

= Palestinian cuisine =

Palestinian cuisine consists of foods from or commonly eaten by Palestinians ? which includes those living in Palestine , Israel , Jordan , refugee camps in nearby countries as well as by the Palestinian diaspora . The cuisine is a diffusion of the cultures of civilizations that settled in the region of Palestine , particularly during and after the Islamic era beginning with the Arab Ummayyad conquest , then the eventual Persian @-@ influenced Abbasids and ending with the strong influences of Turkish cuisine , resulting from the coming of the Ottoman Turks . It is similar to other Levantine cuisines , including Lebanese , Syrian and Jordanian .

Cooking styles vary by region and each type of cooking style and the ingredients used are generally based on the climate and location of the particular region and on traditions . Rice and variations of kibbee are common in the Galilee . The West Bank engages primarily in heavier meals involving the use of taboon bread , rice and meat and coastal plain inhabitants frequent fish , other seafood , and lentils . The Gaza cuisine is a variation of the Levant cuisine , but is more diverse in seafood and spices . Gaza 's inhabitants heavily consume chili peppers too . Meals are usually eaten in the household but dining out has become prominent particularly during parties where light meals like salads , bread dips and skewered meats are served .

The area is also home to many desserts , ranging from those made regularly and those that are commonly reserved for the holidays . Most Palestinian sweets are pastries filled with either sweetened cheeses , dates or various nuts such as almonds , walnuts or pistachios . Beverages could also depend on holidays such as during Ramadan , where carob , tamarind and apricot juices are consumed at sunset . Coffee is consumed throughout the day and liquor is not very prevalent among the population , however , some alcoholic beverages such as arak or beer are consumed by Christians and less conservative Muslims .

= = History = =

The region of the southern Levant has a varied past and as such , its cuisine has contributions from various cultures . After the area was conquered by the Muslims , it became part of a Bilad al @-@ Sham under the name Jund Filastin . Therefore , many aspects of Palestinian cuisine are similar to the cuisine of Syria ? especially in the Galilee . Modern Syrian @-@ Palestinian dishes have been generally influenced by the rule of three major Islamic groups : the Arabs , the Persian @-@ influenced Arabs (Iraqis) and the Turks .

The Arabs that conquered Syria and Palestine initially had simple culinary traditions primarily based on the use of rice , lamb , yogurt and dates . This cuisine did not advance for centuries until the rise of the Abbasid Caliphate , that established Baghdad as its capital and integrated elements of Persian cuisine into the existing Arab cuisine . The Arab geographer al @-@ Muqaddasi said this of Palestine 's foods :

From Palestine comes olives , dried figs , raisins , the carob fruit ... from Jerusalem comes cheeses and the celebrated raisins of the species known as Ainuni and Duri , excellent apples ... also pine nuts of the kind called ' Kuraish @-@ bite ' , and their equal is not found elsewhere ... from Sughar and Baysan come dates , the treacle called Dibs .

The cuisine of the Ottoman Empire ? which incorporated Palestine in 1516 ? was partially made up of what had become , by then a " rich " Arab cuisine . After the Crimean War , in 1855 , many other communities including Bosnians , Greeks , French and Italians began settling in the area especially in urban centers such as Jerusalem , Jaffa and Bethlehem . These communities ' cuisines contributed to the character of Palestinian cuisine , especially communities from the Balkans . Until around the 1950s @-@ 60s , the main ingredients for rural Palestinian cuisine was olive oil , oregano and bread baked in a simple oven called a taboon . Author G. Robinson Lees , writing in 1905 , observed that " The oven is not in the house , it has a building of its own , the joint property of several families whose duty is to keep it always hot . "

= = Regional cuisines = =

There are three primary culinary regions of Palestine ? the Galilee , Gaza and the West Bank (which has its own culinary subregions ranging from north to south) . In the Galilee , bulgur and meat (beef or lamb) are primary ingredients that are often combined to form several variations of dishes ranging from a family @-@ sized meal to a side dish . However , in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip , the populations have a cooking style of their own . In the West Bank , meals are particularly heavy and contrast from the foods of the northern Levant . Main dishes involve rice , flatbreads and roasted meats . The staple food of the inhabitants in the Gaza Strip is fish due to its location on the Mediterranean seacoast . Their cuisine is similar to that of the Levant 's ; however , other spices are used more frequently . These generally include chili peppers , dill seed , garlic , and chard to flavor many of Gaza 's meals . Although the cuisine is diverse , generally Palestinians are not restricted to the foods of their specific region and there is constant culinary diffusion amongst them . Although , because of Gaza 's isolation from other Palestinian and Levantine Arab areas , their cooking styles are less known in the region .

