarly to [dried soaked broad beans](#), as described. Fennel can be substituted for the dill in this recipe.

KUKU

These delicious egg dishes feature prominently in Persian menus because of their versatility. Cut into small squares they can be served with pre-dinner drinks; with yoghurt and bread they make an excellent luncheon or supper dish; for dinner in the Western tradition they make an excellent first course, and are almost always part of the menu for a Persian dinner. As they are just as delicious served cold, prepare one for the picnic hamper, as they do in Iran.

The usual method of cooking is in the oven, a relatively recent adaptation, since ovens were seldom part of the early Persian kitchen. The other and more authentic method is to cook the kuku in a frying pan on the stovetop. The finished kuku should resemble a cake when served, lightly browned and crisp all over, so your choice of cooking utensil and cooking method can be determined by the equipment you have on hand.

Modern Persian cooks have been quick to see the advantage of non-stick cookware for many of their dishes – in particular for certain rice dishes and for kukus.

For oven cooking, choose a smooth-surfaced casserole dish, or a Dutch oven or cake tin with a non-stick coating. The straighter the sides, the better.

For stovetop cooking, a well-seasoned heavy-based frying pan, or one with a non-stick coating, should be used. An omelette pan is far too small, unless you halve the recipe.

Where initial cooking of the vegetables is required, use any pan, keeping your special pan for finishing the kuku.

To present the kuku for serving, it always looks better with the top uppermost. If unmoulding from an oven dish, invert the kuku onto a plate, then place the serving plate on top and turn it upright.

Of course you can serve it straight from the dish it was cooked in if you find your kuku has stuck!

KUKUYE SIBZAMINI Potato omelette

SERVES: 4–6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) potatoes 2 onions, grated

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

6 eggs

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee

Cook the potatoes in a saucepan of boiling water. Drain them well and mash to a purée. Mix in the onion and turmeric and season with salt and pepper. Leave until cold.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Break the eggs into a bowl. Beat with a whisk, then gradually stir into the potato mixture. Mix thoroughly and season with salt and pepper.

Melt the ghee in a 20 cm (8 inch) casserole dish, non-stick Dutch oven or cake tin in the oven. Swirl the melted ghee around the dish to coat the base and side, then pour in the egg mixture.

Bake for 30 minutes, or until set and lightly browned on top. If insufficiently browned, place under a hot grill (broiler) for a few seconds.

Turn out onto a serving dish and serve cut into wedges.

✿ Note: Alternatively, the kuku may be cooked in a frying pan on a stovetop. Cover and cook over medium heat until set, then brown the top under a hot grill (broiler). Loosen the kuku and slide onto a serving dish.

KUKUYE BADEMJAN

Eggplant omelette

SERVES: 4

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) eggplants (aubergines) 90 g (3 oz/½ cup) oil

2 spring onions (scallions), chopped 6 eggs

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 20 g (¾ oz) ghee

yoghurt and flat bread, to serve Peel the eggplants and cut into large cubes.

Heat the ghee or oil in a frying pan and fry the eggplant over medium heat until lightly browned and tender.

Pour the pan contents into a bowl, mash with a fork and add the spring onion. Leave until cool.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Break the eggs into a bowl, then beat well with a fork or whisk. Season with salt and pepper and add to the eggplant.

Melt the ghee in a 23 cm (9 inch) round casserole dish or cake tin in the oven. Swirl the melted ghee around the dish to coat the base and side, then pour in the egg mixture.

Bake for 40 minutes, or until firm and lightly browned on top. If insufficiently browned, place under a hot grill (broiler) for a few seconds.

Serve hot, cut into wedges, with yoghurt and flat bread. It is also good served cold.



KUKUYE KADOU HALVAII

Pumpkin squash omelette SERVES: 4

Follow the [Kukuye Sibzamini](#) recipe, using 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) butternut pumpkin (squash) or similar yellow firm pumpkin (winter squash) instead of the potatoes.

Boil and drain, return to the heat and let the excess moisture evaporate. Mash to a purée, add a little sugar and continue as directed in the recipe.

KUKUYE KADOU

Zucchini omelette

SERVES: 6

**4–5 zucchini (courgettes), preferably the light-skinned variety
60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee
1 large onion, grated or finely chopped
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 teaspoon salt**

1 teaspoon sugar

freshly ground black pepper, to taste

6 eggs

**20 g (¾ oz) ghee, or 1 tablespoon oil yoghurt and flat bread, to serve
Wash and trim the zucchini and cut into 5 mm (¼ inch) slices.**

Heat the ghee in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the zucchini, increase the heat to medium–high and cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are lightly coloured and any moisture has evaporated.

Remove from the heat. Stir in the turmeric, salt and sugar. Season with pepper and leave until cooled.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Break the eggs into a bowl. Beat with a whisk and season lightly. Stir in the cooled zucchini mixture.

Heat the 1 tablespoon of ghee or oil in a 20 cm (8 inch) nonstick casserole dish, Dutch oven or cake tin in the oven. Swirl the ghee or oil around the dish to coat the base and side. Pour in the egg mixture.

Bake for 30 minutes, or until set, puffed and lightly browned on top. If insufficiently browned, place under a hot grill (broiler) for a few seconds.

Unmould onto a plate. Serve hot or cold, cut into wedges, with yoghurt and flat bread.

✿ Note: To cook the kuku in a frying pan, heat 1 tablespoon ghee in the pan and swirl to coat the side. Pour in the egg mixture, then cover and cook over medium heat for 10–15 minutes, or until set and puffed in the centre. Place under a hot grill (broiler) to brown the top. Loosen the egg, tilt the pan and slide the kuku onto a serving platter.

KUKUYE SABZI

Herb omelette

SERVES: 4–6

For this dish, the vegetables and herbs must be well washed and dried before chopping and measuring. The chopping can be done very speedily and efficiently in a food processor. Accurate measuring of greens is not essential to the success of this dish.

130 g (4½ oz/2 cups) finely chopped spinach 180 g (6 oz/1½ cups) finely chopped spring onions (scallions), including the green tops 1 small handful finely chopped flat-leaf parsley 1 small handful finely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves

1 tablespoon chopped dill

1 tablespoon chopped tarragon, optional

2 tablespoons chopped garlic chives

1 tablespoon plain (all-purpose) flour

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season

8 eggs

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee or butter

yoghurt and flat bread, to serve

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Combine the greens and herbs in a bowl. Season the flour with the salt and a good grinding of pepper, sprinkle over the greens and toss well.

Break the eggs into a bowl. Beat until frothy, then pour over the greens. Stir well to combine.

Melt the butter in a 23 cm (9 inch) round casserole dish or deep cake tin in the oven. Swirl the melted butter around the dish to coat the base and side, then pour in the egg mixture.

Place in the oven, one shelf above the centre. Bake for 45–50 minutes, or until set and lightly browned on top. If insufficiently browned, place under a hot grill (broiler) for a few seconds.

Serve hot, cut into wedges, with yoghurt and flat bread.

KUKUYE MOHI

Fish omelette

SERVES: 4–6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) skinless white fish fillets salt, for sprinkling

90 g (3 oz/½ cup) ghee

1 small onion, finely chopped ½ teaspoon ground turmeric 1 tablespoon finely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves 1 tablespoon plain (all-purpose) flour

6 eggs

freshly ground black pepper, to season Pat the fish dry with paper towels. Sprinkle lightly with salt and leave for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Heat 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) of the ghee in a frying pan and fry the fish quickly on each side until cooked through; it does not have to brown. Remove the fish to a plate and flake it with a fork, removing any bones. Tip the fish into a bowl.

Gently fry the onion until translucent, in the ghee remaining in the pan. Stir in the turmeric and cook for 2 minutes. Add the mixture to the fish, along with the coriander and flour, and mix to combine.

Break the eggs into a bowl. Beat well with a fork and add to the fish mixture. Season with salt and pepper and mix thoroughly.

Melt the remaining ghee in a 20 cm (8 inch) non-stick cake tin, casserole dish or Dutch oven. Swirl the melted ghee around the dish to coat the base and side, then pour in the egg mixture.

Bake for 30 minutes, or until set. If insufficiently browned, place under a hot grill (broiler) for a few seconds.

Unmould onto a serving platter. Serve hot or cold, cut into wedges.

MOHI SHEKUMPOUR

Stuffed baked fish

SERVES: 4–5

1 whole fish suitable for baking, weighing about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) finely chopped spring onions (scallions) 100 g (3½ oz/2 cups) chopped mixed fresh herbs, such as flat-leaf parsley, coriander (cilantro), dill and watercress juice of 1 lemon

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) olive oil

herb sprigs, to garnish

lemon wedges, to garnish

Chelou, to serve Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Clean and scale the fish if necessary. Rub it inside and out with salt and pepper and set aside.

In a mixing bowl, combine the spring onion and herbs with 1 tablespoon of the lemon juice and 1 tablespoon of the oil. Season lightly and toss together.

Fill the cavity of the fish with the herb mixture. Secure the opening with wooden cocktail sticks or a fine metal skewer. Cut three diagonal slashes on each side of the fish. Place it in a well-oiled baking dish and pour the remaining lemon juice and oil over the top.

Bake for 40–50 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily when the thickest part is tested with a fork. During cooking, baste the fish with the juices in the baking dish.

Lift the fish carefully onto a serving platter. Garnish with fresh herb sprigs and lemon wedges. Serve with Chelou and a borani (Persian salad).

If desired, serve a small bowl of yoghurt on the side, drizzled with olive oil and paprika.



KHORESHE FESENJAN

Duck in walnut and pomegranate sauce SERVES: 4

1 duck, about 2 kg (4 lb 6 oz), cleaned salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 40 g (1½ oz) ghee or butter

1 large onion, finely chopped

115 g (4 oz/1 cup) finely ground walnuts 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) coarsely ground walnuts 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) pomegranate juice 3 tablespoons brown sugar

2 pieces of cinnamon bark

1 tablespoon lime or lemon juice, optional For serving

30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) coarsely chopped walnuts pomegranate seeds, if available

Chelou or Chelou Ta Dig

Remove the pin feathers from the duck. Remove the excess fat from the cavity. Wipe the duck dry with paper towels, then truss. Season with salt and pepper.

Heat half the ghee in a large heavy-based saucepan and brown the duck on all sides over medium heat. Remove to a plate. Drain the fat from the pan.

Heat the remaining ghee in the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the walnuts, pomegranate juice, sugar and cinnamon and bring to the boil.

Return the duck to the pan and spoon the sauce over it. Cover and simmer gently for 2–2½ hours, or until tender, basting the duck occasionally during cooking. Also adjust the seasoning of the sauce during cooking, adding lime or lemon juice if the pomegranate juice lacks tartness.

Lift the duck onto a platter and keep it hot.

Skim the excess oil from the sauce, then return the sauce to the boil.

To serve, spoon the sauce over the duck and garnish with the walnuts. Add a dash of colour with pomegranate seeds, if available.

Carve the duck into four portions and serve with chelou.

* Note: A whole chicken or chicken pieces may also be used instead of duck.

KHORESHE HOLU

Peach sauce with chicken

SERVES: 5–6

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) chicken pieces, such as breasts, legs and thighs, or 1 jointed whole chicken salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee or butter 1 onion, chopped

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1 small piece of cinnamon bark

3 firm peaches

60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) lemon or lime juice

2 tablespoons brown sugar

Chelou Ta Dig, to serve Cut the chicken pieces if they are large. Pat the pieces dry with paper towels, then season with salt and pepper.

Heat half the ghee in a heavy-based saucepan and brown the chicken pieces in batches. Remove to a plate.

Using the fat in the pan, gently fry the onion until translucent. Sprinkle with the turmeric and fry until the onion begins to brown. Add 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water and stir to dissolve the browned sediment.

Return the chicken to the pan and add the cinnamon. Cover and simmer gently for 45 minutes, or until almost tender.

Peel and stone the peaches, then slice into wedges. Heat the remaining ghee and fry the peaches until lightly coloured.

Arrange the peaches on top of the chicken. Sprinkle with the lemon juice and sugar, then cover and simmer for a further 20–25 minutes. Check the flavour and add salt and pepper if needed.

Serve hot, with Chelou Ta Dig.

✿ Note: When peaches are not in season, use 350–400 g (12–14 oz/1½–2 cups) frozen peach slices or drained tinned peaches. Omit the sugar if using tinned peaches, then adjust the flavour if necessary before serving.

MORGH SHEKUMPOUR

Stuffed chicken

SERVES: 5–6

**90 g (3 oz/½ cup) ghee or butter 1 onion, finely chopped 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) chopped pitted prunes
30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) sultanas (golden raisins) 90 g (3 oz/½ cup) dried apricot halves 1 apple, peeled,
cored and diced**

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season brown sugar, to taste

1 chicken, about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) ½ lemon

Chelou, to serve Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Heat half the ghee or butter in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the prunes, sultanas and apricots and stir for 2 minutes. Add 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) water, then cover and simmer for 10 minutes, or until the fruit is plump and the liquid is absorbed. Stir in the apple and cinnamon and season with salt, pepper and sugar.

Check the cavity of the chicken and clean further if needed. Pat the chicken inside and outside with paper towels; washing the chicken removes valuable juices and is not necessary.

Stuff the chicken with the fruit mixture; close the cavity and truss the legs. Rub the skin with the cut lemon and season with salt and pepper.

Place the chicken in a greased roasting tin and spread the remaining ghee or butter over the top. Roast for 2 hours, or until cooked through. Baste the chicken frequently during cooking, and turn it so it browns evenly.

Before carving the chicken, remove the stuffing and place it on top of the Chelou. Mix it through just before serving.

If desired, ½ teaspoon saffron threads may be soaked in a little hot water for 10 minutes and spooned over the Chelou.

JOOJEH KABAB

Skewered grilled chicken

SERVES: 6

2 chickens, each about 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) lemon juice 1 large onion, grated

2 teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee or butter, melted

1 teaspoon paprika

Chelou, to serve blistered cherry tomatoes, to garnish (see Note) Halve the chickens and remove the backbone. Cut each half into six pieces of fairly even dimensions — halve the breast pieces and thighs, chop off the bony end of the leg, and leave the wings intact.

Combine the lemon juice, onion, salt and a good grinding of pepper in a glass or ceramic dish. Add the chicken pieces, turning them in the marinade to coat. Cover and marinate for 3–4 hours in the refrigerator, turning occasionally.

Thread the chicken pieces onto six long flat skewers, placing the thicker pieces in the centre, and placing them all close together. Combine the melted ghee or butter with the paprika, then brush over the chicken.

Cook over glowing charcoal for 12–15 minutes — or grill (broil) the skewers, initially cooking them under high heat, then reducing the heat to medium.

Turn the skewers often during cooking, and baste them frequently with the ghee mixture; concentrate the heat on the centre pieces towards the end of cooking.

Remove the chicken from the skewers if desired. Garnish with blistered cherry tomatoes and serve with Chelou.

Note: To blister cherry tomatoes, cut a cross on the rounded end of each tomato, brush with butter and grill (broil) under high heat or over glowing charcoal until the skin blisters and browns lightly.

KHORESHE ALU

Prune and meat sauce

SERVES: 4–5

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) boneless lamb or beef stewing meat 20 g (3/4 oz) ghee, or 1 tablespoon oil 1 large onion, chopped

1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric pinch of ground cinnamon salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) pitted prunes 2 teaspoons lemon juice

1 tablespoon brown sugar

Chelou, to serve Trim the meat and cut into 2 cm (3/4 inch) cubes.

Heat the ghee or oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent, adding the turmeric and cinnamon while the onion cooks.

Increase the heat and add the meat. Stir frequently until the meat begins to brown. Pour in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water and season with salt and pepper.

Bring to a slow simmer. Reduce the heat, then cover and simmer gently for 1 hour.

Rinse the prunes if necessary and add them to the meat with the lemon juice and sugar. Cover and simmer for a further 45 minutes.

Serve hot, with Chelou.

KHORESHE ALBALOO

Sour cherry and meat sauce

SERVES: 6

Sour black cherries are not readily available in many areas. However, table cherries can give almost the same flavour with the addition of more lime or lemon juice, making this khoresh possible. Perhaps the flavour will not be quite the same, but it will be just as enjoyable.

