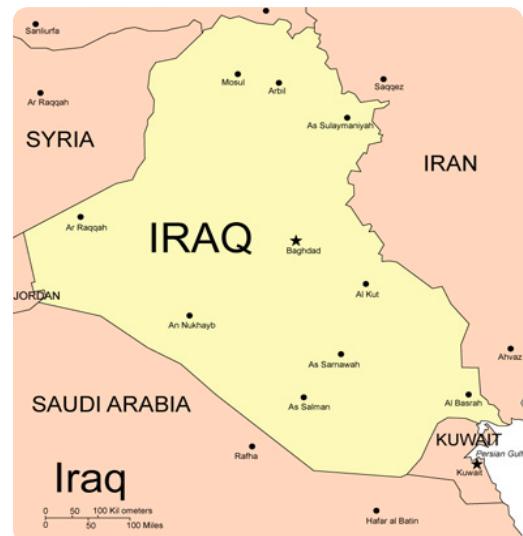




Overview

Home to some 33.7 million people over almost 170,000 square miles, The Republic of Iraq (Arabic: جمهورية العراق jumhuriyyat al-'Iraq), a middle-eastern country bordering Iran, Syria, Jordan, and Kuwait, among others, has been the topic of social and political debate for decades. Whether about oil or political leadership, however, the topics discussed often ignore the very foundation of the country that sits upon the land known as the "Cradle of Civilization"--its people, of whom over 200,000 are currently living in the United States and whose culture and impact bear honoring.



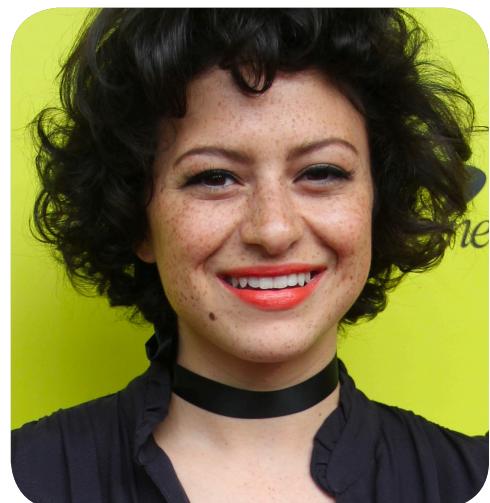


Notable People

While immigration from Iraq (both of refugees and voluntary migrants) has decreased in recent years, the over 200,000 Iraqi-Americans in our country (who live primarily in Detroit, Chicago, New York, Nashville, and Philadelphia) merit recognition and celebration. Throughout our country's history, Iraqi-Americans have contributed to, for example, science, entertainment, art, music, and journalism. Some of these people, featuring both immigrants who obtained citizenship and their American descendants, include:

Alia Shawkat

Alia Shawkat was born in Palm Springs, California, to an Kurdish father and and a Norwegian, Irish, and Italian mother. While growing up, she fostered talents in acting, painting, language, and music; despite agents labeling her "too ethnic" for available roles, she began a successful acting career at age 11 and has made a name for herself, for example, as Maeby Fünke in the series Arrested Development. She also hopes to eventually attend Yale University studying International Relations.



Notable People cont.

Sayed Hassan Al-Qazwini

Arabic: سيد حسن القزويني

The founder and leader of the Islamic Institute of America, Al-Qazwini's first immigration was to Iran with his family while Iraq was at war with Kuwait. After years of vigorously studying Islam, he moved to the United States in 1992 upon realizing the need for Islamic scholars and leaders in the country; he has since become known as an ambassador for American Muslims, who face misconceptions and prejudice born from fear.



Mona Hanna-Attisha

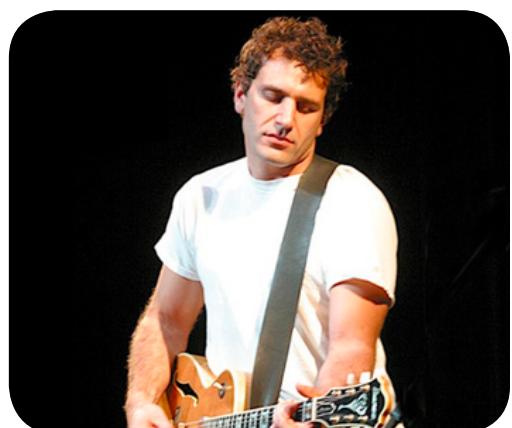
This pediatrician, professor, and public health advocate was born in England to two Iraqi scientists who fled during Saddam Hussein's regime. Her family moved to Michigan, where she stayed all the way through medical school and her residency. She is known for, at great risk to her career, exposing the lead levels in the water of Flint, Michigan, and for founding and directing the Pediatric Public Health Initiative, an effort to mitigate the outcomes of children in Flint.