= = = Galilee = = =

The cuisine of the Galilee is very similar to Lebanese cuisine , due to the extensive communication between the two regions before the establishment of Israel . The Galilee specializes in a number of meals based on the combination of bulgur , spices and meat , known as kubbi by Arabs . Kubbi bi @-@ siniyee is a combination of minced lamb or beef mixed with pepper , allspice and other spices wrapped in a bulgur crust , then baked . Kubbi bi @-@ siniyee could serve as the main dish during a Palestinian lunch . Kubbi neyee is a variation of kubbi , that is served as raw meat mixed with bulgur and a variety of spices . It is mostly eaten as a side dish and pita or markook bread is used for scooping the meat . Since the dish is raw , whatever is not eaten is cooked the next day in either the baked version or as fried kibbee balls .

A special occasion meal in the Galilee consists of Roasted Lamb or any other type of meat complemented by a mixture of rice with chopped lamb and flavored with an assortment of spices , usually garnished with chopped parsley and toasted nuts. shish kebab or lahme mashwi and shish taouk are grilled meats on skewers and are commonly eaten after an array of appetizers known as the maza .

The mezzeh consists of a wide variety of appetizers , usually including hummus (sometimes topped with meat) , baba ghannouj , labaneh , tabbouleh , olives and pickled vegetables . Akkawi cheese , a semi @-@ hard cheese common throughout the Middle East and among the Arab diaspora , originated in the city of Akka , from which the cheese receives its name .

= = = West Bank = = =

Musakhan is a common main dish that originated in the Jenin and Tulkarm area in the northern West Bank . It consists of a roasted chicken over a taboon bread that has been topped with pieces of fried sweet onions , sumac , allspice and pine nuts . Maqluba is an upside @-@ down rice and baked eggplant casserole mixed with cooked cauliflowers , carrots and chicken or lamb . The meal is known throughout the Levant but among Palestinians especially . It dates back to the 13th century .

Mansaf is a traditional meal in the central West Bank and Naqab region in the southern West Bank , having its roots from the Bedouin population of ancient Arabia . It is mostly cooked on occasions such as , during holidays , weddings or a large gathering . Mansaf is cooked as a lamb leg or large pieces of lamb on top of a taboon bread that has usually been smothered with yellow rice . A type of thick and dried cheesecloth yogurt from goat 's milk , called jameed , is poured on top of the lamb and rice to give it its distinct flavor and taste . The dish is also garnished with cooked pine nuts and almonds . The classic form of eating mansaf is using the right hand as a utensil . For politeness , participants in the feast tear pieces of meat to hand to the person next to them .

In addition to meals , the West Bank 's many subregions have their own fruit @-@ based jams . In

the Hebron area , the primary crops are grapes . Families living in the area harvest the grapes in the spring and summer to produce a variety of products ranging from raisins , jams and a molasses known as dibs . The Bethlehem area , Beit Jala in particular , and the village of Jifna are known regionally for their apricots and apricot jam as is the Tulkarm area for its olives and olive oil .

= = = Gaza = = =

The Gaza Strip 's cooking style is similar to culinary styles adopted by the rest of the Levant countries , and is also influenced by the Mediterranean coast . The staple food for the majority of the inhabitants in the area is fish . Gaza has a major fishing industry and fish is often served either grilled or fried after being stuffed with cilantro , garlic , red peppers and cumin and marinated in a mix of coriander , red peppers , cumin , and chopped lemons . Besides fish , as well as other types of seafood , Zibdieh , is a clay pot dish that consists of shrimp baked in a stew of olive oil , garlic , hot peppers , and peeled tomatoes . Crabs are cooked and then stuffed with a red hot pepper paste called shatta .