Morello cherries, though not the same as the sour black cherries of Persia, may be used with less adjustment to the tartness of the dish; the Morello is thought to be a descendant of the Albaloo, the Persian sour cherry. If one wishes to be pedantic, when using the sweet table cherry, the name of the dish should be Khoresh Guillass. However, a Persian would not have heard of such a dish!

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lean lamb or veal stewing meat 60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) oil

1 large onion, finely chopped

1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

**salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 250 g (9 oz/1 1/4 cups) pitted black cherries,
preferably a sour variety 1–3 tablespoons lime or lemon juice brown sugar, to taste**

Trim the meat and cut into 2 cm (3/4 inch) cubes.

Heat half the ghee or oil in a heavy-based saucepan and brown the meat on each side. Remove to a plate.

Using the ghee or oil remaining in the pan, gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the turmeric and cook for a further 2 minutes.

Return the meat to the pan and add 125 ml (4 fl oz/1/2 cup) water. Add the cinnamon and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 40 minutes.

Add the cherries and simmer for 10 minutes to release their flavour. Taste the sauce. If the cherries are sufficiently sour, add 1 tablespoon of the lime or lemon juice and enough brown sugar to give a pleasant sweet-sour flavour; if sweet cherries are used, add more lime or lemon juice, and a little sugar if necessary to balance the flavour.

Cover and simmer for a further 20 minutes, or until the meat is tender.

Serve with [Chelou](#), [Kateh](#) or a [polou](#).

KHORESHE GORMEH SABZI

Green vegetable and meat sauce

SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) boneless lamb or beef stewing meat 185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) ghee, or 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) oil 1 large onion, finely chopped

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 270 g (9½ oz/1½ cups) diced potatoes 60 g (2 oz/1 cup) chopped spring onion (scallion) tops 95 g (3½ oz/1½ cups) chopped spinach

1 small handful chopped flat-leaf parsley

3 tablespoons chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves, optional 3 tablespoons chopped garlic chives, optional Trim the meat and cut into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes.

Heat half the ghee or oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the turmeric and fry for 2 minutes longer.

Increase the heat, add the meat and stir over high heat until the meat changes colour and begins to brown. Reduce the heat.

Add 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water and the lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper and stir to dissolve any browned sediment. Cover and simmer gently for 1–1½ hours, or until just tender. The time depends on the type of meat used.

Heat the remaining ghee or oil in a large frying pan and fry the potatoes over high heat until lightly browned. Add to the meat mixture, leaving the fat in the pan. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Add the greens and herbs to the frying pan and fry over medium heat until wilted. Add to the meat mixture, then cover and simmer for a further 15–20 minutes, or until the meat and potatoes are tender.

Adjust the seasoning and serve.



KHORESHE SIB

Apple and meat sauce SERVES: 6

Follow the directions for the [Khoreshe Alu](#) recipe, substituting 4 apples for the prunes. Peel, core and slice the apples and gently fry in 2 tablespoons ghee or butter for 5 minutes, or until lightly coloured.

When you add the water, salt and freshly ground black pepper, allow the sauce to simmer for 1½ hours, then add the apples and simmer for 10–15 minutes to heat through, keeping the slices intact. Add the lemon juice and sugar to achieve a pleasant sweet-sour flavour.

DOLMEH KALAM

Stuffed cabbage leaves with sweet-sour sauce SERVES: 6

1 cabbage, to give 18 leaves 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) finely minced (ground) beef or lamb 1 large onion, finely chopped

55 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) short-grain white rice

3 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 tablespoons finely chopped coriander (cilantro)

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

1½ teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season 95 g (3½ oz/½ cup) lightly packed brown sugar 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) cider vinegar

Carefully separate the leaves from the head of cabbage. You will need 18 leaves, although larger leaves may be halved and counted as two.

Blanch the leaves in a large saucepan of boiling water for 5 minutes, or until limp — do not overcook. Drain, then cut away the lower portion of the thick, white central rib.

Combine the meat in a mixing bowl with the onion, rice, herbs and turmeric. Season with salt and pepper. Divide the mixture into 18 portions.

Spread a cabbage leaf flat on a work surface and place one portion of the filling on the base of the leaf. Roll once, fold in the sides, then roll up into a firm package. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.

Line a heavy-based saucepan with the cabbage trimmings or a well-washed outer leaf. Pack the rolls in close together, satcking them in layers. Add 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) cold water and invert a heavy plate over the rolls. Cover, bring to simmering point, then simmer gently for 45 minutes.

Combine the sugar and vinegar and add to the pan. Tilt the pan to blend the liquids. Cover and cook for a further 30 minutes.

Serve with [Chelou](#) or flat bread.

DOLMEH BEH

Stuffed quinces

SERVES: 6

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee or butter

1 onion, finely chopped

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lean minced (ground) beef or veal

2 tablespoons uncooked white rice

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 6 quinces

2 teaspoons sugar

60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) cider vinegar or lemon juice, approximately 45 g (1½ oz/1/4 cup) lightly packed brown sugar, approximately Heat half the ghee or butter in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the meat and stir over high heat until the juices evaporate and the meat begins to brown. Stir in 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) water and the rice and cinnamon. Season with salt and pepper and remove from the heat.

Wash the quinces well, rubbing off the fuzz, then dry them. Cut off and reserve the tops (stem end). Scoop out the core and most of the quince flesh with a melon baller, leaving a cavity of reasonable size in each. Sprinkle the cavities with the sugar and fill with the meat mixture. Replace the tops.

Pour 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water into a deep saucepan large enough to hold the quinces side by side. Arrange them upright in the pan. Top each quince with a knob of the remaining ghee. Place about a cup of the quince flesh around the quinces.

Place two paper towels on the rim of the pan and cover tightly with the lid. Set over medium heat, bring to a simmer, then lower the heat and cook gently for 1 hour.

Add the vinegar or lemon juice and sugar to the liquid. Tilt the pan to blend the liquids, then baste the quinces with the sauce. Cook for a further 45 minutes, or until the quinces are tender, basting occasionally during cooking.

Carefully remove the quinces to a serving dish and keep them hot. Pass the liquid and quince pulp through a sieve and return to the pan. Cook until reduced by half, then adjust the sweet-sour flavour with a little more sugar and vinegar or lemon juice if needed.

Pour the sauce over the quinces and serve with flat bread as a first course.

DOLMEH SIB

Stuffed apples

SERVES: 6

Follow the directions for the Dolmeh Beh recipe (left), using 12 apples in place of the quinces. Arrange the stuffed apples in a baking dish, adding half the apple pulp to the water. Dot the apples with the butter, cover the dish with foil and bake in a preheated 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) oven for 30 minutes.

Remove the foil. Add the vinegar or lemon juice and sugar to the liquid. Tilt the dish to blend the liquids, then baste the apples with the sauce. Cook, uncovered, for a further 15–20 minutes, or until the apples are tender.

✿ Note: Eating apples are less likely to disintegrate during cooking. Choose a variety with a tart flavour.

LULEH KABAB

Minced lamb on skewers SERVES: 4–6

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lean boneless lamb 1 large onion

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon, optional melted ghee or butter, for basting 4–6 small tomatoes

For serving

1 quantity Chelou

4–6 egg yolks, in their half-shells 4–6 knobs of butter

sumac, for sprinkling salt and freshly ground black pepper, for sprinkling Pass the lamb through a meat grinder twice, using a fine screen, then grind the onion. Alternatively, process in a food processor, using a steel blade.

Mix in the salt, pepper and cinnamon, if using. Beat well to a paste, using a wooden spoon.

Divide the mixture into 12 equal portions. Shape the portions around long, moistened sword-like skewers, making thin sausage shapes about 12 cm (5 inches) long. Moisten your hands frequently to mould the mixture more easily.

Cook over a glowing charcoal fire, placing the skewers across supports so that the meat does not touch the grill — remove the grill if possible. Turn the skewers frequently to brown the meat evenly. Cook for about 5–7 minutes, basting occasionally with melted ghee or butter.

Meanwhile, cut a cross into the rounded end of each tomato. Thread the tomatoes onto a skewer and brush with melted ghee. Grill next to the kababs for about 4 minutes, until the skin blisters.

Slide the kababs off the skewers. Serve immediately on individual plates of hot Chelou, with a tomato as garnish for each serve. Each diner places an egg yolk in the centre of their hot Chelou and stirs it into the rice. Butter, sumac, salt and pepper are then stirred into the rice before eating.



CHELOU KABAB

Grilled lamb with rice SERVES: 6

3 lamb loins (6 ribs), each about 20 cm (8 inches) long (see Note) 155 g (5 oz/¾ cup) grated or minced onion 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) lemon juice freshly ground black pepper, to season

6 small tomatoes

melted ghee, for brushing For serving

Chelou

6 egg yolks, in their half-shells

6 knobs of butter

sumac, for sprinkling

salt and freshly ground black pepper, for sprinkling yoghurt, optional

Remove the fillets from the loins. Trim all fat and gristle from the main muscles (the 'eye'). Slice each piece lengthways, with the grain, into three, giving strips of lamb about 8 cm (3¼ inches) wide, 20 cm (8 inches) long and 8 mm (⅓ inch) thick. Split each fillet without cutting right through, then open each one out.

Lightly hammer the meat with a heavy-bladed knife to make fine, shallow incisions along the length of the meat.

Place the onion in a sieve over a bowl and press to extract as much juice as possible. Discard the pulp. Add the lemon juice and season with pepper. Place the lamb in this marinade, stirring to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 12 hours, or longer, turning the meat occasionally.

Pass a flat, sword-like skewer through the length of each lamb strip. Cut a cross into the rounded end of each tomato, then thread the tomatoes onto a skewer.

Lightly brush the meat and tomatoes with melted ghee. Cook the meat over a glowing charcoal fire for about 5 minutes, turning frequently; grill the tomatoes next to the kababs for about 4 minutes, until the skin blisters. The meat will flop somewhat at the beginning of cooking. As it cooks it flattens out — a good indication it is ready. It should be lightly browned and just cooked through.

Slide the lamb off the skewers. Serve on individual plates of hot Chelou, with a tomato as garnish for each serve. Each diner places an egg yolk in the centre of their hot Chelou and stirs it into the rice. Butter, sumac, salt and pepper are then stirred into the rice before eating. Yoghurt can be added, if desired.

Speed is the essence of a good Chelou Kabab meal, as it is more enjoyable when very hot.

* Note: Ask your butcher to remove the backbones from the loins, or do this yourself with a boning knife. This dish may be prepared more economically with lamb leg, although it will be slightly less authentic. Bone the leg and trim off all fat and fine sinew; cut the meat into 8 cm (3¼ inch) squares instead of long strips. Lightly hammer with a sharp knife to make shallow incisions. Thread four pieces onto each skewer, to serve 8.

TAH CHIN

Yoghurt, lamb and rice

SERVES: 6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) lean lamb, from the leg 625 g (1 lb 6 oz/2½ cups) yoghurt

4 tablespoons salt

1 teaspoon ground turmeric, or ½ teaspoon pounded saffron threads freshly ground black pepper, to season 600 g (1 lb 5 oz/3 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice

2 egg yolks

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee or butter, melted Cut the lamb into 3 cm (1¼ inch) cubes. Combine in a bowl with 500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) of the yoghurt, half the salt and the turmeric or saffron. Add a good grinding of pepper and turn to coat. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for 6 hours, or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 160°C (320°F/Gas 2–3).

Pick over the rice and wash it well until the water runs clear. Bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil in a large saucepan. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons salt and the rice, stir and return to the boil. Allow to boil, uncovered, for 5 minutes, then drain the rice.

Beat the egg yolks in a bowl. Stir in the remaining yoghurt and half the partly cooked rice.

Place the melted ghee and 1 tablespoon hot water in a 2.5 litre (85 fl oz/10 cup) casserole dish or Dutch oven. Swirl to coat the base and side. Spread the egg, yoghurt and rice mixture evenly over the base. Arrange half the lamb on top and drizzle with some of the yoghurt marinade. Add another layer of rice, the remaining lamb mixture, and all but 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) of the marinade. Top with the remaining rice and spread the reserved yoghurt marinade on the top.

Cover and bake for 1½ hours.

Spoon the rice and lamb mixture into the centre of a serving dish. Lift off the crusty layer from the bottom of the dish and break it into large pieces. Arrange around the edge of the dish.

Alternatively, if you are using a Dutch oven, place it on a cold surface or in cold water for 5–10 minutes. Run a knife round the edge of the contents and invert a serving dish on top. Tip the pan upside down so that the contents come out like a cake. Cut into wedges to serve.

ABGUSHT

The literal translation of abgusht is 'the water of the meat'. In Persian cookery, this can be a substantial soup or a stew. In fact, what might begin as a stew may end up as a soup if unexpected guests arrive. Then again, it may serve as two courses from the one pan, with the flavoursome liquid ladled into bowls and served as soup, leaving enough liquid in the saucepan for the remainder to be served as a moist stew.

Whichever abgusht is being made, the essence is in the long slow cooking. Though my cooking times are considerably shorter than those in Iran, I have taken into account the nature of the ingredients available to the Western cook. Our lamb and beef are considerably more tender, dried beans and fruit take less time to cook than in the past – and we usually tend to hurry things up considerably.

However, with the era of slow cooking upon us once more, abgusht simmered in a slow cooker takes on excitingly different dimensions. For a guide to using a slow cooker, see the [Note](#) at the end of the recipe.

ABGUSHTE LUBIA GHERMEZ

Lamb and bean stew

SERVES: 6

210 g (7½ oz/1 cup) dried red kidney beans

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee or butter

1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) lamb shoulder on the bone, chopped into 6 pieces, or 6 lamb foreshanks, cracked

1 large onion, finely chopped

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes)

1 dried lime ([Loomi](#)), or 1 tablespoon lemon juice salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Wash the kidney beans well and place them in a saucepan with 750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) water. Bring to the boil and leave to boil for 2 minutes. Cover and leave off the heat for 30 minutes, or until the beans are plump.

Heat half the ghee or butter in a deep, heavy-based saucepan and brown the meat on all sides. Remove each batch to a plate.

Heat the remaining ghee in the pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Stir in the turmeric and cook for 2 minutes.

Return the lamb to the pan and add the beans and their soaking liquid and the passata. If using a dried lime, pierce it twice with a skewer, then add to the stew. Alternatively, add the lemon juice. Pour in another 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and bring to the boil.

Cover and simmer over low heat for 1 hour. Season with salt and pepper and cook for a further 1 hour, or until the meat and beans are tender. Remove the dried lime, if used.

Serve in deep plates, with a piece of lamb in each. Pickles, fresh herbs, chopped onion, radishes and flat bread should be served as accompaniments.

✿ Note: If you are using a slow cooker, instead of returning the lamb to the pan with the onion and turmeric, place all the ingredients in a slow cooker and cook on low for 9–10 hours, or on high for 5–6 hours. Use a little less water and add more only if necessary, as less liquid evaporates when using this appliance.

ABGUSHTE BADEMJAN

Lamb and eggplant stew SERVES: 6

Follow the Abgushte Lubia Ghermez recipe (left), omitting the kidney beans and soaking water. Cut 2 eggplants (aubergines) into chunky pieces, leaving the skin on. Sprinkle liberally with salt and leave for 30 minutes. Pat dry with paper towels and fry in additional ghee until lightly coloured. Set aside. Return the lamb to the pan with all the remaining ingredients and season with salt and pepper. Cook for 1½ hours, add the eggplant and cook for a further 30 minutes, or until the meat and eggplant are tender. Add more water only if necessary. If using a slow cooker, add the eggplant after cooking for 8 hours on low, or after 4 hours on high.

BAQLAWA

Almond and cardamom pastry

MAKES: ABOUT 40 PIECES

Though baklava is regarded as a Greek pastry, its popularity extends throughout the Middle East. The Persian version differs considerably in that it uses a greater proportion of nuts, and is perfumed with rosewater and flavoured with cardamom.

Baqlawa and the celebration of Now Rooz (New Year) go hand in hand. It is one of the special foods prepared in abundance for this joyful celebration.

For the best flavour, use freshly ground or pounded cardamom, unless the quality of the ready-ground product is very good.