Stephan Said

Arabic: ستيفن سعيد

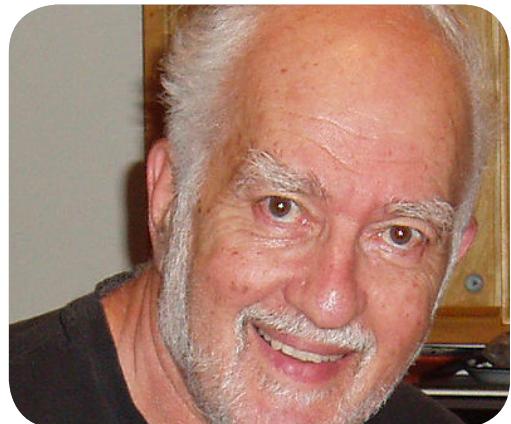
Born in Cleveland to an Iraqi father and Austrian mother, Stephan Said has become known for a distinct musical style that blends pop, rock, folk, and hip-hop. His lyrics often focus on global equality and social justice, and he outlets his passion for these subjects through *borderless*, a docu-series highlighting those on the cutting edge of change. He has centered his career around unity and bringing people together through music.



Notable People cont.

Greg Patent

This American cookbook author and baker spent the first 11 years of his life in China with his Russian Father and Iraqi mother. His family lived with his grandmother during World War II, where she cooked kosher Middle Eastern cuisine that helped inspire his love of food; he and his family then moved to San Francisco, and at the age of 18, he won second prize in the Pillsbury Bake-Off junior division. While he was the national spokesperson for Cuisinarts, Inc., and while he is known for his James Beard-award-winning cookbook *Baking in America*, he now works at the University of California, Berkeley with a PhD in Zoology.



Aiham Alsammarae

Arabic: أيهم السامرائي;

Alsammarae, who served as Iraq's Minister of Electricity from 2003-2005, lived in the United States in exile for over 30 years as a result of his prominent involvement in the Iraqi Opposition. After his return to Iraq and subsequent employment as Minister of Electricity, he again had to flee to the United States after being wrongly jailed in Baghdad. He now runs a private engineering consulting firm in Chicago and lives with his wife and three children.



Dunya Mikhail

Born and raised in Iraq, Dunya Mikhail, who now lives in Michigan, possesses a masters in Near Eastern Studies and employs her knowledge and experience through poetry. Her poetry, which centers on themes of exile and war, has reached millions, and her honors include the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Knights Foundation grant, the Kresge Fellowship, and the United Nations Human Rights Award for Freedom of Writing. She also co-founded the Mesopotamian Forum for Art and Culture, based in Michigan.





Holidays & Festivals

عيد الفطر

(Eid-al-Fitr - "Feast of Breaking the Fast")

Observed between June 26th and 28th (although dates do differ between Sunni and Shiite Muslims), this three-day period marks the end of Ramadan, the period which, according to Islam, marks the revealing of the Quran to Muhammad. During Ramadan, Muslims in Iraq and around the world fast; Eid-al-Fitr marks the end of that period of fasting. Naturally, food plays a large part in this celebration; whether they are eating the food themselves or charitably giving it away--a common tradition--foods consumed in Iraq during this period may be something such as:

الكليجا

(Kleicha)

Considered the national cookie of Iraq, the most popular version of this food (which may date all the way back to the ancient Babylonians), served frequently during Eid-al-Fitr, is made with dough--featuring honey, cinnamon, and cardamom powder--complete with a date filling.

<http://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/kleicha/>





Holidays & Festivals cont.

عيد الأضحى

(Eid al-Adha - "Sacrifice Feast")

Honoring the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son at God's word, Eid al-Adha is celebrated on the 10th day of Dhu al-Hijjah, the final month in the Islamic calendar (which translates to varying dates on the Gregorian calendar; the holiday's date is 11 days earlier each year). Men, women, and children dress their best, sacred prayers and congregations are held in mosques, and symbolic sacrifices are made. Just as in Eid al-Fitr, tradition has it that no person, rich or poor, should be excluded from the sacrificial meal, which, in Iraq, may include something such as:

سمچ مسگوف

(Semeç Masgûf, or simply Masgouf)

Another “national” dish of Iraq (this one dating back to Mesopotamian times), Masgouf is as much a specifically-crafted dish as it is a style of preparing fish (which may be several kinds of fish, although carp is the most common). The fish is butterflied and marinated in a mixture of olive oil and spices (most often turmeric and tamarind). The fish is then often cooked over an open fire, or, in other parts of the country, in a clay oven.