A dish native to the Gaza area is Sumaghiyyeh , consisting of water @-@ soaked ground sumac mixed with tahina . The mixture is added to sliced chard and pieces of stewed beef and garbanzo beans and additionally flavored with dill seeds , garlic and hot peppers . It is often eaten cool with khubz . Rummaniyya is prepared differently depending on the time of the year and is made up of unripened pomegranate seeds , eggplant , tahina , garlic , hot peppers and lentils . Fukharit adas is a slow @-@ cooked lentil stew flavored with red pepper flakes , crushed dill seeds , garlic , and cumin ; it is traditionally made during winter and early spring .

Qidra is a rice dish named after the clay vessel and oven it is baked in . Rice is cooked with pieces of meat inside of the vessel , often using lamb , whole garlic cloves , garbanzo beans , cardamom pods , and various other spices such as , turmeric , cinnamon , allspice , nutmeg and cumin . Plain rice cooked in meat or chicken broth and flavored with mild spices including cinnamon is known as fatteh ghazzawiyyeh . The rice is layered over a thin markook bread known as farasheeh , smothered in ghee and topped with stuffed chicken or lamb . The meal is eaten with green peppers and lemon sauce .

= = Types of meals = =

= = = Rice meals = = =

Rice is the basic ingredient in ceremonial dishes , and is a very important element of Palestinian meals . Rice dishes are usually the main dish of Palestinian dinner , because they consist of a variety of ingredients commonly found within the Palestinian land . Rice is usually not served alone or as a side dish (see ruz ma lahma below) , but rather it is incorporated within a larger dish or tabeeekh (dish) , that would include soups , vegetables , and meat (chicken or lamb) . Meat is almost always present in Palestinian dishes .

Mansaf is a very popular dish that is usually served during important events , such as a traditional wedding , engagement , funeral , baptism and circumcision . It is a dish incorporating all the elements of Palestinian land , such as bread , laban (yogurt) soup , rice , nuts (pine nuts) , parsley and lamb , making it an important cultural dish . The meal is oftentimes served the traditional way in a large common plate , a sidr . The meal is usually eaten without the use of tableware , but rather each person sits beside each other eating from the same large plate .

Maqluba means " upside down " in Arabic , and it is a dish made with a meat , fried vegetables and rice . The dish is cooked with the meat at the bottom of a large pot , then layered with fried vegetables , such as potatoes , carrots , cauliflower and eggplant . Rice is then added to the dish as it completes cooking . When served , Maqluba is flipped upside down with the meat now at the top , hence the name . Maqluba is a popular dish , commonly served with salad and yogurt by Palestinians .

Quzi is a rich rice dish with chopped vegetables and roasted meat made in the Taboon served with it . The dish is seen as comparatively simpler in its cooking than other Palestinian dishes , because it is cooked with basic rice (with diced vegetables) and a meat served on top of it . The meal is served in a large sidr , similar to mansaf , decorated with chopped parsley and pine nuts or chopped almonds . Another variant of this is the Zarb which has bread dough instead of rice although this is due to the Jordanian influence in the region .

Ruz ma Lahma is generally the only rice side dish in most Arab and Palestinian cooking , with simply cooked rice , spices , ground beef and nuts . It is usually served with a full lamb , kharoof , as the main dish .

= = = Stew meals = = =

Stews are basic fare for every day family cooking and are always served with vermicelli rice or plain rice . They are popular because they provide a wide range of nutrients from the meat , the vegetables and the rice . The extra liquid is also essential in such dry climate . Stews are also economically beneficial , as they provide relatively small amount of meat into feeding large families , especially within the poorer population .

Mloukhiyeh is a stew made from Jew 's mallow . The Jew 's mallow is picked during harvest time , and is either frozen or dried . It is widely popular in the middle east , as it is commonly grown in dry climate areas . The stew is cooked with lemon juice and water , and served with cut lemons and rice . The meal can be served with either chicken or lamb however it can be served without either (unlike many other Palestinian meals) .

Adas is a healthy lentil soup , common in the Middle East . Unlike other parts of the Middle East , Palestinians do not incorporate yogurt or other ingredients into this soup . Rather , it is made with lentils and chopped onions and served with sliced onions and bread on the side .