**300 g (10½ oz/3 cups) ground almonds 155 g (5 oz/1 cup) finely chopped almonds
230 g (8 oz/1 cup) caster (superfine) sugar**

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) clarified butter or ghee, melted

10 sheets fillo pastry

Syrup

440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar

1 teaspoon lemon juice

½ teaspoon ground cardamom

1 tablespoon rosewater

Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Combine the ground and chopped almonds in a bowl with the sugar and cardamom.

Brush a 25 × 33 cm (10 × 13 inch) baking dish with the melted clarified butter or ghee. Place three fillo pastry sheets in the dish, brushing each sheet with butter, including the top. Sprinkle one-third of the nut mixture over the

top.

Add two more pastry sheets, again buttering each sheet. Repeat with another two layers of nut mixture, with two buttered pastry sheets between each layer.

Top the last layer of nuts with three sheets of fillo, buttering each sheet as before, including the top.

Trim the edges with a sharp knife. Carefully cut through the pastry and nut layers in diamond shapes. Drizzle the remaining melted butter over the top, letting it run into the cuts and around the sides of the baqlawa. Place on the centre shelf of the oven and bake for 30 minutes. Raise the shelf one notch above the centre and bake for another 5–10 minutes, or until the pastry is a pale golden brown.

Meanwhile, prepare the syrup. In a heavy-based saucepan, dissolve the sugar in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Bring to the boil, add the lemon juice and cardamom then boil rapidly for 15–18 minutes without stirring, or until the syrup is thick when a little is tested on a cold saucer. Stir in the rosewater and remove from the heat. Set aside until the pastry is cooked.

Remove the baqlawa from the oven and pour the warm syrup evenly over the hot pastry. Leave for at least 2 hours before cutting again and removing from the dish.

The pastry may be left in the dish, covered lightly with a fine cloth to protect it from dust, and will remain crisp for 3–4 days. Any left after serving may be stored in a sealed container for several days, though the crispness will decrease. Do not refrigerate.

KHARBOOZEH VA HOLOO MAKHLOOT

Melon and peach dessert SERVES: 8

1 Persian or honeydew melon

1 rockmelon (cantaloupe) 115 g (4 oz/½ cup) caster (superfine) sugar ½ teaspoon salt

4 firm, ripe peaches

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice 2–3 tablespoons rosewater shaved or crushed ice, to serve Cut each melon in half. Scoop the seeds into a sieve set over a bowl. Let the juice drip into the bowl, then discard the seeds.

Working over the bowl, scoop the melons into neat balls with a melon ball scoop, letting the juices fall into the bowl with the melon balls. Add the sugar and salt and stir gently to combine.

Peel the peaches, halve them and slice them into a bowl containing the lemon juice. As each peach slice is added to the bowl, stir gently to coat it with the lemon juice, to prevent discolouration.

Add the peaches and lemon juice to the melon balls. Stir gently and add rosewater to taste. Cover and chill for several hours.

To serve, pile into individual dessert glasses and top with a little shaved or crushed ice. Serve immediately.

HALVAYE SHIR

Milk pudding

SERVES: 5–6

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee or unsalted butter 90 g (3 oz/1/2 cup) rice flour 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) milk 55 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) sugar

3 teaspoons rosewater

¼–½ teaspoon ground cardamom 40 g (1½ oz) chopped blanched almonds or pistachio nuts Melt the ghee or butter in a heavy-based saucepan, preferably one with a non-stick coating. Stir in the rice flour and cook over medium heat, stirring often, for 3 minutes, without allowing the ground rice to colour.

Add the milk, stirring constantly until the mixture has thickened and is bubbling. Stir in the sugar, rosewater and cardamom to taste. Stir for a further 5 minutes.

Pour into small bowls, sprinkle with the nuts and serve warm or at room temperature. Alternatively, pour into a lightly buttered 20 cm (8 inch) square cake tin, sprinkle with the nuts, leave until cold and serve cut into squares.

SHIR BERENJ

Rice pudding SERVES: 6

**110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) short-grain white rice 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) milk pinch of salt 55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) sugar ½ teaspoon ground cardamom 2–3 teaspoons rosewater honey, for drizzling, optional
Rinse the rice only if necessary. Place in a heavy-based saucepan with 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) cold water and bring to the boil, stirring occasionally. Boil gently, uncovered, for 15 minutes, or until the water has been absorbed.**

Stir in the milk, add the salt and bring to a slow simmer. Simmer gently, uncovered, for 40 minutes, or until the pudding is thick. Stir occasionally with a wooden spoon and take care that the pudding does not scorch.

Stir in the sugar, cardamom and rosewater to taste. Spoon into small bowls. Serve warm or chilled, with a little honey drizzled on top if desired.

KALUCHEH BERENJ

Rice cookies

MAKES: 60

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) butter 125 g (4 oz/1 cup) icing (confectioners') sugar, sifted

2 egg yolks

440 g (15½ oz/2½ cups) rice flour ½–1 teaspoon ground cardamom 1 egg white, lightly beaten 65 g (2¼ oz/½ cup) finely chopped pistachio nuts or almonds Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F/Gas 4).

Cream the butter and icing sugar in a bowl until light and fluffy. Gradually add the egg yolks, beating well. Sift the rice flour with the cardamom and fold into the butter mixture to form a soft dough. Knead for 2 minutes, then cover and allow the dough to rest for 1 hour.

Shape generous teaspoonsfuls of the dough into balls, placing them on ungreased baking trays. Using a thimble, make three crescent shapes on each cookie.

Brush the cookies very lightly with the egg white and lightly sprinkle with the chopped nuts. Bake for 15 minutes, but do not let the tops colour; the bases should be golden brown.

Leave the cookies on the baking trays for 5 minutes, then lift onto wire racks to cool completely.

Store in a sealed container.

LAUZE BADAM

Almond sweetmeat

MAKES: ABOUT 45 PIECES

Sweetmeats are much appreciated in Iran, and their making is a long and ancient art. To assure success for the Western cook, I have followed basic candy-making principles, without sacrificing the Persian flavour of the sweetmeat. The following recipes use a base so similar to a cooked fondant that I have given the basic fondant as the basis from which to work.

Fondant

440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar To finish

200 g (7 oz/2 cups) finely ground almonds ½ teaspoon vanilla essence Pour 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water into a heavy-based saucepan, add the sugar and place on a very low heat so that the sugar dissolves slowly — do not stir.

When the sugar has completely dissolved, bring to the boil, add the cream of tartar and allow to boil for 20–25 minutes, or until the mixture reaches the 'soft ball' stage, when a small spoonful of the syrup forms a ball when dropped into a bowl of very cold water — 115°C (240°F) on a sugar thermometer.

Place 180 g (6 oz/1¾ cups) of the ground almonds in a heatproof bowl; sprinkle half the remaining almonds over the base of an 18 cm (7 inch) square cake tin.

Pour the syrup over the ground almonds in the bowl and leave for 15 minutes, or until a skin begins to form around the edge. Take a spatula and work the mixture together in a figure-8 movement, until it begins to grain. Add the vanilla during this process.

When the mixture is cool enough to handle, knead it into a ball. Press the fondant out flat on a work surface, then place it in the cake tin, pressing it into the shape of the tin. Sprinkle with the remaining almonds, pressing them into the fondant.

Leave for about 3 hours, or until firm. To serve, cut into small diamond-shaped lozenges using an oiled knife.

LAUZE NARJEEL

Coconut sweetmeat

MAKES: ABOUT 45 PIECES

Follow the Lauze Badam recipe (left), replacing the ground almonds with 180 g (6 oz/2 cups) desiccated coconut.

LAUZE TOOT

Mulberry sweetmeat MAKES: ABOUT 45 PIECES

The shape, rather than the ingredients, gives this confection its name. Follow the Lauze Badam recipe (left), using all the ground almonds in the fondant mixture. When the mixture is cool enough to handle, shape it into small pieces the size and shape of a mulberry, then roll them in sugar. Insert a sliver of blanched pistachio nut in the top of each one to resemble a stem.



SHARBAT ALBALOO

Cherry sherbet

SERVES: 4–6

The black sour cherries of Iran are used for this sherbet. If sour cherries such as Morello are unavailable, use the table varieties and increase the lemon juice to give the characteristic sharp tang.

**500 g (1 lb 2 oz) sour or other cherries sugar
juice of ½ lemon**

Wash the cherries and remove the stems and seeds. Place in a saucepan with 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer over low heat for 15 minutes, or until the cherries are soft.

Strain the cherries through a sieve, set over a bowl. Leave for 30 minutes to drain thoroughly.

Measure the juice back into the saucepan and add an equal volume of sugar — 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) of sugar to each 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) of juice.

Add the lemon juice and bring to the boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar. Allow to boil, uncovered, for 8–10 minutes without stirring, skimming when necessary.

Leave to cool, then pour into a [sterilised](#) bottle. Store at room temperature.

To serve, pour 2–3 tablespoons of the syrup into a glass and add ice cubes and cold water to taste. Stir gently and serve.

SHARBAT BEH

Quince sherbet

SERVES: 4–6

Traditionally this sherbet is made by grating the fruit into water. Lemon juice is rubbed on the fruit and added to the water to stop the fruit discolouring. It seems like such a lot of trouble when the resultant juice is cooked anyway. The method given here works just as well, and gives a better colour to the syrup.

2 large quinces

sugar

juice of ½ lemon

Peel the quinces, remove the cores and chop the flesh into small pieces. Place in a stainless steel or enamelled pan and add 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water. Bring slowly to the boil, then simmer gently for 40 minutes, or until the quince is very soft and has coloured to a pinky orange.

Place a doubled-over piece of muslin (cheesecloth) in a bowl, draping the ends over the side. Pour the fruit and juice into the centre of the cloth, gather the ends and tie with string. Lift the bag up and suspend it over the bowl. Leave it to drip for several hours, as you would for jelly-making.

Measure the juice back into the saucepan and add an equal volume of sugar — 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) of sugar to each 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) of juice.

Add the lemon juice and bring to the boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar. Allow to boil, uncovered, for 8–10 minutes without stirring, skimming when necessary.

Leave to cool, then pour into a [sterilised](#) bottle. Store at room temperature.

To serve, pour 2–3 tablespoons of the syrup into a glass and add ice cubes and cold water to taste. Stir gently and serve.

* Note: The quince pulp may be used in the [Quince Paste](#) recipe.

SEKANJABIN

Sweet-sour mint syrup

MAKES: ABOUT 375 ML (12½ FL OZ/1½ CUPS) The Persian penchant for sweet-sour flavours extends to desserts and beverages. Sekanjabin, a sweet-sour syrup with a flavour reminiscent of mint sauce, plays a number of roles in the Persian household. It may be served as a dip for crisp cos (romaine) lettuce leaves for an unusual dessert. With bread as an accompaniment to the lettuce and syrup, it becomes a light meal. With water or soda water and ice it makes a refreshing drink. With grated cucumber, soda water and ice, a very pleasant punch can be made, though this last innovation bears Western influence. Persians in the past treated jaundice attacks with a diet of Sekanjabin and lettuce – no bread – until the patient recovered.

440 g (15½ oz/2 cups) sugar 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) white vinegar juice of ½ lemon

6 large mint sprigs

Put the sugar and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water in a saucepan and stir over medium heat until the sugar dissolves. Bring to the boil, add the vinegar and lemon juice, and return to a steady boil. Allow to boil over medium heat for 15–18 minutes, or until thick, skimming as required. Test a little on a cold saucer: when cool, it should have a thin honey consistency.

Add the mint sprigs to the boiling syrup. Boil for 1 minute, then remove from the heat and leave until cool. Strain into a [sterilised](#) bottle and store at room temperature.

To serve as a dessert, pour some syrup into a shallow bowl and float a mint sprig on top. Serve with crisp cos (romaine) lettuce leaves, for diners to fold and dip into the syrup.

To serve as a beverage, one-third fill a glass with the syrup, add ice cubes and top with water or soda water. Stir gently and float a mint sprig on top.

To serve as a punch, coarsely grate a young, peeled cucumber into a punch bowl. Add 1 quantity of the syrup, plenty of ice cubes and soda water to taste. Garnish with mint sprigs and thin cucumber slices.

MORABAYE HENDEVANEH

Watermelon rind preserve

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) watermelon rind

660 g (1 lb 7 oz/3 cups) sugar

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 teaspoon cardamom seeds

Peel the green skin from the watermelon rind and remove any pink flesh. Weigh after peeling, or cut into 2 cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ inch) cubes and measure. You will require four cups of diced rind.

Place the watermelon rind in a preserving pan and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil, then simmer gently for 1 hour, or until the rind is tender and translucent. Drain.

Place the preserving pan back over medium heat. Add the sugar and 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and stir to dissolve the sugar. Add the lemon juice and bring to the boil. Add the drained rind and return to the boil. Allow to boil for 15 minutes, skimming when necessary.

Crush the cardamom seeds using a mortar and pestle and stir into the preserve. Boil for 1 minute, then remove from the heat. Cover and leave for 12 hours, or overnight.

Remove the lid and place the pan over medium heat. Bring to the boil and leave to boil gently for 15–20 minutes, or until the syrup is thick when tested on a cold saucer.

Ladle into warm, [sterilised jars](#), leave to cool, then seal.



Afghanistan





AFGHANISTAN

In early history Alexander the Great conquered Afghanistan on his way to India; the country was plundered by Genghis Khan and his Mongol hordes in their surge to the Middle and Near East; and it served as a route for Marco Polo on his journey to China. It is the land of the Khyber Pass, which features in the annals of military history in Britain's attempts to maintain her colonies in India. Babur, founder of the Moghul Empire in India and a direct descendant of Genghis Khan, began his rise to power in Kabul and returned there to die.

Being a land-locked country, as one might expect, the foods of Afghanistan reflect those of its neighbours, Pakistan, India and Iran. Though the country shares a border with Russia, there is little evidence that Russia has influenced the cuisine of Afghanistan.

THE FLAVOUR OF AFGHAN FOOD

The Pakistan-Indian influence is prevalent in Afghan spices and palaus. Garam masala is a popular spice blend, with saffron, cinnamon, cloves, peppers and hot chillies echoing the same influence; cardamom, dill, mint, cumin and coriander reflect the Persian and Arabic influences. Gashneez, fresh coriander (cilantro), is referred to as Afghan parsley and is used extensively. Though history shows that Persia influenced cooking in India in early times, Afghanistan seems to have taken the best of both worlds. The Mongol influence can be seen in noodle-type dishes such as aushak and aush, though it is possible that any grain-producing area could have conceived the noodle without outside influence.

Maust (yoghurt) is a necessary part of Afghan cooking and is frequently drained to make a thick, cream cheese-like substance called chakah. Yoghurt or sour milk is drained and dried for a cheese called quroot, which is then painstakingly dissolved in water to reconstitute it; you will find instructions for making a similar-tasting cheese condiment in the recipes [Quroot](#).

The breads of Afghanistan are similar to those of Pakistan, India and Iran, though they are prepared a little differently. Naun and lawash are two different breads, naun being similar to the Punjabi (North Indian) naan, and lawash similar to the nane lavash of Iran.

This perhaps shows clearly the influences of each of the countries on the others' cooking. The chalau and palau of Afghanistan are again similar to the rice dishes of both Iran and Pakistan or India. Basmati rice is used in Afghanistan, though another good-quality long-grain white rice may be substituted.

The korma (meat sauce) of Afghanistan has a parallel in the korma of India, though it is not as spicy, and khoreshe gormeh sabzi is a related dish from Persia (now Iran). Here again, another similarity is apparent. The sabzee and sabzi of Afghanistan and Iran can also be found in Pakistan-Indian cooking. Persian sabzi refers to green herbs, Afghan sabzee to spinach, and Pakistan-Indian sabzi to a variety of vegetables. The point is, of course, that the Indo-Iranian sub-family of languages is the basis of the languages spoken in these four countries. Language aside, their foods are closely linked in many areas.

The kabaub is a convenient way to cook cubes of meat and Afghans like to serve them between pieces of lawash. Favoured meats are beef and lamb, though occasionally goat or camel meat is used. As much of the meat is rather tough, minced (ground) meat is used extensively, either in sauces or made into kofta kabaub.

The fat from the tail of the Awassi sheep is highly favoured and added to minced meat, or diced and placed between meat cubes when preparing kabaubs. For a somewhat similar flavour, use lamb with a proportion of fat – lamb shoulder is a good choice. The Afghans like their foods to be oily, either from the lamb fat or from the use of rather large amounts of vegetable oil or ghee.