<https://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/masgouf/>





Food Palate and History

Iraqi cuisine (sometimes referred to as Mesopotamian cuisine) goes as far back as 10,000 years; the country boasts having created the first cookbooks in history, recorded on stone tablets around the year 1900 BCE (a cookbook that featured literal hundreds of recipes for cheeses, soups, breads, and drinks). Similar tablets written in 1700 BCE feature recipes for stews seasoned with familiar ingredients like leeks, onion, garlic, cumin, coriander, mint, and dill.

Furthermore, during the Islamic Golden Age (750 - 1258 AD), Iraqi cuisine was at its most prolific and bountiful. Medieval and modern history has shown that Iraqi cuisine has both maintained its roots while changing with the world around it; Iraqi's rich culinary history carries on to this day, with influences from its neighboring countries.

This food is eaten at meals with traditional customs and in a specific order. For instance, Iraqi dinners begin with *Mezza*, or appetizers and salads. Then, the main dish, which can include kebab, wraps, stews, rice dishes, or falafel, among many others, is served, followed by desserts like baklava, halva, kleicha, or qatayef.

See the next page for a list of some staple Iraqi ingredients, cooking methods, and dishes.

Food Palate and History (cont.)

Today, most Iraqi cuisine features these ingredients and dishes:

Primary Starches	Primary Proteins	Primary Produce
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rice• Bulghur wheat• Barley• Flatbreads	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lamb• Chicken• Beef• Pork (despite Iraq being a mostly Muslim country)• Goat• Fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eggplant• Tomato• Turnips• Beans• Shallots• Okra• Olives• Pomegranate• Lentils• Cress• Potato• Cabbage• Zucchini• Spinach• Garlic
Primary Seasonings	Primary Cooking Methods	Foundational Dishes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cinnamon• Cardamom• Coriander• Fenugreek• Cumin• Oregano• Mint• Tarragon• Thyme• Saffron• Dried lime• Dill• Tuermeric• Sumac• Za'atar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stewing• Steaming• Baking• Braising• Frying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kebab• Fattoush• Tabbouleh• Baba ghanoush• Hummus• Fesenjan• Falafel• Dolma• Mujaddara• Pilaf• Quzi• Shawarma• Kleicha



Featured Ingredients



Rice

Possibly the most important staple in Iraqi cuisine, long-grain rice is cooked using a unique technique: it is cooked using a multistep process that results in not-too-tender, fluffy grains complete with a khaka, or a crisp bottom crust, which is broken up and distributed to those enjoying the meal together. Beyond as a side, however, it is a core ingredient in many Iraqi dishes, including:

مجدرة

(Mujaddara)

A dish made of lentils, groats, rice, and onions, this recipe, which is cooked and enjoyed by millions throughout the Levant, dates back to the early 1200s, when it was penned by Muhammad bin Hasan al-Baghdadi (or simply al-Baghdadi for short), the compiler of *كتاب الطبيخ* (Kitab al-Ṭabīḥ - The Book of Dishes).



<https://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/mujadara/>





Featured Ingredients cont.

Lamb

Lamb, a pervasively popular meat in Iraq, is extremely versatile. It can often be found simply marinated with garlic, lemon, and spices and served with rice; however, it can also be prepared in more complex dishes, including:

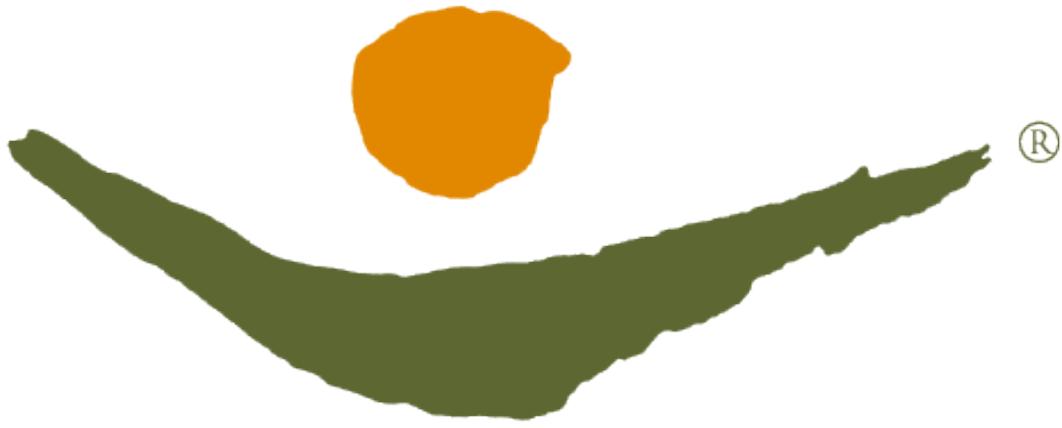
قوزى
(Quzi)

Quzi, another traditional popular Levantine dish, is prepared by slow-cooking lamb with nuts, vegetables, spices, and raisins and is served with rice.



<https://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/quzi/>



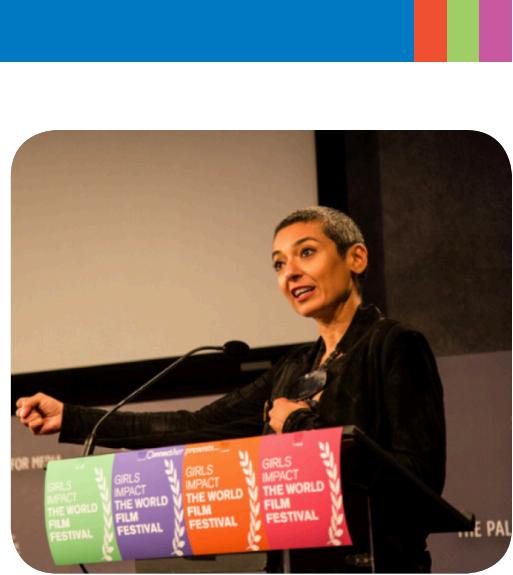


WOMEN *for* WOMEN *International*

Did you know...

...that Women for Women International, the organization whose mission is to help “marginalized women in [any of eight] countries affected by war and conflict,” was started by Zainab Salbi, an Iraqi-American?

That’s right--after being born in Baghdad and directly facing the psychological effects of Saddam Hussein’s leadership, she has dedicated her life to women around the world that need help, founding Women for Women International in 1993. She led the organization until 2011. She moved to the United States at the age of 19 and currently lives in New York.



Embassy Information

The Embassy of the Republic of Iraq
3421 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20007
202-742-1600
<http://www.iraqiembassy.us/>



Organizations and Places to Learn More

The Iraqi-American Society

(Buffalo, NY)
<http://iasbuffalo.org>

Founded in 2014, the Iraqi-American Society is “a non-profit organization established by the Iraqi community for the Iraqi and Arabic speaking population.” They offer monthly cultural meetings, ESL citizenship classes, and other resources to both spread their culture and acclimate Iraqi immigrants into American life.

Iraqi Cultural Office

(Washington, DC)
<http://www.iraqiculture-usa.com/>
(202) 986-2626

This center, established in 2006 as part of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, is devoted to “help students, schools and all Iraqis to learn more about education in the USA. At the same time, we aim to serve as a resource to American students, schools and people at large to know about education and culture in Iraq.”

The Arab American Institute

(Washington, DC)
<https://www.aaiusa.org/>

Established in 1985, the Arab American Institute’s mission is to “to nurture and encourage the direct participation of Arab Americans in political and civic life in the United States.” Their activities center on elections and policy; the Institute created, for example, the #YallaVote movement to encourage voting and activism.

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

(Washington, DC)
<http://www.adc.org/>
(202) 244-2990

The ADC is a civil rights organizations dedicated to “defending the rights of people of Arab descent and promoting their rich cultural heritage.” They focus on protecting the civil rights and liberties of Arab Americans, promoting understanding, and preserving cultural heritage.

Caveat



Our Recipe for Unity is not suggesting that any person's culture or ethnic identity can be synthesized into one Fact Sheet. Our resources are just a place of beginning. We encourage you to learn more by contacting any of the organizations mentioned at the end of our Fact Sheets; to talk with people from different cultures and ethnicities to learn from them; and to please feel free to send us any resources that you think would be helpful to include on this site or in these Fact Sheets.