= = = Bread meals = = =

Palestinians bake a variety of different kinds of breads : they include khubz , pita and markook and taboon . Khubz is an everyday bread and is very similar to pita . It often takes the place of utensils ; It is torn into bite size pieces and used to scoop various dips such as hummus or ful . Markook bread is a paper @-@ thin unleavened bread and when unfolded it is almost transparent . Taboon receives its name from the ovens used to bake them .

Musakhan is a widely popular Palestinian dish composed of roasted chicken , with fried onions , sumac , allspice , saffron and pine nuts atop one or more taboons . The dish is usually eaten with the hands and served with cut lemon on the side . In April 2010 , Palestinians were entered into the Guinness Book of World Records for largest Musakhan dish .

Palestinian cuisine also includes many small pizza @-@ like foods , including Manakish , sfiha , fatayer , sambusac and ikras . Sfiha is a baked miniature flatbread , topped with lamb and cooked red peppers or tomatoes . Manakish is a baked flat bread , usually topped with za 'atar and olive oil . Sfiha are meat patties decorated with spices and peppers . Sambusac and fatayer are baked or sometimes fried doughs stuffed with minced meat and cooked onions or snobar (pine nuts) . Fatayer is usually folded into triangles and unlike sambusac , it could be filled with arabic cheese or za 'atar . Ikra is similar to sambusac and fatayer , by using dough stuffed with either meat or spinach , however they are not fried (like sambusac) , and are usually served as a meal rather than meal addition or side dish .

Sandwiches usually using markook or khubz , such as Shawarma and Falafel are also common bread meals . Shawarma can be served as a sandwich or meal with shaved meat and bread . Shawarma can be chicken or beef , and is adorned with a variety of garnishes . These can include pickles , hummus , or a garlic yogurt mix . Falafel , fried chickpeas , parsley and onion are fried into small patties and are adorned with similar toppings as shawarma .

= = = Mahashi = = =

Mahshi (pl. mahshi) dishes are composed of rice stuffed vegetables such as , eggplants , baby pumpkins , potatoes , carrots and marrows as well as a variety of leaf vegetables , primarily grape leaves , cabbage leaves and less often chard . Mahshi requires delicacy and time ? the main reason it is prepared before the day it is cooked and served . Many female family members participate in the rolling and stuffing of the vegetables , relaxing the amount of individual effort required , with great attention to detail .

Waraq al- ' ainib (stuffed grape leaves) , is a mahshi meal reserved for large gatherings . The grape leaves are normally wrapped around minced meat , white rice and diced tomatoes , however meat is not always used . Dawali is an excellent representation of the attention to detail commonly found in Palestinian and Levant cuisine , with each piece being tightly wrapped to the size of cigarette morsels (some families differ in their structure) . It is then cooked and served as dozens of rolls on a large plate usually accompanied by boiled potato slices , carrots and lamb pieces . Kousa mahshi are zucchinis stuffed with the same ingredients as waraq al- ' ainib and usually served alongside it heavy meals . If made with a large number of zucchinis as well as dawali it is known as waraq al- ' ainib wa kousa .

= = = Dips and side dishes = = =

Bread dips and side dishes such as , hummus , baba ghanoush , mutabbel and labaneh are frequented during breakfast and dinner .

Hummus is a staple in Palestinian side dishes , in particular in hummus bi tahini , in which boiled , ground beans are mixed with tahini (sesame paste) and sometimes lemon juice . Hummus is often slathered in olive oil and sometimes sprinkled with paprika , oregano and pine nuts ; the latter are especially popular in the West Bank . Chick peas are also mixed with ful (fava beans) , resulting in an entirely different dish , mukhluta , with a distinct flavor and brownish color .

Baba ghanoush is an eggplant or aubergine salad or dip with several variants . The root of all the variants is broiled and mashed eggplant and tahini lathered with olive oil , which can then be flavored with either garlic , onions , peppers , ground cumin seeds , mint and parsley . Mutabbel is one of the spicier variants that receives its zest from green chili peppers .