The latter is the preferred fat, but in short supply in Afghanistan. The amounts of these fats have been reduced in recipes to cater for Western tastes, and may be reduced even further if necessary.

A wide variety of vegetables is used in cooking, with leeks being particularly popular, fired with chilli and used as a filling for boiled and fried doughs for aushak and boolawnee. Vegetables are frequently combined with meats for korma, with spinach, turnip, potato and carrot being the most popular. Though I have called such recipes [Korma Sabzee](#), [Korma Zardak](#) and so on, when the korma is served with chalau the correct titles become sabzee chalau or zardak chalau – rather confusing, but this is how the Afghans refer to them.

Yellow split peas are frequently used to thicken sauces and soups. The use of mung beans in maushawa interested me, as this is the only recipe I have ever encountered using the whole mung bean. Usually these beans are used for the Chinese bean sprouts, or ground into a flour for Asian sweet-making.

Chai, the tea of Afghanistan, is ever present. It is usually served black, very strong, sometimes flavoured with cardamom, and can be taken with or without sugar. Afghans are renowned for their hospitality, and when serving a guest with tea they are likely to add copious quantities of sugar. If your tea is served very, very sweet, you can count yourself as a very honoured guest indeed. Generally tea is served at the end of a meal, with each person being provided with their own teapot, cup and a bowl for the tea dregs. Tea with milk, sheer chai, is usually served on more formal occasions, green tea being used for this brew.

EATING AFGHAN STYLE

The food is served on large platters or in pots, and placed on a cloth spread over a mat or carpet. Sometimes individual plates or bowls are provided, though this varies according to location, whether in a house or a tent. Cushions are provided for seating and the food is generally eaten with the fingers of the right hand, after the traditional hand-washing. A chalau or palau is always served, usually with korma. Kabaub, chicken or aushak plus a thick soup could also be served, particularly if the occasion is festive. The Afghans are noted for serving foods in large quantities. Vegetables, salad, pickles, yoghurt and bread are always served. The bread is used to scoop up

soft foods. Dug (yoghurt drink) or murgh (buttermilk) is often served as the beverage during the meal. Fresh fruit is plentiful and very good and is always part of the meal. Puddings or sweet pastries frequently follow the meal, with tea being served quite some time later.

COOKING METHODS

Rice is cooked in a traditional pot called a degh and stirred and served with a gafgeer. Cooking over the embers of a wood fire is a popular method for kabaubs, the same fire also being used to cook the other components of the meal. The oven for bread-making is the tandour — the beehive oven of Iran, Iraq and Asia — and as this is not suitable for baking pastries, the sweet tooth of the Afghan is satisfied with copious amounts of fried pastries, though baklava and kalucheh berenj, the rice cookies of Iran, are available at pastry shops. One fried pastry that intrigued me considerably was the abraysham kabaub, actually a kind of sweet omelette. You might enjoy tackling the recipe I have given.

INGREDIENTS FOR AFGHAN COOKING

There are few ingredients that you might not already have on your pantry shelf or in your vegetable storeroom. Fresh coriander is a must and can be grown from seed. Pick it before flowering. Coriander is a delicate herb and if it is washed, allowed to dry well, then packed loosely into a plastic bag, it should keep in the refrigerator for four days or so.

You will require lots of garlic, onions and dried mint, and a few hot chillies for flavouring; leeks for special recipes; and plenty of yoghurt — try making your own (see the [instructions](#)). Spices required are cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, cardamom, cumin, black cumin and [garam masala](#), although you can use ready-made if you would rather not make your own. For sweet pastries, you will need saffron threads, rosewater, unsalted pistachio nuts, almonds and walnuts. Use ghee or vegetable oil for cooking. Fresh limes and lemons are also necessary.

CHATNI GASHNEEZ

Coriander chutney MAKES: 350 G (12 OZ/1½ CUPS) 50 g (2 oz/1 cup) roughly chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves 2 garlic cloves

1 green chilli

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) coarsely chopped walnuts 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) lemon juice or vinegar salt, to taste

Pack the chopped coriander firmly into a cup to measure. Peel the garlic and chop roughly; slit the chilli, remove the seeds and chop roughly.

Place the prepared ingredients and walnuts in a blender or food processor and process to a textured paste, adding the lemon juice or vinegar gradually while processing.

Add salt to taste, place in a bowl and chill until required. Serve with kabaubs.

✿ Note: If you have no processor or blender, pass the ingredients through a food grinder using a fine screen, or chop the ingredients finely, then pound using a mortar and pestle. Gradually stir in the lemon juice or vinegar and add salt to taste.



GARAM MASALA Fragrant spice mix

MAKES: 50 G (2 OZ/1/2 CUP)

5 cardamom pods

2 pieces of cinnamon bark, each about 8 cm (3½ inches) long ½ teaspoon cloves

2 tablespoons cumin seeds

1 teaspoon black cumin seeds

½ whole nutmeg, grated Combine all the spices except the nutmeg in a small frying pan and roast over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the spices smell fragrant. Remove to a plate and cool.

Remove and discard the pods from the cardamom. In a blender, process the cardamom seeds and roasted spices to a fine powder.

Grate the nutmeg and add to the ground spices. Store in a sealed jar.

QUROOT

Yoghurt cheese

MAKES: 550 G (1 LB 3½ OZ/2½ CUPS) Quroot is a ball of very dry Afghan cheese made from drained, salted and dried yoghurt. To prepare quroot for serving with particular dishes, the cheese ball is soaked in hot water in a special bowl containing a stone. The quroot is then rubbed against the stone and the sides of the bowl, and gradually worked into the water to form a thick sauce.

Afghans living abroad have found a substitute by combining chakah (drained yoghurt) and mature cheddar cheese. The cheddar provides the tang associated with ripened cheese.

Another substitute is a combination of undrained yoghurt, mature cheddar and sour cream.

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) drained yoghurt

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) finely grated mature cheddar cheese

Mix a little of the yoghurt into the grated cheese, working the mixture with the back of a wooden spoon to blend the ingredients. Gradually stir in the remaining yoghurt and add salt to taste. Pile into a small bowl or serve as directed in recipes.

Alternative mixture

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) undrained yoghurt 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) grated mature cheddar cheese 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) sour cream salt, to taste

Prepare as before, mixing the yoghurt into the cheese, then adding the sour cream and salt to taste.

KORMA

Meat sauce

SERVES: 6

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) lean beef or lamb stewing meat 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) oil

1 large onion, finely chopped 2 garlic cloves, crushed

55 g (2 oz/¼ cup) yellow split peas, washed

1 teaspoon ground cumin

¼–½ teaspoon hot chilli powder salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season 2–3 tablespoons chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves Chalau, for serving Cut the meat into 2 cm (¾ inch) cubes.

Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan, add the onion and fry gently until translucent. Increase the heat, add the garlic and meat and fry, stirring often, until the juices evaporate and the meat begins to brown.

>Stir in 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) water, the washed split peas, cumin and chilli powder, to taste. Season with salt and pepper and bring to a slow simmer. Cover the pan and simmer gently for 1–1½ hours, until the meat is tender. The time depends on the cut of meat used.

Add the coriander and cook for a further 10 minutes.

Mound the Chalau on a platter and spoon some of the sauce on top. Serve the remaining sauce in a separate bowl.

KORMA SABZEE

Meat and spinach sauce

Prepare the basic Korma, omitting the split peas. Add 120 g (4 oz/3 cups) chopped fresh spinach with the coriander. Cook for a further 10–15 minutes.

KORMA SHULGUN or KORMA KACHALO

Meat and turnip sauce or meat and potato sauce Prepare the basic Korma, omitting the split peas. About 20 minutes before the meat is cooked, add 3 white turnips or 3 potatoes, peeled and cut into 2 cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ inch) cubes. When the meat and vegetables are tender, add the coriander and cook for a further 10 minutes.

KORMA ZARDAK

Meat and carrot sauce

Prepare the basic Korma with the Korma Shulgun variation above, but adding 310 g (10½ oz/2 cups) diced carrots instead of turnips.

BOOLAWNEE

Fried leek pastries MAKES: ABOUT 32

Pastry

**300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour ½ teaspoon salt Leek filling
2 leeks (to make 405 g/14 oz/3 cups chopped)**

2 teaspoons salt

¼ teaspoon hot chilli powder

3 teaspoons vegetable oil

To finish

oil, for deep-frying Sift the flour and salt into a bowl, make a well in the centre and add 185 ml (6½ fl oz/¾ cup) cold water. Mix to a firm dough and knead for 5 minutes until elastic, dusting with more flour if necessary. Wrap in plastic wrap and leave to rest for 30 minutes.

Cut off and discard most of the green tops from the leeks. Halve them lengthways and rinse well to remove all traces of soil between the leaves. Remove the roots and dry the leeks with paper towels. Place the leeks flat on a board, cut along the length at 5 mm (¼ inch) intervals, then across to dice. Measure in cups and place in a bowl.

Add the salt and chilli powder and knead by hand to soften the leeks. Stir in the oil.

Roll pieces of the dough into balls the size of large hazelnuts, then roll thinly into a 10 cm (4 inch) circle. Alternatively, roll out the dough and cut into 10 cm (4 inch) rounds.

Place about 2 teaspoons of the leek filling in the centre of each circle, moisten the pastry halfway round the edge of the circle and fold the pastry over the filling. Press the edge to seal well and, using the edge of a thimble (the traditional method), or a coffee spoon, make little crescent-shaped marks around the edge, or press with the tines of a fork.

Fry three or four at a time in hot oil until golden brown, turning to brown evenly. Drain on paper towels and serve hot or warm.

MAUSHAWA

Bean and meatball soup

SERVES: 6

**105 g (3½ oz/½ cup) dried red kidney beans, washed and soaked overnight 110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup)
yellow split peas 110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) mung beans 110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) short-grain white rice**

2 teaspoons salt

Meatballs

**250 g (9 oz) finely minced (ground) beef or lamb ½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper ¼ teaspoon hot chilli powder
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon**

To finish

**60 ml (2 fl oz/½ cup) vegetable oil 1 large onion, finely chopped 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) chopped,
peeled tomatoes**

1 tablespoon chopped dill

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) yoghurt

Place the kidney beans in a large saucepan with their soaking water. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer gently for 1 hour.

Wash the yellow split peas and mung beans and add to the beans with 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water. Return to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes.

Wash the rice and add to the pan with the salt. Simmer for a further 30 minutes, until the ingredients are soft.

Combine the meat with the seasonings and shape into balls the size of hazelnuts.

Heat the oil in a large heavy-based saucepan and fry the onion until translucent and lightly browned. Add the meatballs and fry, stirring often, until browned. Stir in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water and the tomatoes, then cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Add the cooked bean mixture, another 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water and the dill. Bring to the boil, then add the yoghurt, stirring over low heat until almost boiling.

Adjust the seasoning with salt and more chilli powder if desired. Serve hot in deep plates with [Lawash](#) or [Naun](#).

BOURANEE BAUNJAUN

Eggplant with yoghurt sauce SERVES: 6

**4 eggplants (aubergines), about 1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) salt, for sprinkling
oil, for frying**

2 onions, sliced

1 green capsicum (pepper), seeds removed, sliced into rings

2 large ripe tomatoes, peeled and sliced

**1/4 teaspoon hot chilli powder Chakah (yoghurt sauce) 500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) drained yoghurt
2–3 garlic cloves, crushed salt, to taste**

Cut the stems from the eggplants, but leave the skin on. Cut the eggplants into slices 1 cm (½ inch) thick. Spread on a tray and sprinkle the slices liberally with salt. Leave for 30 minutes, then dry well with paper towels.

Pour enough oil into a deep frying pan (with a lid to fit) to cover the base well. Fry the eggplant until lightly browned on each side, but do not cook completely. Lift onto a plate when browned. Add more oil to the pan as required for the remaining slices.

As the oil drains out of the eggplant on standing, return it to the pan and add the onion. Fry gently until translucent, then remove to another plate.

Place a layer of eggplant back into the pan. Top with some sliced onion, capsicum rings and tomato slices. Repeat using the remaining ingredients and adding a little salt and the chilli powder between the layers. Pour in any remaining oil from the eggplant and onion and add 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) water. Cover and simmer gently for 10–15 minutes, until the eggplant is tender.

Combine the Chakah ingredients and spread half of the Chakah into the base of a serving dish. Top with the vegetables, lifting the eggplant carefully to keep the slices intact. Leave some of the juices in the pan.

Top the vegetables with the remaining Chakah and drizzle the vegetable juices over it. Serve with kabaubs and Lawash.



AFGHAN BREADS

Afghanistan

The breads of Afghanistan are similar to those of neighbouring Iran on one side, and India on the other. Basically two breads are widely eaten: one is the large, flat lawash or parakee baked on the wall of a beehive oven called the tandour; the other is naun, similar to the Punjabi naan in shape. Wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour is generally used, and the bread is leavened with a fermented starter. As you really have to know how to handle such a starter, it is better to use conventional yeast, though the flavour is not quite the same.

LAWASH

Wholemeal (whole-wheat) flat bread

Follow the recipe for [Nane Lavash](#) in the chapter on Iran. Use as directed in recipes, or as an accompaniment to foods. The readily available Lebanese pitta bread may be used instead. When Lawash is required in the serving of food, split a Lebanese bread and use the two rounds separately to replace the Lawash. Although the flavour is not the same, the basic effect is there.

To warm Lawash, wrap it in foil and heat in the oven at 180°C (350°F/Gas 4) for 5 minutes.

Wholemeal (whole-wheat) bread

MAKES: 8 LOAVES

2 teaspoons active dried yeast

**450 g (1 lb/3 cups) wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour 300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour
1½ teaspoons salt**

oil, for shaping

Dissolve the yeast in 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) warm water.

Put the flours and salt in a mixing bowl and stir well with a balloon whisk to combine — this is just as effective as a sieve and the flakes from the wholemeal flour are retained. Remove about 150 g (5 oz/1 cup) of the flour and set aside.

Add 440 ml (15 fl oz/1¾ cups) warm water to the yeast mixture and pour into the centre of the flour. Stir a little flour into the liquid to thicken it slightly, cover the bowl and leave it in a warm place for 10 minutes, or until the liquid is frothy.

Stir in the remaining flour, then beat by hand for 20 minutes, gradually kneading in the reserved flour towards the end of this time. Alternatively, beat the dough for 15 minutes using an electric mixer with a dough hook, gradually adding as much of the reserved flour as the mixture will take.

Cover the bowl and leave the dough in a warm place to rise until it has doubled in size – 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 220°C (430°F/Gas 7). With oiled hands, divide the dough into eight equal portions, then roll into balls.

Lightly oil your hands and, working on an oiled work surface, press a ball of dough into a tear shape, about 1 cm (½ inch) thick. Place the shaped loaves on baking trays, cover with cloths and leave for 15 minutes.

Dip a forefinger in oil and make three parallel grooves in each loaf, about 2 cm (¾ inch) in from the edge, by pressing the side of the finger along the length of the bread. You will end up with ridged, tear-shaped loaves, each with three grooves, the middle groove longer than those on either side.

Bake the loaves on the middle shelf of the oven for 15 minutes, or until the loaves are lightly browned and cooked. Wrap in a cloth as they come out of the oven.

CHALAU

Steamed rice

SERVES: 6–8

600 g (1 lb 5 oz/3 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice **60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) vegetable oil**

2 teaspoons salt

Pick over the rice if necessary and place in a sieve. Wash under cold running water until the water runs clear. Leave to drain for 30 minutes.

Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and add the rice. Stir over medium heat for 5 minutes.

Add cold water to a level 2 cm (¾ inch) above the surface of the rice — reaching up to the first joint of your forefinger is a reliable indication of the level required. Stir in the salt.

Bring to the boil, stirring occasionally until boiling, then reduce the heat to low. Cover the rim of the pan with a cloth or two paper towels and fit the lid on tightly.

Cook gently for 30 minutes over low heat. Fluff up the rice grains with a fork and mound on a platter to serve.

Alternative method

Wash the rice only if necessary. Bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil in a heavy-based saucepan, then add the rice and 1 tablespoon of salt. Stir until the water comes to the boil, then boil, uncovered, for 8 minutes.

