

= Falafel =

Falafel ( / fəˈlæfəl / ; Arabic : فلفل , [ fæˈlæfəl ] , dialectal : [ fæˈlæfəl ] ) is a deep @-@ fried ball or patty made from ground chickpeas , fava beans , or both . Falafel is a traditional Middle Eastern food , commonly served in a pita , which acts as a pocket , or wrapped in a flatbread known as taboon ; " falafel " also frequently refers to a wrapped sandwich that is prepared in this way . The falafel balls are topped with salads , pickled vegetables , hot sauce , and drizzled with tahini @-@ based sauces . Falafel balls may also be eaten alone as a snack or served as part of a meze tray ( assortment of appetizers ) .

Falafel is a common dish eaten throughout the Middle East . The fritters are now found around the world as a replacement for meat and as a form of street food .

= = Etymology = =

The word Falʔfil ( Arabic : فلفل ) is the plural of Filfil ( فلفل ) , meaning " pepper " . The word itself spread and is used in other languages such as Persian pilpil ( فلفل ) , from the Sanskrit word pippalʔ ( पपल ? ) , meaning " long pepper " ; or an earlier \* filfal , from Aramaic pilpʔl , " small round thing , peppercorn , " derived from palpʔl , " to be round , roll " . Thus in origin , falafel would be " rollers , little balls . "

A Coptic origin has recently been proposed via the unattested phrase \* pha la phel ( फल फल ) , meaning " of many beans " .

The Arabic word falʔfil has been globalized into many other languages and spread around the rest of the world as the general name for this food . In English , it is first attested in 1941 .

Falafel is known as taʔamiya ( Egyptian Arabic : فلفل ?aʔmiyya , IPA : [ tʔʔʔʔmejjʔ ] ) in Egypt . The word is derived from a diminutive form of the Arabic word ʔaʔʔm ( فلفل , " food " ) ; the particular form indicates " a unit " of the given root in this case ʔ @-@ ʔ @-@ M ( فلفل , having to do with taste and food ) , thus meaning " a little piece of food " or " small tasty thing " .

The word falafel can refer to the fritters themselves or to sandwiches filled with them .

= = History = =

The origin of falafel is unknown and controversial . A common theory is that the dish originated in Egypt , possibly eaten by Copts as a replacement for meat during Lent . As Alexandria is a port city , it was possible to export the dish and name to other areas in the Middle East . The dish later migrated northwards to the Levant , where chickpeas replaced the fava beans . It has been speculated that its history may go back to Pharaonic Egypt .

= = = Middle East = = =

Falafel grew to become a common form of street food or fast food in the Middle East . The croquettes are regularly eaten as part of meze . During Ramadan , falafel balls are sometimes eaten as part of the iftar , the meal that breaks the daily fast after sunset . Falafel became so popular that McDonald 's for a time served a " McFalafel " in some countries . Falafel is still popular with the Copts , who cook large volumes during religious holidays . Debates over the origin of falafel have sometimes devolved into political discussions about the relationship between Arabs and Israelis . In modern times , falafel has been considered a national dish of Egypt , Palestine , and of Israel . Resentment exists amongst many Palestinians for what they see as the appropriation of their dish by Israelis . Additionally , the Lebanese Industrialists ' Association has raised assertions of copyright infringement against Israel concerning falafel .

Falafel plays an iconic role in Israeli cuisine and is widely considered to be the national dish of the country . While falafel is not a specifically Jewish dish , it was eaten by Mizrahi Jews in their countries of origin . Later , it was adopted by early Jewish immigrants to Palestine . Due to its being entirely plant based , it is considered pareve under Jewish dietary laws and gained acceptance with

Jews because it could be eaten with meat or dairy meals .

In 2012 , in an attempt to challenge Israeli claims regarding the origins of Falafel , and reassert the Arabic identity of the food , one of the hotels in the capital of Jordan , Amman , prepared the world 's largest Falafel disc weighing about 75 kg ? breaking the previous record set at a Jewish food festival in the United States .

= = = North America = = =

In North America , prior to the 1970s , falafel was found only in Middle Eastern and Jewish neighborhoods and restaurants . Today , the dish is a common and popular street food in many cities throughout North America .

= = = Vegetarianism = = =

Falafel has become popular among vegetarians and vegans , as an alternative to meat @-@ laden street foods , and is now sold in packaged mixes in health @-@ food stores . While traditionally thought of as being used to make veggie burgers , its use has expanded as more and more people have adopted it as a source of protein . In the United States , falafel 's versatility has allowed for the reformulating of recipes for meatloaf , sloppy joes and spaghetti and meatballs into vegetarian dishes .

= = Preparation and variations = =

Falafel is made from fava beans or chickpeas , or a combination of the two . The use of chickpeas is predominant in most Middle Eastern countries . The dish is usually made with chickpeas in Syria , Lebanon , Jordan , Israel and Palestine . This version is the most popular in the West . The Egyptian variety uses only fava beans .

When chickpeas are used , they are not cooked prior to use ( cooking the chickpeas will cause the falafel to fall apart , requiring adding some flour to use as a binder ) . Instead they are soaked ( sometimes with baking soda ) overnight , then ground together with various ingredients such as parsley , scallions , and garlic . Spices such as cumin and coriander are often added to the beans for added flavor . The dried fava beans are soaked in water and then stone ground with leek , parsley , green coriander , cumin and dry coriander . The mixture is shaped into balls or patties . This can be done by hand or with a tool called an aleb falafel ( falafel mould ) . The mixture is usually deep fried , or it can be oven baked .

When not served alone , falafel is often served with flat or unleavened bread when it is wrapped within lafa or stuffed in a hollow pita . Tomatoes , lettuce , cucumbers , and other garnishes can be added . Falafel is commonly accompanied by tahini .

Falafel is typically ball @-@ shaped , but is sometimes made in other shapes , particularly donut @-@ shaped . The inside of falafel may be green ( from green herbs such as parsley or green onion ) , or tan .

= = Nutrition = =

When made with chickpeas , falafel is high in protein , complex carbohydrates , and fiber . Key nutrients are calcium , iron , magnesium , phosphorus , potassium , zinc , copper , manganese , vitamin C , thiamine , pantothenic acid , vitamin B , and folate . Phytochemicals include beta @-@ carotene . Falafel is high in soluble fiber , which has been shown to be effective in lowering blood cholesterol .

Chickpeas are low in fat and contain no cholesterol , but a considerable amount of fat is absorbed during the frying process . Falafel can be baked to reduce the high fat content associated with frying . Although baking alters the texture and flavor , it is a preparation technique often recommended to people suffering from such health problems as diabetes .

= = World records = =

= = = Largest falafel ball = = =

The current record , 74 @. @ 75 kg ( 164 @. @ 4 lb ) , was set on 28 July 2012 in Amman , Jordan . The previous record was 23 @. @ 94 kg ( 52 @. @ 8 lb ) , 1 @. @ 17 m in circumference and 0 @. @ 3 m in height , set at the Santa Clarita Valley Jewish Food and Cultural Festival ( US ) , at the College of the Canyons in Valencia , California , US , on 15 May 2011 .

= = = Largest serving of falafel = = =

The record , 5 @, @ 173 kg ( 11 @, @ 404 lb 8 oz ) , was set by Chef Ramzi Choueiri and the students of Al @- @ Kafaat University ( Lebanon ) in Beirut on 9 May 2010 .

= = In popular culture = =

There is one novel ( He Died with a Felafel in His Hand ) and at least two films ( Falafel and He Died with a Felafel in His Hand ) related to falafel .

= = Gallery = =