Jibneh Arabieh or jibneh baida is a white table cheese served with any of the above dishes . Ackawi cheese is a common variation of jibneh baida . Ackawi cheese has a smoother texture and a mild salty taste . Labaneh is a pasty yogurt @-@ like cream cheese either served on a plate with olive oil and za 'atar ? which is generally called labaneh wa za 'atar ? or in a khubz sandwich .

= = = Salads = = =

The most served Palestinian salad is a simple type known as salat bandura (tomato salad) , similar to Arab salad . It is composed of diced tomatoes and cucumbers combined with olive oil , parsley , lemon juice and salt . Depending on the area of Palestine , the recipe may include scallions and garlic as well .

Tabbouleh is a Mediterranean @-@ style table salad originating in the Levant . The salad is made from parsley pieces , bulgur , diced tomatoes , cucumbers and is sautéed with lemon juice and vinegar . In 2006 , the largest bowl of tabbouleh in the world was prepared by Palestinian cooks in the West Bank city of Ramallah .

Fattoush is a combination of toasted bread pieces and parsley with chopped cucumbers , radishes , tomatoes and scallions and flavored by sumac . Dagga is a Gazan salad usually made in a clay bowl and is a mix of crushed tomatoes , garlic cloves , red hot peppers , chopped dill and olive oil . Its seasoned with lemon juice immediately before being served .

Salatah arabieh or " Arab salad " is a salad used with most meals . Romaine lettuce , tomatoes and cucumbers are the main ingredients . Lettuce is cut into long strips , then chopped into thin strands , the tomatoes and cucumbers are chopped into cubes . Finely chopped parsley and mint give it a " particular zest " according to chef Ali Qleibo . A pinch of salt , the juice of a whole fresh lemon and

several tablespoons of olive oil are used for final touch ups .

= = = Sweets = = =

Palestinian desserts include baklawa , halawa and kanafeh , as well as other semolina and wheat pastries . Baklawa is a pastry made of thin sheets of unleavened flour dough (phyllo) , filled with pistachios and walnuts sweetened by honey . Burma Til @-@ Kadayif , or simply Burma , especially popular in East Jerusalem , has the same filling as baklawa , but is cylindrical in shape and made with kanafeh dough instead of phyllo . Halawa is a block confection of sweetened sesame flour served in sliced pieces . Muhalabiyeh is a rice pudding made with milk and topped with pistachios or almonds .

Kanafeh , a well @-@ known dessert in the Arab World and Turkey . Made of several fine shreds of pastry noodles with honey @-@ sweetened cheese in the center , the top layer of the pastry is usually dyed orange with food coloring and sprinkled with crushed pistachios . Nablus , to the present day is famed for its kanafeh , partly due to its use of a white @-@ brined cheese called Nabulsi after the city . Boiled sugar is used as a syrup for kanafeh .

= = = Snack foods = = =

It is common for Palestinian hosts to serve fresh and dried fruits , nuts , seeds and dates to their guests . Roasted and salted watermelon , squash and sunflower seeds as well as , pistachios and cashews are common legumes .

Watermelon seeds , known as bizir al @-@ bateekh and pumpkin seeds , known as bizir abyad are eaten regularly during various leisurely activities : playing cards , smoking argeelah , conversing with friends or before and after meals .

= = Meal structure = =

Palestinian culture and life revolves around food in every aspect , whether it is an ordinary day or a special occasion such as a wedding or holiday . Meals are structured in a cyclical order by Palestinians and span into two main courses and several intermediate ones like coffee , fruits and sweets as well as dinner . Like in most Arab cultures , meals are a time to spend with family and could last 1 ? 2 hours depending on the specific time of the day . Unlike other cultures , lunch is the primary course and breakfast and dinner are lighter in contents .

Fatur / Iftur (lit . ' breakfast ') is a term for breakfast , usually consists of fried eggs , olives , labaneh , olive oil , za 'atar , or jams . Hummus bi tahini is also eaten primarily during this time the day .

Ghada is a term for lunch , usually late in the afternoon . Lunch is the heaviest meal of the day and main ingredients could include rice , lamb , chicken , cooked vegetables and forms of mahashi .

Asrooneh Derives from the word ' Aasr (lit . ' afternoon ') is a term for the consumption of a variety of fruits and legumes after gheda .