Drain.

Place the rice in a large casserole dish, add the oil and toss to coat the grains with oil. Add 1 teaspoon salt and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) cold water.

Cover the rim of the casserole with a cloth or two paper towels and fit the lid on tightly. Cook in a preheated oven at 150°C (300°F/Gas 2) for 30 minutes.

ZARDA PALAU

Sweet rice with orange and chicken

SERVES: 5–6

thinly peeled rind of 2 oranges 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) vegetable oil 60 g (2 oz/1/2 cup) slivered almonds

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) chicken breast fillets, quartered salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season

1 onion, sliced

1 tablespoon salt

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) basmati or other good-quality long-grain white rice, washed 1/2 teaspoon saffron threads

35 g (1 1/4 oz/1/4 cup) blanched pistachio nuts, optional Cut the orange rind into fine shreds about 3 cm (1 1/4 inches) long. Boil them in 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water for 5 minutes to remove any bitterness, then drain and rinse.

Dissolve the sugar in 250 ml (8 1/2 fl oz/1 cup) water. Add the orange rind shreds and boil gently for 5 minutes, or until the syrup is thick. Remove from the heat and set aside.

In a frying pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the ghee or oil, add the almonds and fry gently until golden. Remove from the pan and set aside.

Heat the remaining ghee or oil in the frying pan and brown the chicken pieces on all sides. Remove the chicken, leaving the fat in the pan. Season the chicken with salt and pepper.

Add the onion to the frying pan and fry gently until soft and slightly browned. Add 250 ml (8 1/2 fl oz/1 cup) water and stir to lift the browned juices. Return the chicken to the pan, cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 150°C (300°F/Gas 2).

Bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil in a large saucepan. Add the washed rice and 1 tablespoon of salt. Bring back to the boil, then boil for 8 minutes and drain.

Tip the rice into a bowl and strain the syrup from the orange rind shreds over the rice, reserving the rind. Toss the rice and spread half over the base of a greased casserole dish.

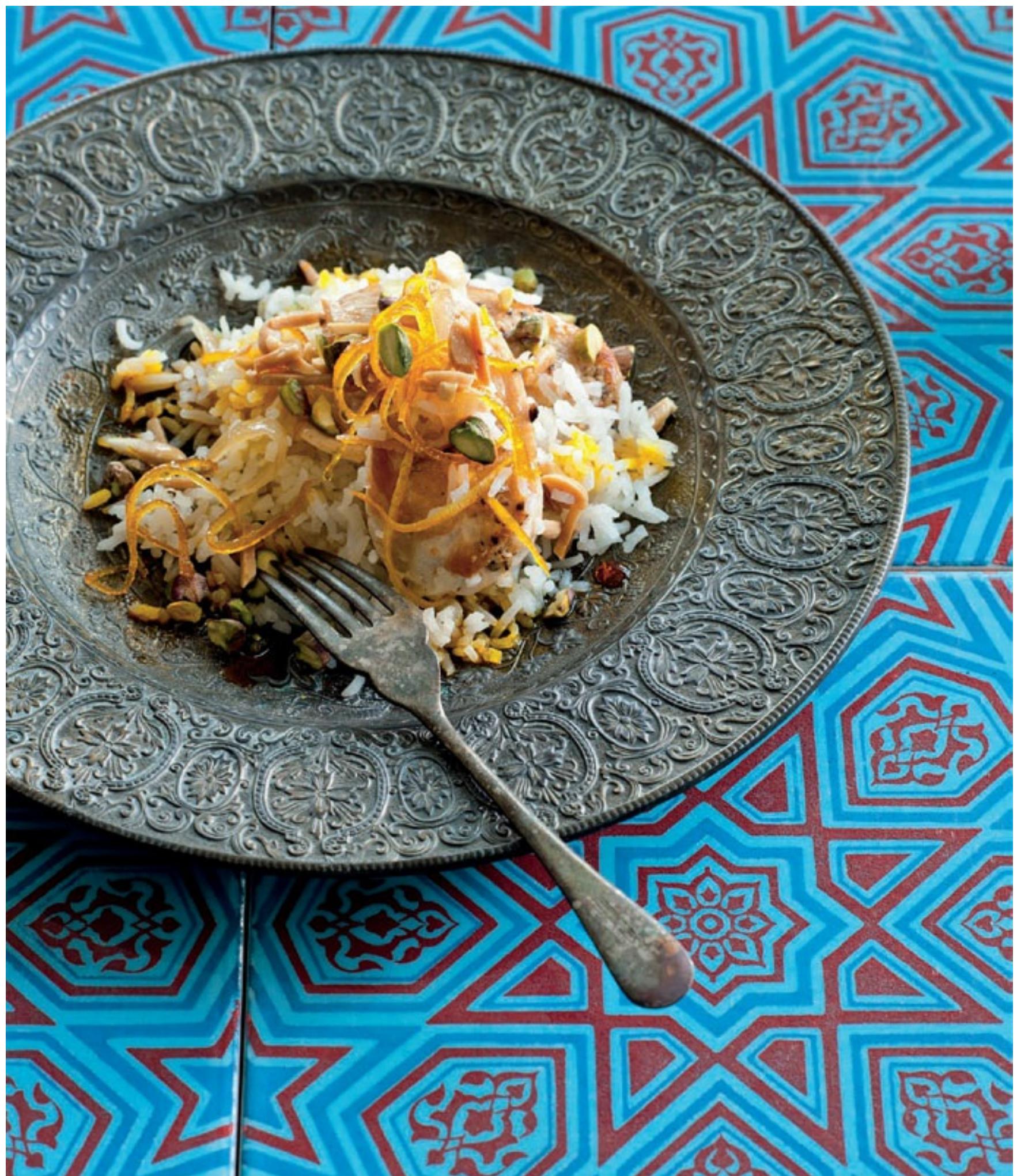
Arrange the chicken pieces on top with the onion and half the cooking liquid. Sprinkle with half the shredded rind and half the browned almonds.

Spread the remaining rice on top, then pour the remaining chicken liquid evenly over the rice. Cover the casserole, transfer to the oven and bake for 40 minutes.

Meanwhile, pound the saffron threads and steep them in 2 tablespoons hot water.

When the palau is cooked, remove the top layer of rice and arrange it around the edge of a warm serving platter. Put the chicken pieces aside and place the bottom layer of rice in the centre of the platter. Top with the chicken pieces and garnish with the reserved orange rind shreds and almonds.

Sprinkle with the pistachio nuts, if using. Pour the saffron liquid over the rice border and serve immediately.



KABAB-E-MURGH

Roast chicken

SERVES: 5–6

1 chicken, about 1.5 kg (3 lb 5 oz) **1–2 garlic cloves, crushed**
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season **125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) melted ghee or vegetable oil**

1 onion, finely chopped

250 g (9 oz/1 cup) chopped, peeled tomatoes

For serving

2 Lawash

3 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and sliced

coriander (cilantro) leaves

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F/Gas 5).

Check the cavity of the chicken and clean further if necessary. Wipe the chicken inside and out with paper towels.

Season the cavity with salt and pepper. Rub crushed garlic and more salt and pepper over the skin. Truss if desired.

Brush the chicken all over with some of the ghee or oil and place in a roasting tin. Roast for 1½ hours, basting occasionally with more ghee. Turn to brown evenly.

Meanwhile, gently fry the onion in 1 tablespoon of the ghee until soft, add the tomatoes and season to taste. Simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes, then pass the mixture through a sieve or food mill.

Combine the tomato mixture with the last of the ghee and frequently brush it over the chicken during the last 30–45 minutes of roasting.

To serve, cut a Lawash into pieces, place around the edge of a platter and place the chicken in the middle. Garnish with the egg slices and the coriander leaves and top with a second Lawash. Carve or joint the chicken at the table.

* Note: If you have a rotisserie, place the chicken on the spit and cook, basting with the ghee, then later with the tomato sauce mixture.

KABAUB

Lamb kebabs with yoghurt marinade SERVES: 5–6

Traditionally this kabaub uses pieces of lean lamb alternated on skewers with similar-sized pieces of lamb tail fat. As this kind of lamb, the Awassi or fat-tailed sheep, is not available outside the Middle East, I have used lamb shoulder. The cubes will contain fat either running through the meat or on one side, to give the desired effect. The fat flavours and moistens the meat.

750 g (1 lb 10 oz) boneless lamb shoulder 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) yoghurt 2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 teaspoon salt

freshly ground black pepper, to taste For serving

5–6 Lawash or other flat bread sliced tomatoes sliced onions

lemon wedges

coriander (cilantro) sprigs Cut the lamb into 3 cm (1½ inch) cubes.

Combine the yoghurt, garlic, salt and a generous grind of pepper in a glass or ceramic bowl. Add the meat, stir to coat, then cover and refrigerate for 4–5 hours, or overnight.

When ready to cook the kabaubs, thread five or six pieces of lamb onto five or six skewers, leaving a little space between the cubes. Brush off the excess marinade — the meat should be coated with a thin film.

Cook the skewers over a glowing charcoal fire. If possible, remove the grill from the barbecue and rest the skewers across the sides of the barbecue, so that the meat is not directly on the grill. Turn the skewers frequently during cooking.

Push the meat off the skewer onto one half of each flat bread. Add some tomato and onion slices. Fold the bread over the top to keep the meat warm and serve immediately, garnished with lemon wedges and coriander.

AUSH

Noodles with pulses, meat and yoghurt SERVES: 6

Aush dough

300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour, plus extra as needed 1 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

80 g (3 oz/2 cups) finely chopped fresh spinach Pulse mixture

110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) yellow split peas 250 g (9 oz/1 cup) tinned red kidney beans, with liquid

2 teaspoons salt

Keema (meat sauce)

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) vegetable oil 1 onion, finely chopped 750 g (1 lb 10 oz) minced (ground) lamb or beef 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Chakah (yoghurt sauce) 375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) drained yoghurt

3 teaspoons dried mint, rubbed ¼–½ teaspoon hot chilli powder, to taste 3 tablespoons finely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves salt, to taste

To make the dough, sift the flour and salt into a bowl and add 165 ml (5½ fl oz/⅔ cup) cold water. Mix to a firm dough, adding more flour if necessary. Divide into two balls and wrap in plastic wrap. Rest for 30 minutes.

On a floured work surface, roll out each ball of dough very thinly. Cut into 5 mm (¼ inch) noodles, either while the dough is flat, or after rolling up each sheet of dough.

Place the noodles on a floured cloth, dust with flour and leave to dry for about 30 minutes.

To prepare the pulse mixture, wash the split peas well and place in a saucepan with 375 ml (12½ fl oz/1½ cups) cold water. Bring to the boil, then boil gently for 30 minutes, or until tender. Add the kidney beans and their liquid and keep warm.

In a large saucepan, bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil. Add the salt and oil. Put the noodles in gradually, stirring after each addition. Return to the boil and cook, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Add the spinach and cook for a further 5 minutes. Drain, then return to the pan.

Add the split pea mixture to the noodles. Toss lightly and keep hot, over low heat.

To make the Keema, heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until soft. Add the meat and stir over high heat until the juices evaporate and the meat browns lightly. Stir in the passata and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes, then remove the lid and let the moisture evaporate. The sauce should be oily.

Combine the Chakah ingredients, add to the noodle mixture and toss well; the mixture should be moist.

Place the noodle mixture in a deep dish and top with the Keema. Stir at the table and serve in deep plates.



KOFTA KABAUB SURKH SHUDA Fried ground lamb kebab SERVES: 6

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) boneless lamb stewing meat

2 onions, chopped

110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) yellow split peas

2 teaspoons salt

3 tablespoons chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves **1 garlic clove, chopped, optional** **½ teaspoon Garam Masala**

1 egg, beaten

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste **35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) wholemeal (whole-wheat) flour,**
approximately oil, for pan-frying

4 potatoes, each peeled and cut into 8 wedges For serving

2 Lawash, optional lemon or lime wedges

coriander (cilantro) leaves Cut the lamb into cubes and place in a saucepan with 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water. Add 1 chopped onion and bring slowly to the boil, skimming when necessary. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Rinse the split peas and add them to the pan with the salt. Cover and cook for a further 30 minutes, or until the lamb and split peas are tender and the water has been absorbed. Leave the lid off the pan and cook over medium heat for a few minutes to evaporate some of the moisture.

Allow to cool a little, then stir in the remaining chopped onion, and the coriander and the garlic, if using. Pass the mixture through a meat grinder using a fine screen, or process in a food processor using a steel blade.

Turn the mixture into a bowl and leave until cold. Mix in the garam masala, egg, and salt and pepper to taste. Add enough flour to make a manageable paste.

Using moistened hands, shape about 2 tablespoons of the paste at a time into sausage shapes about 10 cm (4 inches) long.

Heat enough oil to cover the base of a frying pan to a depth of 5 mm (¼ inch). Fry the kabaubs in batches until golden brown on all sides. Drain and keep hot.

While the kabaubs are cooking, deep-fry the potatoes in another pan until golden brown and cooked through. Drain.

To serve, arrange the kabaubs on one Lawash placed on a platter; garnish with lemon or lime wedges and coriander. Top with the second Lawash and arrange the potatoes on another platter.

If not using the Lawash, arrange the kabaubs, potatoes and garnishes on a platter and serve with another flat bread.

KHABLI PALAU

Spiced lamb pilaf

SERVES: 4–5

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) ghee, or 60 ml (2 fl oz/1/4 cup) vegetable oil

2 onions, chopped

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) boneless lamb, cut into 2 cm (3/4 inch) cubes

1/2 teaspoon Garam Masala

1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 1/2 tablespoons salt

40 g (1 1/2 oz/1/3 cup) slivered almonds

60 g (2 oz/1/4 cup) butter or ghee

2 carrots, cut into matchstick lengths

125 g (4 oz/1 cup) seedless raisins

2 teaspoons sugar

400 g (14 oz/2 cups) long-grain white rice

Heat half the ghee or oil in a deep, heavy-based saucepan.

Add the onion and fry over medium heat for 15 minutes, or until translucent and golden brown.

Remove and set aside.

Add the lamb to the pan with the remaining ghee and fry over high heat until browned, stirring often. Sprinkle with the spices and 1 teaspoon of the salt. Stir over heat for 1 minute, add 375 ml (12 1/2 fl oz/1 1/2 cups) water, then return the onion to the pan. Cover and simmer for 1 hour.

While the meat is cooking, lightly brown the almonds in a frying pan in the butter or ghee. Remove from the pan and set aside, leaving the fat in the pan.

Add the carrots to the frying pan and fry over medium heat until lightly coloured, stirring often. Add the raisins and continue to fry, stirring until the raisins become plump. Sprinkle with the sugar and set aside.

Wash the rice well and strain. In a saucepan, bring 1.5 litres (51 fl oz/6 cups) water to the boil with another 1 tablespoon of the salt. Add the rice, return to the boil, then boil for 6 minutes. Strain.

Remove the cooked lamb and about 125 ml (4 fl oz/ 1/2 cup) liquid from the saucepan. Stir the rice and the remaining 1 teaspoon of salt into the juices still remaining in the pan. Make three or four holes in the rice with the end of a wooden spoon. Place the lamb mixture over one half of the rice, and place the carrot and raisin mixture over the rest of the rice. Spoon the reserved meat juices all over the top.

Place two paper towels over the pan and cover tightly with a lid. Cook over medium heat for 5 minutes, then reduce the heat to low and cook for a further 25 minutes. Remove from the heat and keep covered for 5 minutes.

Pile the lamb pieces in the centre of a platter and top with the carrot and raisin mixture. Fluff up the rice grains with a fork and mound the rice around the edge of the dish. Sprinkle with the reserved browned almonds and serve.

SAMBOSAY GOSHTI

Fried meat triangles

MAKES: 40

Filling

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lean beef or lamb

1 teaspoon salt

60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) vegetable oil 1 small onion, finely chopped ½ teaspoon Garam Masala

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Pastry

300 g (10½ oz/2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour

1 teaspoon salt

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) butter or ghee

1 egg

oil, for deep-frying

Cut the meat into cubes and place in a saucepan with the salt and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water. Bring slowly to the boil, then simmer for 1–1½ hours, or until the meat is tender.