'Asha is a term for supper , usually eaten anytime from 8 @-@ 10 pm . ' Asha is simpler than gheda and some foods consumed include fatayer , hummus bi tahini , a variety of salads and a Levantine @-@ style omelette called ijee .

'Hilew Sometimes after or just before ' asha as well as when hosting guests come various sweets . Baklawa is common and is usually purchased from pastry shops instead of made at home like muhallabiyeh .

Shay wa Kahwah Tea and coffee are served in throughout the day in before , after and between fatur , ghada and ' asha .

= = Dining out = =

Restaurants or mata 'im offer a brilliant array of cold appetizers known as the mezze . Notably ,

hummus bi tahini , mukhluta , sometimes nearly a dozen variations of eggplant salad , tabbouleh , fattoush , chili pepper and red cabbage salads and dishes made up by the chef are served . Kibbee balls and sfiha are the primary hot appetizers available . Heavy meals are rarely provided by restaurants , instead however , the entrées include shish kebab , shish taouk , rack of lamb and chicken breasts . Falafel shops or Mahal falafel offer mainly falafel and shawarma with several different contents . They also offer hummus or tabbouleh to be served with the meal .

Coffeeshouses (called al @-@ maqhah in Arabic) serve hot beverages and soft drinks and are usually restricted to male customers ? who take part in leisurely activities like playing cards or backgammon and smoking argileh (Arabic for hookah) . Sweet shops or mahal al hilaweyat , can be found in the souks of cities and major towns , they offer a wide range of sweets common with Palestinians , such as , kanafeh , baklawa and anise @-@ flavored cookies . Family @-@ run shops often serve at least one type of sweet that they themselves created . The city of Nablus in particular are world famous for their exquisite Arabic sweets , and have some of the oldest sweet shops in Palestine .

= = Beverages = =

= = = Soft drinks = = =

Soft drinks are also common in Palestinian homes and the city of Ramallah contains a Coca @-@ Cola and Faygo bottling plant , while Gaza , Hebron and Nablus have distribution centers . A Pepsi @-@ Cola plant in Gaza was shut down in 2007 .

Homemade fruit juices are also a common household drink during warm days and during Ramadan , the holy month for fasting by Muslims . In the Palestinian culture , coffee and tea is traditionally served to adults during a visit or gathering , while juice is served primarily to children . However , juices such as tamar hind or qamar deen are served during special occasions to everyone . Tamar hind , originally from Africa is a liquorice drink made by soaking or infusing liquorice sticks , and adding lemon juice . Qamar deen is traditionally served to break the Ramadan fast (as is water) , and is an iced drink made from a dry sheet of apricots soaked in water , and mixed with lemon juice or syrup .

Rose or mint water is a drink commonly added to Palestinian sweets and dishes . However , it is also a popular drink on its own , and is seen as refreshing in the heated summers . Herbs such as sage can also be boiled with water to create a drink that is sometimes used for medicinal purposes . A warm drink made from sweetened milk with salep garnished with walnuts , coconut flakes and cinnamon , is known as sahlab and is primarily served during the winter season .

= = = Coffee and tea = = =

Two hot beverages that Palestinians consume is coffee ? served in the morning and throughout the day ? and tea which is often sipped in the evening . Tea is usually flavored with na 'ana (mint) or maramiyyeh (sage) . The coffee of choice is usually Turkish or Arabic coffee . Arabic coffee is similar to Turkish coffee , but the former is spiced with cardamom and is usually unsweetened .

Among Bedouins and most other Arabs throughout the region of Palestine , bitter coffee , known as qahwah sadah (Lit. plain coffee) , was a symbol of hospitality . Pouring the drink was ceremonial ; it would involve the host or his eldest son moving clockwise among guests ? who were judged by age and status ? pouring coffee into tiny cups from a brass pot . It was considered " polite " for guests to accept only three cups of coffee and then end their last cup by saying daymen , meaning " always " , but intending to mean " may you always have the means to serve coffee " .

= = = Liquor = = =

A widely consumed liquor among Palestinian Christians , non @-@ religious Palestinians and many

less @-@ stringently observant Muslims is Arak . Arak is a clear anise @-@ flavored alcoholic drink that is mixed with water to soften it and give it a creamy white color . It is consumed during special occasions such as holidays , weddings , and gatherings or with the mezze . Beer is also a consumed drink and the Palestinian town of Taybeh in the central West Bank contains one of the few breweries in Palestine . In addition to regular beer , the brewery produces non @-@ alcoholic beer for observant Muslims . The nearby town of Birzeit is also home to Shepherds Brewery .

= = Holiday cuisine = =

There is a sharp difference of Palestinian courses eaten on a daily basis in comparison to those reserved for holidays ? which include family and religious occasions for both Muslims and Christians .

= = = Ramadan = = =

In the past , during the fasting month of Ramadan , the Musaher of a town would yell and beat his drum to wake up the town 's residents for suhoor (lit . ' of dawn ') ? usually very early in the morning , ranging from 4 @-@ 6 am . The meals eaten during this time are light and foods include labaneh , cheese , bread and fried or boiled eggs along with various liquids to drink . The muezzin 's call to dawn prayers signaled the beginning of sawm or fasting .

Breaking the day 's fasting traditionally begins with the brief consumption of dates and a chilled beverage . Palestinians make a variety of fruit @-@ based beverages , including the flavors , tamar Hindi or tamarind , sous or licorice , kharroub or carob and Qamar Eddine . Tamar Hindi is made by soaking tamarinds in water for a many hours , then straining , sweetening and mixing it with rose water and lemon juice . Kharroub is made similarly except instead of tamarind , carob is used . Qamar Eddine is made of dried apricots boiled into a liquid and chilled .

The term iftar has a different meaning in Ramadan where it is used to describe the ' breaking of fasting ' unlike its common meaning of breakfast in the morning . Iftar begins with soup , either made from lentils , vegetables or freekeh . Shurbat freekeh (" freekeh soup ") is made from cracked , green wheat cooked in chicken broth . There is a wide variety of meals served during iftar , ranging from small plates or bowls vegetable @-@ based courses or saniyyehs (large plates or trays) of a particular meat . Common small dishes on the dinner table are bamia ? a name for okra in tomato paste , mloukhiyeh ? a corchorus stew ? or maqali , an array of fried tomatoes , aubergines , potatoes , peppers and zucchini . Pilaf or plain freekeh are normally served alongside the dinner meat . Each household prepares extra food to provide for their neighbors and the less fortunate ? who must receive an equal version of the food eaten at home .

= = = Holiday sweets = = =

A common Palestinian dessert reserved only for Ramadan is qatayef , which could be provided by the numerous street vendors in several major Palestinian cities or towns as well as typical Palestinian households . Qatayef is the general name of the dessert as a whole , but more specifically , the name of the batter that acts as a base . The result of the batter being poured into a round hot plate appears similar to pancakes , except only one side is cooked , then folded . The pastry is filled with either unsalted goat cheese or ground walnuts and cinnamon . It is then baked and served with a hot sugar @-@ water syrup or sometimes honey .

Ka 'ak bi ' awja is a semolina shortbread pastry filled with ground dates called ' ajwa or walnuts . The dessert is a traditional meal for Christians during Easter , however , ka 'ak bi awja is also prepared towards the end of Ramadan , to be eaten during Eid al @-@ Fitr ? a Muslim festival immediately following Ramadan , as well as during Eid al @-@ Adha . During Mawlid ? the holiday honoring the birth of the Islamic prophet Muhammad ? Zalabieh which consists of small , crunchy deep fried dough balls in dipped in syrup , is served . The dough is made from flour , yeast and water .

A special pudding called mughli is prepared for a new born child . The dessert is made of ground rice , sugar and a mixture of spices , garnished with almonds , pine nuts and walnuts . An infant 's new tooth is celebrated with bowls of sweetened wheat or barley and sweets served after a child 's circumcision include baklava and Burma . Christian families in mourning serve a sweet bun known as rahmeh . It is a food eaten in remembrance of the dead and as a gesture of blessing the soul of the deceased person . The Greek Orthodox Church offer a special tray with cooked wheat covered with sugar and candy after a memorial service .