Lift the meat from the liquid, reserving the liquid. Allow to cool slightly, then chop finely, or pass through a meat grinder using a coarse screen.

Heat the oil in a frying pan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Add the meat, increase the heat and fry until lightly browned; add a little of the reserved cooking liquid to moisten. Stir in the garam masala and season lightly with salt and pepper. Remove from the heat and cool.

To make the pastry, sift the flour and salt into a bowl. Add the butter or ghee and lightly rub into the flour with your fingertips until well distributed. Lightly beat the egg, then add enough cold water to make up the liquid to 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup).

Pour the liquid into the flour mixture and mix to a soft dough. Cover with plastic wrap and leave to rest for 15 minutes.

Thinly roll out half the pastry, using the method described [Homemade fillo pastry](#). The circle should be about 50 cm (20 inches) in diameter.

Fold the pastry back on itself in 8 cm (3¼ inch) pleats, so that you finish with a strip of that width, and the

length of the circle's diameter. Press lightly with a rolling pin, then cut the strip in half for easier handling.

Roll each strip lengthways, so each is about 75 cm (30 inches) long and 9 cm (3½ inches) wide, then cut each into squares and stack. Repeat with the remaining pastry.

Working one at a time, place a generous teaspoon of filling in the centre of each square of pastry; moisten two adjacent edges with water and fold over to form a triangle. Press the edges to seal, then press with the edge of a thimble in crescents, or with the tines of a fork. Place the finished pastries on a tray.

Deep-fry three or four at a time in hot oil, turning to cook evenly. Fry until golden brown, then lift out and drain on paper towels. Serve hot.



AUSHAK

Boiled leek pastries with yoghurt and meat sauce SERVES: 6

It is popularly believed that Marco Polo introduced noodles to Italy from China. Some 50 years before his travels, Arabs and Indians were eating noodles, called rishta in Arabic (a name still used today and derived from the Persian word for 'thread'), and sevika in India. As Afghanistan was the natural land route from one area to the other, it's anybody's guess where rishta, sevika or **aush** originated.

All this preamble because the usual English description of aushak is leek 'ravioli' with yoghurt and meat sauce! With all respect to the Italians, to prevent confusion I have refrained from using Italian words. This recipe is of ancient origin, and without doubt Afghan. Only the tomato is a recent introduction and probably replaced tamarind or some such acid ingredient.

1 quantity Aush Dough

2 leeks (to make 405 g/14 oz/3 cups chopped) 1/4 teaspoon hot chilli powder 2 teaspoons salt

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

2–3 teaspoons dried mint

Keema (meat sauce)

125 ml (4 fl oz/1/2 cup) vegetable oil 1 large onion, finely chopped 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) lean minced (ground) lamb or beef 125 ml (4 fl oz/1/2 cup) tomato passata (puréed tomatoes) salt and freshly ground black pepper, to season Chakah (yoghurt sauce)

500 g (1 lb 2 oz/2 cups) drained yoghurt

3–4 garlic cloves, crushed

1 teaspoon salt

Make the dough as directed **aush**, wrap in plastic wrap and rest for 30 minutes.

Cut off and discard most of the green tops from the leeks. Halve them lengthways and rinse well to remove all traces of soil between the leaves. Remove the roots and dry the leeks with paper towels. Finely chop the leeks and measure in cups.

Combine the leek in a bowl with the chilli powder, 1 teaspoon of the salt and 1 tablespoon of the oil. If desired, the leek may be fried gently in oil until soft.

Divide the dough in two and roll out very thinly on a lightly floured work surface. Cut into 5 cm (2 inch) rounds or squares. Stack and cover them as the shapes are made; roll out the trimmings and cut to shape.

Working one at a time, place a teaspoon of the leek filling in the centre of the dough. Moisten the edge with water and fold over to make semi-circles; fold squares into triangles. Seal the edges by pressing with the edge of a thimble or the tines of a fork. Put each pastry on a cloth-lined tray and keep covered with another cloth.

To make the Keema, heat the oil in a saucepan and gently fry the onion until translucent. Increase the heat, add the meat and stir until crumbly. Cook until the juices evaporate and the meat browns. Reduce the heat and stir in the passata and 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes, then remove the lid and cook until the moisture evaporates and the mixture is oily. Keep hot.

Combine the Chakah ingredients in a bowl and set aside.

Bring 2 litres (68 fl oz/8 cups) water to the boil in a large saucepan. Add the remaining 1 teaspoon salt and 1 tablespoon oil. Drop in about 20 pastries and boil for 10 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon to a colander set over simmering water. Cover and keep warm while cooking the remaining pastries.

Spread half the Chakah on an oval platter. Top with the hot pastries and cover with the remaining Chakah. Rub the dried mint to a powder and sprinkle over the Chakah. Top with the hot Keema and serve immediately.



KECHEREE QUROOT-E-KOFTA

Rice and mung beans with meatball and yoghurt sauce SERVES: 6

**750 g (1 lb 10 oz) finely minced (ground) lamb 1 onion, grated
1 teaspoon ground coriander**

1 teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon hot chilli powder 1½ teaspoons salt

125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) vegetable oil, or 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) ghee 1 large onion, finely chopped 375 g (13 oz/1½ cups) chopped, peeled tomatoes Kecheree (rice and mung beans) 110 g (3¾ oz/½ cup) mung beans 330 g (11½ oz/1½ cups) short-grain white rice 125 g (4 oz/½ cup) ghee 2 onions, chopped

2 teaspoons salt

freshly ground black pepper, to season ½ teaspoon Garam Masala

1 teaspoon dried mint, rubbed For serving

60 g (2 oz/¼ cup) ghee or butter 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped Quroot

Combine the lamb with the grated onion, spices and salt. Shape into walnut-sized balls.

Heat the oil or ghee in a saucepan and gently fry the chopped onion until lightly browned. Add the tomatoes, 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water and some more salt to taste. Bring to the boil and add the meatballs, then cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Remove the lid and cook until most of the liquid has evaporated, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile, prepare the Kecheree. Wash the mung beans and rice separately; drain and set aside. Heat the oil or ghee in a heavy-based saucepan and gently fry the onion until lightly browned. Add 1 litre (34 fl oz/4 cups) water and bring to the boil, then stir in the mung beans. Return to the boil and simmer, covered, for 10 minutes.

Stir in the rice, salt, pepper, garam masala and mint. Bring back to the boil, then reduce the heat to low. Cover the pan tightly with a cloth and a lid and simmer gently for 30 minutes.

Mound the Kecheree onto a platter, hollowing the centre. Fill the hollow with some of the meatballs and sauce. Place the remaining meatballs in a bowl beside the platter.

To finish, heat the ghee or butter in a small saucepan and gently fry the garlic until lightly coloured. Put the Quroot in a bowl and pour the hot garlic mixture over it. Serve the Quroot immediately with the other dishes, so that it may be added to individual taste.

ABRAYSHAM KABAUB

Silk kebab

MAKES: ABOUT 30 PIECES

This fascinating sweet is actually a sweet omelette cooked in a most unusual way. Afghan cooks differ about how the silkenthread omelette should be prepared. I have given the method that works best for me — once you have the idea you might devise a simpler method.

This is regarded as one of the great delicacies of Afghan cooking, but the 'kebab' part of the name is rather confusing. Perhaps it is because the final pieces resemble kebab meats; personally I cannot see it.

Syrup

330 g (11½ oz/1½ cups) sugar

1 teaspoon lemon juice

¼ teaspoon saffron threads, optional

Omelette

8 eggs

pinch of salt

To finish

500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) vegetable oil

100 g (3½ oz) finely chopped pistachio nuts or walnuts

½ teaspoon ground cardamom

To make the syrup, dissolve the sugar in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/ 1 cup) water in a heavy-based saucepan over medium heat. Bring to the boil, add the lemon juice and saffron, if using, and boil for 10 minutes. Cool and strain into a 25 cm (10 inch) pie plate, then set aside.

To make the omelette, break the eggs into a flat-based dish about 20 cm (8 inches) in diameter; the size of the dish and the flat base are important. Add a pinch of salt and mix the eggs with a fork until the yolks and whites are thoroughly combined — but do not beat, as the eggs must not be foamy.

Heat the oil in an electric frying pan to 190°C (375°F), or in a 25 cm (10 inch) frying pan placed on a temperaturecontrolled hot plate or burner.

Have ready a long skewer, the plate of syrup, a baking tray and the nuts mixed with the cardamom. A bowl of

water and a cloth for drying your hands are also necessary.

Hold the dish with the eggs in one hand, next to and slightly above the pan of oil. Put a hand into the egg, palm down, so the egg covers the back of the hand. Lift out your hand, curling your fingers slightly inwards, then open out over the hot oil, fingers pointing down. Move your hand across the oiled surface so the egg falls in streams from your fingertips. Dip your hand in the egg again and make more strands across those already in the pan. Repeat three or four times, until about an eighth of the egg is used. There should be a closely meshed layer of egg strands about 20 cm (8 inches) across. Work quickly so the last lot of egg is added not long after the first lot.

Quickly rinse your hand and dry it. Slide the skewer under the bubbling omelette, lift it up and turn it over to lightly brown on the other side. The first side will be bubbly, the underside somewhat smoother. When the omelette is golden brown, lift it out with the skewer and drain over the pan.

Place the omelette flat in the syrup, spoon over the syrup and lift it out with a skewer onto a baking tray. Roll it up with the bubbly side inwards. The finished roll should be about 3 cm ($1\frac{1}{4}$ inches) in diameter. Sprinkle with nuts and set aside.

Repeat with the remaining egg, making seven or eight rolls in all. Although the depth of the egg reduces, you will become so adept that somehow you will get it into the pan in fine strands.

When cool, cut the rolls into 4–5 cm (1½–2 inch) pieces and serve. These keep well in a sealed container in a cool place.

HALWAU-E AURD-E SUJEE

Semolina sweetmeat

SERVES: 6–8

This halwau is very similar in preparation to a Greek halva I have been making for years. The ghee, cardamom and rosewater give it a typically Oriental flavour.

220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar 185 g (6½ oz/¾ cup) ghee

125 g (4 oz/1 cup) semolina (farina) 35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) pistachio nuts 30 g (1 oz/¼ cup) slivered almonds ½–1 teaspoon ground cardamom 1–2 teaspoons rosewater

additional pistachio nuts or almonds, to decorate Combine the sugar and 500 ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) water in a saucepan. Stir occasionally over medium heat until the sugar has dissolved. Bring to the boil, then boil briskly for 5 minutes without stirring. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Meanwhile, heat the ghee in a deep, heavy-based saucepan. Add the semolina and stir over medium heat for 5 minutes, without allowing the semolina to colour.

Pour the hot syrup into the semolina, stirring constantly. When smoothly combined, reduce the heat a little and leave to cook, uncovered, until the liquid has been absorbed. The mixture should be thick, but still moist at this stage. Stir in the nuts, and the cardamom and rosewater to taste.

Cover the pan with a cloth or two paper towels, put the lid on tightly and leave over low heat for 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and leave the pan undisturbed for 10 minutes.

Spread the halwau on a flat, lightly oiled platter and decorate it with nuts. Serve warm or cold, cutting pieces into diamond shapes or squares (see for [cutting techniques](#)).



FIRNEE

Almond and cardamom cream pudding SERVES: 6–8

750 ml (25 fl oz/3 cups) milk **pinch of salt**

75 g (2½ oz/⅓ cup) sugar

60 g (2 oz/½ cup) cornflour (cornstarch) **80 g (3 oz/½ cup) slivered almonds, or chopped blanched almonds** **¼ teaspoon saffron threads, pounded** **¼–½ teaspoon ground cardamom**

35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) finely chopped pistachio nuts **Pour all but 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) of the milk into a heavy-based saucepan and add the salt and sugar. Heat gently, stirring to dissolve the sugar.**

Blend the cornflour with the reserved milk and 60 ml (2 fl oz/¼ cup) cold water. Pour the mixture into the warm milk, stirring constantly. Add the almonds and keep stirring until the mixture thickens and bubbles — use a whisk if the mixture becomes lumpy.

Add the pounded saffron, and cardamom to taste. Cook over low heat for 5 minutes, letting the pudding simmer very gently, and stirring occasionally.

Pour into six or eight individual dishes. Sprinkle the pistachios around the edge of each dish.

✿ Note: To serve firnee in the traditional manner, the pudding should be poured into two deep plates, decorated with pistachios, cut into quarters and served in wedges.

GOSH FEEL

Elephant ear pastries MAKES: ABOUT 40

2 eggs

**2 teaspoons caster (superfine) sugar ¼ teaspoon salt
125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) milk**

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

½ teaspoon ground cardamom 375 g (13 oz/2½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour, plus 35 g (1¼ oz/¼ cup) for kneading oil, for deep-frying

To finish

**125 g (4 oz/1 cup) icing (confectioners') sugar ½ teaspoon ground cardamom, optional 130 g (4½ oz/1 cup) finely chopped blanched pistachio nuts, or 55 g (2 oz/½ cup) finely chopped walnuts
Beat the eggs until frothy, then beat in the sugar and salt. Stir in the milk, oil and cardamom. Sift the flour, add half to the egg mixture and mix in with a wooden spoon. Gradually stir in the remaining flour, holding back about 75 g (2½ oz/½ cup).**

Turn out onto a floured work surface and dust with some of the reserved flour. Knead for 10 minutes, until smooth and glossy, using more flour as required; the dough will still be slightly sticky. Cover with plastic wrap and rest for 2 hours.

Take a piece of dough about the size of a large hazelnut and roll out on a floured surface to a circle about 8–10 cm (3¼–4 inches) in diameter. Gather up the dough on one side and pinch, forming a shape resembling an elephant ear. Place on a cloth and cover. Repeat with the remaining dough.

Deep-fry one at a time in oil heated to 190°C (375°F), turning to cook evenly. Fry until golden; do not over-brown. As the dough is rather elastic, the pastry tends to contract with handling, so just before dropping each pastry into the hot oil, pull it out lightly with your fingers to enlarge.

Drain the pastries on paper towels.

To finish, sift the icing sugar with the cardamom, if using, and dust the pastries with the mixture. Sprinkle with the nuts and serve warm or cold. Store in a sealed container.

✿ Note: For an alternative topping, make a syrup using 220 g (8 oz/1 cup) sugar and 125 ml (4 fl oz/½ cup) water. Bring to the boil when the sugar has dissolved and boil for 5 minutes. Drizzle the syrup onto warm pastries and sprinkle with cardamom and nuts.



SAMBOSAY SHEEREN

Fried sweet pastries MAKES: 40

**1 quantity Sambosay Goshti pastry 60 g (2 oz/½ cup) icing (confectioners') sugar 55 g (2 oz/½ cup)
ground pistachio nuts, optional oil, for deep-frying Filling**

115 g (4 oz/1 cup) ground walnuts 160 g (5½ oz/1 cup) chopped seedless raisins Make the pastry as directed, up to the point of filling. Combine the icing sugar and pistachio nuts and set aside.

To make the filling, combine the walnuts and raisins to form a coarse paste.

Working one at a time, place a generous teaspoon of filling in the centre of the pastry squares. Moisten two adjacent edges and fold the pastries diagonally to form a triangle. Press the edges to seal, then press with a thimble in crescents, or with the tines of a fork. Place the finished pastries on a tray.

Deep-fry three or four pastries at a time in hot oil, turning to brown evenly. Cook until golden brown, then lift out and drain on paper towels.

Sprinkle the warm pastries with the icing sugar and nut mixture and serve warm or cold. Store the remaining pastries in a sealed container.

ALLSPICE

Botanical name: *Pimenta officinalis*

Family name: Myrtaceae

Arabic: bhar hub wa na'im, bahar

Turkish: yeni bahar

Although it is a spice from the New World, allspice has been adopted in Middle Eastern cooking for its similarity to the combined flavours of clove, cinnamon and nutmeg. Commonly referred to as bahar.

BAHAR

See [Allspice](#).

BAHARAT

A mixture of spices used in Gulf Arabic and Iraqi cooking, it is a combination of cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, cumin, coriander and pepper, with paprika added for colour.

BAKALIAROS

Dried salt cod. A favourite in Greece and Cyprus. Requires soaking for several hours, changing the water often. It is usually par-boiled, coated with batter and fried, with garlic sauce an essential accompaniment. Also used in stews or rissoles.

BAY LEAF

Botanical name: *Laurus nobilis*

Family name: Lauraceae

Arabic: warak al gar

Greek: thaphne

Turkish: dafne yapregi

Used in Greek, Turkish and Cypriot cooking as a flavouring herb in meat stews, and in marinades for lamb and fish. Pieces of bay leaves are frequently placed on skewers between food pieces. Occasionally used in Arabic cooking.

BEANS, DRIED

See individual entries under [Black-eyed beans](#), Broad beans and Mung beans. Only the lesser known dried beans are detailed.

BLACK-EYED BEANS

Botanical name: *Vigna unguiculata*

Family name: Leguminosae

Arabic: lubyi msallat

Greek: fassoulia mavromatica

Greek Cypriot: louvi mavromati

The black-eyed bean is a variety of the cowpea, and native to Central Africa. It should not be confused with the dried bean of *Vigna sesquipedalis*, which, when immature, is the yard-long asparagus or snake bean so popular in Mediterranean countries. Black-eyed beans have a pleasant, slightly sweet flavour and cook more quickly than other dried beans. Though they discolour the liquid in which they are cooked, I prefer these beans to any other for making fassoulatha (bean soup).

BROAD BEANS

(FAVA BEANS)

Botanical name: *Vicia faba*

Family name: Leguminosae

Arabic: ful nabed

Greek: koukia

Iranian: bhagala

Turkish: fava

Used fresh in Greek, Cypriot, Turkish and Arabic cooking. When very young, the whole bean is used — topped, tailed and strings removed. Mature beans are shelled and used in most countries of the region. They are very good when cooked with globe artichoke hearts. In Iranian cooking the skin is removed from the fresh, shelled beans. Frozen broad beans are a good year-round standby and are easily skinned.

Dried broad beans vary in colour from olive green to a purplish hue. The green beans are usually new season's beans and take less soaking and cooking than the darker beans. Used in Egyptian and Arabic cooking for ful nabed, tameya and falafel.

See for instructions on soaking and [skinning](#). Sometimes available ready skinned; when skinned, the beans are white.

BROAD BEANS, SMALL

Botanical name: *Vicia faba* var. *minor*

Family name: Leguminosae

Arabic: ful

Greek: fava

Turkish: bakla

Also called Egyptian brown beans, tick, horse, fava and ful beans, these are only used dried. They are essential for the Egyptian ful medamis, a dish popular throughout most of the region, though the name varies occasionally. They range in colour from beige to purple and require soaking and long, slow cooking. Native to the Mediterranean region, their use as a food goes back to pre-history.

BURGHUL

Arabic: burghul, bulkar

Greek: pourgouri

Turkish: bulgar

Burghul is hulled wheat, steamed until partly cooked, then dried and ground. It is available in fine and coarse grades. Recipes specify which grade to use. It has a nut-like flavour, making it a popular food for those following natural food diets. It is widely used in Lebanon, Syria and neighbouring countries. You will find it in Middle Eastern, Greek and Armenian grocers, speciality food stores and health food shops.

CAPSICUM

Botanical name: *Capsicum* spp.

Family name: Solanaceae

Arabic: felfel, felfel bard

Armenian: ganantch biber

Greek: piperies

Iranian: felfel sabz

Also known as bell peppers, sweet peppers and pimento, these green summer vegetables ripen to a deep red, with a change in flavour when ripe. The spice paprika is made from the ripe capsicum. Though native to tropical America, they are very popular throughout the Middle East.

CARDAMOM

Botanical name: *Elettaria cardamomum*

Family name: Zingiberaceae

Afghan: hale

Arabic: hell, hail

Iranian: hell

An expensive spice, but necessary to Gulf Arabic, Iranian and Afghan cooking. Available in pods, as seeds or ground. Where ground cardamom is required, a better flavour is obtained with freshly ground seeds, particularly for sweet recipes. It is also a necessary spice for Arabic coffee.

CAROB

Botanical name: *Ceratonia siliqua*

Family name: Leguminosae

Arabic: kharrub

An evergreen tree native to the Mediterranean region, yielding long fleshy pods. The dried pods are sold in the Middle East as a snack food; the slightly sweet, chocolate flavour appeals, particularly to children. In carob, the Western natural food advocates have found a substitute for chocolate — one with far less fat.

See also [Dibs](#).

CASSIA

Botanical name: *Cinnamomum cassia*

Family name: Lauraceae

Arabic: darseen, kerfee

Greek: kanella

Also known as Chinese cassia, this spice is considered an inferior form of cinnamon. The thick pieces of bark are widely used in Arabic and Greek cooking in savoury dishes and sweet syrups, and although cinnamon is specified in recipes, either cassia or cinnamon may be used.

CHESTNUTS

Botanical name: *Castanea sativa*

Family name: Fagaceae

Arabic: kestani, abu / arwe

Greek: kastana

Turkish: kestane

Native to Mediterranean regions, chestnuts have been used from ancient times. The chestnut-sellers with their charcoal braziers ply their trade in cities around the Mediterranean, but are a less frequent sight today, as crops are dwindling due to fungus diseases affecting the trees. Chestnuts are used in stuffings for poultry; in Greece chestnut purée is a favourite dessert, and the zaharoplasti (sweet-maker) excels in preparing glacé chestnuts.

To prepare chestnuts for cooking, cut through the shell at each end, cover with water and boil for 10 minutes. Remove a few at a time and peel off the shell and inner covering on the nut. To roast, cut a cross on one side of the shell, then cook in a moderate oven (180°C/350°F) for 10–15 minutes. Peel while hot.

CHICKPEAS, GARBANZO BEANS

Botanical name: *Cicer arietinum*

Family name: Leguminosae

Arabic: hummus

Armenian: siser-noghud

Greek: revithia

Iranian: nakhod

Turkish: nohut

Used as a food from ancient times in Egypt and Greece, chickpeas are popular throughout the region. They must be soaked before cooking, and some recipes require the removal of the [skins](#). Armenian food stores sometimes stock ready-skinned chickpeas.

They are also sold roasted as a snack food.

CHILLI

Botanical name: *Capsicum frutescens*

Family name: Solanaceae

Afghan: murgh

Arabic: felfel, bisbas

The long, slender green or red hot chilli is favoured in Gulf and Yemeni cooking. Frequently the whole pod is used, including the seeds, but as the seeds are very hot indeed it is better to remove them. Take care when handling chillies, keeping fingers away from the mouth and eyes. Dried chillies or ground hot chilli pepper may be substituted.

Remove the seeds from dried chillies and soak the chillies in hot water for 5 minutes before using.

Use ground hot chilli or chilli pepper cautiously, adding a small amount at a time, and tasting until the desired heat is obtained.

CINNAMON

Botanical name: *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*

Family name: Lauraceae

Afghan: dolchini

Arabic: darseen, kerfee

Armenian: dartchin

Greek: kanella

Iranian: derchin

Turkish: tarcin

A popular spice for both savoury and sweet dishes; either ground cinnamon or pieces of bark are used. It is an essential ingredient in the baharat of the Gulf States and Iraq, and the garam masala of Afghanistan and India. Fine sheets of the inner layer of the cinnamon bark are dried and interleaved to form sticks or quills. In recipes, a small piece of bark refers to a stick about 4 cm (1½ inches) long, while a large piece is twice as long; however, there is no need to be very accurate in measuring.

CLOVES

Botanical name: *Syzygium aromaticum* or *Eugenia aromatica*

Family name: Myrtaceae

Afghan: kala

Arabic: habahan, gharanful-mesmar

Greek: garifala

Iranian: nebos

Turkish: karinfil

The dried flowerbud of an evergreen tree native to tropical Asia is used in both savoury and sweet dishes. A clove is sometimes added to simmering chicken to remove unwanted flavours, perhaps necessary for range-fed chickens or boiling fowls, but not for specially raised birds.

Cloves are claimed to sweeten the breath after eating garlic. In the Gulf States they are infused for a spicy tea.

CORIANDER (CILANTRO)

Botanical name: *Coriandrum sativum*

Family name: Umbelliferae

Afghan: gashneez

Arabic: kazbarah

Greek Cypriot: koliandros

Iranian: geshniez

Turkish: kis nis

Both the green leaves and seeds of this parsley relative are widely used in the Middle East. The flavour of the leaves is an acquired taste; the name of this pungent herb comes from the Greek koris, meaning 'bug', indicative of its aroma. However, it is also similar to the aroma of dried orange peel, a more acceptable comparison. Known as

cilantro in the US, it is used in the cooking of Afghanistan, Iran, the Gulf States, Yemen and Cyprus.

Ground coriander seeds are also widely used and feature in the baharat of the Gulf States and Iraq. The crushed seeds are also an essential ingredient in the afelias of Cyprus.

CORNFLOUR

Also called cornstarch: a white starch used for thickening milk puddings, and essential in Turkish delight. Not to be confused with yellow cornflour.

CRESS

Botanical name: *Arabis caucasica*

Family name: Cruciferae

Arabic: barbeen

Iranian: shahat

A green herb much used in Iran, Iraq and the Gulf States as a salad herb. In Iran it is also used for the pot. Very similar to watercress in appearance and flavour, though the leaves are larger and more closely bunched on the stems.

CUMIN

Botanical name: *Cuminum cyminum*

Family name: Umbelliferae

Afghan: zeera

Arabic: kamoon

Armenian: kimion

Greek: kimino

Iranian: zire

Turkish: cemen

Native to Egypt, the seeds have been widely used as a spice from ancient times in Egyptian and Eastern Mediterranean cooking. In Cyprus a seed called artisha is used in tavas, and though similar in appearance and flavour to cumin, it is claimed to be different by the Cypriots and is rarely available outside Cyprus. Some herbs and spices do vary in flavour when grown in different climates and soils; perhaps this can explain the difference.

CUMIN, BLACK

Botanical name: *Nigella sativa*

Family name: Ranunculaceae

Afghan: kala zeera

Arabic: habet el sauda

Armenian: shoushma

Greek: mavrokoko

This small black aromatic seed bears no relationship to cumin. It is used on sweet yeast breads and cakes in Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria and Armenia; for flavouring haloumi cheese in Lebanon; and is one of the spices in the garam masala of Afghanistan.

DIBS

A syrup made from the carob pod, which has a chocolate flavour. Popular in Lebanon and Syria, where it is mixed with tahini as a spread for bread.

DIBS ROMAN

Pomegranate molasses or syrup, used in Lebanese and Syrian cooking. See [Pomegranate](#).

DILL

Botanical name: *Anethum graveolens*

Family name: Umbelliferae

Afghan: shabit

Armenian: samit

Greek: anitho

Turkish: dereotu

Native to the Mediterranean region, dill was much favoured as a medicinal herb in ancient times. The feathery leaves are blue-green in colour and give a distinctive, slightly aniseed flavour to meat, vegetable and rice dishes and pickles. An excellent herb for globe artichokes. Fennel may be substituted.

DRIED LIMES

Arabic: loomi, noomi, noomi besra

Iranian: limu omani

Also called black limes, these are available in the Gulf States, either light grey-brown in colour or almost black. In Iran and Iraq, the lighter limes are used. They come from Oman and also from Thailand, and are dried on the

trees. As they are not readily available to the Westerner, directions are given to make your own [Dukkous Al-Badinjan](#).

FENUGREEK

Botanical name: Trigonella foenum-graecum

Family name: Leguminosae

Arabic: hulba, hilbeh

Armenian: chaiman

Iranian: shambalileh

Though indigenous to the Eastern Mediterranean countries, the fawn, three-sided seed is used in Yemeni cooking for a potent paste called hulba or hilbeh, according to the dialect of the region; it is also a principal ingredient for pastourma (dried, spiced beef). The seeds have a slightly bitter flavour and are an essential ingredient in Indian curry blends.

The small, oval leaves are used in Iran in dishes such as sabzi khordan, kukuye sabzi and khoresh gormeh sabzi. Though some recipes do not include the herb because it is not readily available, add a small quantity if you have it on hand.

FETA

Greek in origin, feta is a soft, crumbly, white cheese made from goat's or ewe's milk. Turkey's beyaz peynir and Iran's panir are both feta-style cheeses, and as these are not exported, feta is the only substitute.

Feta is made in many other countries, and the quality varies according to the milk used. Greek, Bulgarian and Romanian fetas are the best for serving as appetisers or in salads. Firmer fetas are made from cow's milk; usually less expensive, these are suitable for cooking purposes.

To keep feta for a considerable time, take a wide-necked jar with you when purchasing so that the cheese may be covered with the whey in which it is packed. Alternatively, reserve the whey when making [mizithra](#), then boil it, leave to cool and pour over the feta. Seal the container and store in the refrigerator.

FLOUR

The plain flour used in these recipes is known in North America as all-purpose flour; wholemeal flour is known as whole-wheat or wheatmeal flour.

Unbleached plain (all-purpose) flour can be used in recipes if preferred, especially for bread. See also the '[Bread](#)' section.

FUL, FUL MEDAMIS

See [Broad beans, small](#).

GARBANZO BEANS

See [Chickpeas, garbanzo beans](#).

GARLIC

Botanical name: Allium sativum

Family name: Liliaceae

Afghan: seer

Arabic: tum

Armenian: sekhdor

Greek: skortho

Iranian: sir

Turkish: sarimsak

Known and used from ancient times for the medicinal properties attributed to it, garlic is essential to Middle Eastern dishes and should not be omitted from recipes using it. Remember that the flavour of garlic becomes more pronounced if browned, so avoid browning if a strong flavour is not desired. Raw garlic, finely chopped, is often mixed through boiled greens. Any recipe using raw garlic will leave you with unpleasant breath. Chewing on a clove or drinking milk are favourite antidotes.

GARLIC CHIVES

Botanical name: Allium tuberosum

Family name: Liliaceae

Iranian: tareh

This flat-bladed green herb is used extensively in Iranian cooking and has a garlic-like flavour. If unavailable, it may be omitted from the ingredients, or add onion-flavoured chives and half a crushed garlic clove.

GHEE

Afghan: roghan

Arabic: samneh

Iranian: roghani kare

Ghee is pure butter fat. Because of the absence of milk solids, ghee can be heated to high temperatures without burning, and imparts a special fragrance to foods. When ghee is heated a degree of oxidation occurs, evident in the white colour of the ghee when it solidifies. Food laws in some countries are not as stringent as in others, and ghee often includes other fats or vegetable oils; for this reason clarified butter is given as the alternative in recipes where the flavour of ghee is necessary.

HALOUMI

This salty, sheep's milk cheese is made in Cyprus and Lebanon, and matured in whey. It is string-like in texture, as it is kneaded after the drained curd is boiled in the whey. Cyprus haloumi is flavoured with dried mint; the Lebanese haloumi uses black cumin. The cheese can be made in the home using cow's milk; see [Haloumi](#) for details.

HALVA

Halva, with its many variations in spelling, generally means sweet, and is frequently a thickened pudding or sweetmeat. The confection called halva is made from ground raw sesame seeds; as its preparation requires cooking under pressure and the skill of a professional confectioner, it is not possible to duplicate the process in the home. Halva often contains almonds or pistachio nuts. It is a delicious confection, and though high in calories, it has good nutritive value and is highly recommended if you wish to gain weight.

KASSERI

A Greek sheep or goat's milk cheese, creamy white, firm textured with a few very small holes. It is a good table cheese, is excellent fried in butter or olive oil and served with a squeeze of lemon juice, and is frequently used diced on top of lamb stews. Kaser, a Turkish cheese, and kashkaval, a Romanian cheese, may be used instead.

KATAIFI

Arabic: konafa, k'nafi

Greek: kataifi

Turkish: kadaif

A shredded pastry which looks rather like slightly soft vermicelli noodles. A dough, somewhat similar to fillo dough, is forced through a finely perforated metal plate. The fine pastry strands are dropped onto a solid, heated metal plate, cooked briefly, then scooped off while still pliable. Kataifi is usually packaged in plastic and keeps well in the refrigerator or freezer, providing the package is sealed, and overwrapped if stored in the freezer. It has a longer storage life than fillo pastry. Bring it to room temperature, in its package, before attempting to loosen the strands.

It is available from Greek and Middle Eastern food stores and pastry shops.

KEFALOTIRI

A popular Greek grating cheese, whose name literally means 'head cheese'. The Italian parmesan cheese may be substituted.

KISHK

Burghul fermented with milk and yoghurt, in a very lengthy process. After fermentation it is salted, spread on a cloth to dry, then ground to a fine powder and stored for winter use. Cooked with water, kishk becomes a nourishing breakfast; it is also added to soups for extra nourishment. It is used in Lebanon and Syria, and to a lesser extent in Iran, where it is called kashk. It is available from Middle Eastern food stores.

LOOMI

See [Dried limes](#).

MAHLAB

Greek: mahlepi

A Syrian spice from the kernel of the black cherry stone, with a sweet spicy fragrance. The spice is always sold whole and is a small, husked seed, pale brown in colour and a little smaller than a coriander seed. Pound using a mortar and pestle before using to flavour sweet yeast breads.

MASTICHA

Botanical name: Pistacia lentiscus

Family name: Anacardiaceae

Arabic: mistki

Greek: masticha

Mastic is a resin from a small evergreen tree, with most of the world's supply coming from the Greek island of Chios. From ancient times it has been used as a chewing gum. The powdered resin is used to flavour sweet yeast breads and a Greek liqueur of the same name. In Egypt, a small piece of masticha is often added to boiling chicken to remove unwanted flavours.

MELOKHIA

Botanical name: *Corchorus olitorius*

Family name: Tiliaceae

This is a secondary source of jute grown in Egypt and India. In Egypt the younger shoots are harvested and the oval leaves, 4–8 cm (1½–3¼ inches) long, are stripped from the long stalks and used as a pot herb for a soup of the same name. The herb has the viscous properties of okra, and it is favoured more for this than for its flavour. Melokhia sometimes makes its appearance in Western city markets during late spring and summer. Strip the leaves from the stalks, wash well, then drain and shred very finely, using about 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) leaves in place of the 1½ cups dried leaves given in the recipe [Besara](#). Dried melokhia is available at Greek and Middle Eastern food stores.

MINT

Botanical name: *Mentha spicata* or *M. viridis*

Family name: Labiateae

Afghan: nauna

Arabic: na'na

Armenian: ananoukh

Greek: thiosmos

Iranian: nano

Turkish: name

The mint most favoured throughout the region is spearmint, both in fresh and dried form. Used in meat and vegetable dishes, and fragrant when fried in butter or ghee for or a final touch to yoghurt, soups and salads, mint gives Middle Eastern cooking a distinct and appealing flavour. Dried mint is readily available at any store carrying a wide range of dried herbs.

MUNG BEANS

Botanical name: *Vigna radiata*

Family name: Leguminosae

Afghan: maush

Also known as green beans, golden gram or green gram, mung beans have been cultivated in Asia for centuries. While mainly used for bean sprouts or ground to a flour for Asian sweets, they are used whole in Afghan cooking. Mung beans do not require pre-soaking as they cook quickly.

NOOMI

See [Dried limes](#).

NUTMEG

Botanical name: *Myristica fragrans*

Family name: Myristicaceae

Arabic: josat al teeb

Greek: mostokaritho

Turkish: kucuk hindistancevizi

The hard inner kernel of the fruit of a tropical tree grown in the West Indies, Sri Lanka and South-East Asian countries. An essential ingredient in the baharat of the Gulf States. In Greek cooking, a small quantity of ground nutmeg is added to cream and meat sauces and spinach pie fillings.

OKRA

Botanical name: *Abelmoschus esculentus* or *Hibiscus esculentus*

Family name: Malvaceae

Arabic: bamia

Greek: bamye

Turkish: bamya

Also called ladies' fingers and gumbo. Native to Africa, okra is an angular pod, tapering to a point. Young okra are preferred. The vegetable has viscous properties, and while it is used for these properties in Western cooking, the preparation of the vegetable in the Middle East, particularly in Greece, is so devised that these properties are lessened ([preparation](#)). If you like the glutinous texture, do not use the vinegar treatment given, though a brief blanching will firm the vegetable.

Okra is also available dried, tinned and frozen.

OLIVES

Botanical name: *Olea europaea*

Family name: Oleaceae

Arabic: zaytun

Greek: elies

Turkish: zeytin

Native to Eastern Mediterranean regions, the olive has been enjoyed as a fruit and for its oil from ancient times. The fresh fruit is bitter and must be treated to make it edible. Though recommended methods use a lye solution initially, home-cured olives are prepared in other ways. Ripe olives are dry-salted in wicker baskets and left for several days until the bitter juices have run out, then placed in wooden casks to mature, giving olives a wrinkled appearance. Another method for both ripe and green olives requires water-soaking for 3–7 days (the longer period for green olives), with water changed daily; they are then left in brine to mature. Splitting or cracking the fruit hastens curing.

Oil is extracted by pressing, the first pressing yielding the finest oil, which is greenish in colour. The pulp is treated and subsequent pressings give oil of gradually lessening quality. Better-quality oils keep the longest.

If you find high-quality oil strong in flavour, blend a small amount at a time with a bland salad oil.

ORANGE FLOWER WATER

Arabic: ma'ez zahr

Greek: neroli

Turkish: portakal cicegi suyu

A fragrant liquid distilled from orange blossoms, used to flavour syrups and pastries. Available at Middle Eastern and Greek food stores. Chemists (pharmacies or drug stores) sell a concentrated essence; if this is all you can obtain, use in drops rather than the teaspoon or tablespoon measures given.

ORZO

Flat, oval noodles with a shape similar to rice grains. Used in soups or for yiouvetsi.

PARSLEY

Botanical name: *Petroselinum crispum neapolitanum*

Family name: Umbelliferae

Arabic: bakdounis

Armenian: azadkegh

Greek: maidano

Iranian: jafari

Turkish: maydanoz

Only the flat-leaf parsley is used in the region, being regarded as more flavoursome than its curly-leaved cousin. Where small quantities are given in recipes, use the curly-leaf variety if that is all you have, adding some finely chopped stalks for more flavour. For dishes such as tabbouleh, and Iranian recipes using large quantities of herbs, the flat-leaf variety is essential. It is now very widely available, and is easily grown from seed.

PASTOURMA

Armenian: basderma, arboukht

Greek: pastourma

Turkish: pastirma

Dried, highly spiced beef popular in Turkey, Greece and Armenia. Pastourma is the most widely used term, as it is generally available at Greek food stores. Fenugreek, garlic, paprika, black pepper and chilli pepper are the main ingredients used in the thick, spicy coating. Slice it very thinly and eat with bread, or fry in butter and serve with fried eggs.

PEPPERS, SWEET

See [Capsicum](#).

PINE NUTS

Botanical name: *Pinus pinea*

Family name: Pinaceae

Arabic: snoober

Greek: koukounaria

Turkish: cam sistigi

Also called pignolia nuts, these are the kernels from the cones of the stone or umbrella pine, native to the Mediterranean region. Pine nuts are evenly oval and slender. There is another nut sold as pine nuts; it is tearshaped, and is actually the pinon (pronounced pi'nyon) nut from pines native to north-west America. Pinon nuts are less expensive.

POMEGRANATE

Botanical name: *Punica granatum*

Family name: Punicaceae

Arabic: roman

Iranian: anar

A fruit known from ancient times and native to southwestern Asia. The fruit will keep for months in a cool, dry place if picked before full maturity. It is much used in the cooking of Iran, where its sour juice is highly favoured. As some varieties are not very sour, the addition of lime or lemon juice may be necessary. In Lebanon and Syria the juice is used in cooking, and the colourful seeds are a popular garnish.

To juice the fruit, wrap a handful of seeds at a time in some muslin (cheesecloth) and squeeze the juice into a bowl. Freeze in ice-cube trays, then pack the frozen cubes in plastic bags and store in the freezer. The seeds also freeze well if required as a garnish. If fresh pomegranate juice is not available, use pomegranate molasses or syrup (see [Dibs roman](#)), available from Middle Eastern food stores.

Use 3–4 teaspoons [dibs roman](#) in 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) water for 250 ml (8½ fl oz/1 cup) pomegranate juice.

The syrup grenadine is made from pomegranates, but cannot be used in savoury dishes.

PURSLANE, PURSLEY

Botanical name: *Portulaca oleracea*

Family name: Portulacaceae

Arabic: ba'le, bakli, farfhin

Armenian: perper

Greek: glystiritha

A wild green with fleshy leaves, popular as a salad ingredient for the fattoush of Syria and Lebanon. In Armenian cookery it is added to yoghurt with cucumber for a refreshing salad; in Greece and Cyprus it is used in raw vegetable salads. Pick the young leaves and tender leafy tips from the reddish-coloured stalks.

RIGANI

Botanical name: *Origanum vulgare*

Family name: Labiateae

A pungent Greek herb and an essential flavouring for many Greek lamb dishes. It is wild marjoram, made that little more pungent because of the hot, dry climate. Picked when the flowers are in bud, the herb is dried before use. Though oregano grown elsewhere, picked at the bud stage and dried, is a reasonable substitute, it lacks the special, pleasantly pungent flavour of that grown in Greece. Available from Greek food stores, either in dried bunches or stripped from the stalks.

ROSEMARY

Botanical name: *Rosmarinus officinalis*

Family name: Labiateae

Greek: thendrolivano

Turkish: biberiye

Widely used in ancient times, being regarded as beneficial to the head, in ways ranging from curing headaches to aiding the memory. Occasionally used in Greek, Turkish and Cypriot cooking, in lamb or fish dishes.

ROSEWATER

Arabic: ma'el ward

Iranian: golab

Turkish: gul suyu

Distilled from fragrant rose petals, rosewater is used for both savoury and sweet dishes. As the strength varies according to the quality, when using a new brand add it cautiously and taste to judge how much is required. Price is usually indicative of quality, with the more expensive brands being stronger. Rosewater essence is a concentrate available from chemists (pharmacists or drug stores); it should be used in drops rather than spoon measures. Rosewater is available from Middle Eastern and Greek food stores.

SAFFRON

Botanical name: *Crocus sativus*

Family name: Iridaceae

Afghan: zaffaron

Arabic: zaffaran

Iranian: zaffaron

When it takes the stamens of almost a quarter of a million blooms to produce 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) of saffron, is it any wonder that saffron is the world's most expensive spice? The use of saffron originated in Asia Minor in ancient times. Buy a reliable brand, as there are cheaper versions sold that are not true saffron. Pound the saffron threads using a mortar and pestle and soak it in the specified liquid to bring out the fragrance and colour.

SALEP

Arabic: sahlab

Greek: salepi

Iranian: neshasteh

Turkish: salep

A fawn-coloured powder made from the dried tubers of various species of Orchis. It has a gelatinous quality, similar to cornflour (cornstarch) or arrowroot. In Greece and Turkey it is made into a hot beverage with milk and sugar (1 teaspoon salep to 1 cup cold milk; stir and heat until boiling), served with a dusting of cinnamon.

In Lebanon and Syria it is the thickener for the custard base for buza (ice cream). The falooda of Iran is a cream pudding thickened with salep, chilled and served with fruit syrup and crushed ice.

SESAME SEEDS

Botanical name: *Sesamum indicum* or *S. orientate*

Family name: Pedaliaceae

Arabic: simsum

Armenian: sousma

Greek: sousame

Turkish: susam

Pale cream seeds of a plant widely grown in tropical regions. Sesame seeds are oily and highly nutritious and used since ancient times in the Middle East. The seeds are used on breads and cookies; for pastelli, a confection made with honey; for another confection called halva; and for tahini (see [Glossary](#) entries for the last two).

SPRING ONIONS

Botanical name: *Allium cepa*

Family name: Liliaceae

Also known as scallions and green onions, these are the long green shoots of an immature onion. Unless otherwise specified in the recipe, use some of the tender green tops as well as the white section.

SUMAC

The dried, crushed red berries of a species of sumach tree. It has a pleasant sour taste, rather lemony in flavour. As many trees of related species are poisonous, I have deliberately omitted the botanical name – it is advisable that sumac be purchased at Middle Eastern and Armenian food stores.

SUMAC

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TAHINI

Also called tahina in some countries, this oily paste is made from toasted sesame seeds. The flavour of different brands varies, so it might be necessary to try various tahinis to find one to your liking. Smooth peanut butter is

frequently given as a substitute; though it is a good substitute in cakes and cookies, only tahini should be used for any other recipes. Tahini separates on standing for a considerable time and requires blending before use. Storing unopened tins or jars upside down for some days makes blending easier.

TAMARIND

Botanical name: *Tamarindus indica*

Family name: Leguminosae

Arabic: sbar, tamar hindi

The word tamarind comes from the Arabic, and literally means 'date of India'. The large bean pod of this tropical tree is favoured for its strongly acid quality. Dried pods, compressed and packaged, are available at Asian food stores and require soaking and straining to separate the pulp from the seeds and fibres. Tamarind is used in the Gulf States and Iraq for dishes that include okra, as well as in other Gulf dishes. Tamarind pulp is also combined with a syrup for a cooling beverage popular in Egypt.

TARO

Botanical name: *Colocasia esculenta*

Family name: Araceae

Arabic: kolkas

Greek Cypriot: kolokassi

Though there are species of *Colocasia* native to tropical Asia and Africa, the kolokassi used in Cyprus is the same species as that of the Pacific Islands. It is a large, starchy tuber with side tubers or corms. The taro is toxic if eaten raw; heating destroys the toxicity.

TOMATOES

Some recipes call for fresh tomatoes to be peeled before using. To do this, score a cross in the base of the tomato, place in a heatproof bowl and cover with boiling water. Leave for 30 seconds, then transfer to cold water and peel the skin away from the cross. To seed tomatoes, cut the tomato in half and scoop out the seeds with a teaspoon.

TOMATO PASTE

(CONCENTRATED PURÉE)

A thick concentrated paste made from tomatoes, also known as tomato purée in the UK. The tomato passata

(puréed tomatoes) used in recipes, however, refers to a thick, pourable tomato concentrate, which is thicker than tinned tomato juice but thinner than tomato paste; it is available in tins and bottles.

See also recipe for [Tomato Paste](#).

TROUMIS

Botanical name: *Lupinus luteus*

Family name: Leguminosae

Certain lupins have been used as foods in the Mediterranean region from 2000 BCE. With the wide variety of pulses available today, lupins are now used only as a snack food. Troumis is the Arabic for dried white lupins, and as these look rather like dried butterbeans (lima beans) (though close inspection reveals differences), an explanation is necessary. As they are bitter, troumis should not be prepared similarly to other pulses. Soak for 4 days in cold water, changing the water twice daily. Boil until tender, adding salt after 1½ hours. Drain and serve cold with olive oil and lemon juice as an appetiser.

TURMERIC

Botanical name: *Curcuma domestica*

Family name: Zingiberaceae

Afghan: zarchoba

Arabic: kurkum

Iranian: zarchubeh

Though often regarded as a spice for colouring food rather than flavouring it, turmeric does impart a pleasant, mildly pungent aroma to foods. It is used only in small quantities in Gulf Arabic and Iranian cooking for both colour and flavour, and is an essential ingredient in Indian curry blends.

WALNUT OIL

Walnut oil is available commercially, but it is very expensive. To extract the oil from walnuts, roughly chop shelled walnuts and press a few pieces at a time in a garlic press. For 1 tablespoon oil, you will require 6–7 walnuts. In Turkey the chopped nuts are enclosed in muslin (cheesecloth) and squeezed — but the garlic press is much easier.

Walnut oil is used as a garnish combined with paprika for cerkes tavugiu. A bland salad oil may be substituted for this particular garnish.

YOGHURT DRINK

Afghanistan: dugh

Arabic: aryaan, laban bi sikkar

Armenia: tan

Iranian: abdug

Turkish: ayran

Yoghurt blended with cold water, usually 2 parts yoghurt to 1 part water, though this varies according to the thickness of the yoghurt.

Salt is usually added, although in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, sugar is sometimes used (laban bi sikkar). In Iran, abdug is prepared commercially, being carbonated and bottled.

ZA'TAR

A blend of powdered herbs, including thyme, marjoram and sumac, with salt added. Sprinkle on oiled [khoubiz](#) before baking for a flavourful flat bread; it is occasionally used as a flavouring spice mix in cooked meat dishes. Za'tar also refers to the herb thyme.



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TESS MALLOS

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Dudley House, North Suite
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www.hardiegrant.co.uk

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