

Title:

Israeli Food Guide

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628

Summary:

Once you begin to know some Hebrew you discover that many Israelis spend most of their time chatting about money and food. This is odd because they end up eating the same things all the time anyway. This isn't a dilemma though as Israeli cuisine is as good as anywhere in the region and, this being the Middle East, eating together is an essential part of their culture. 'He who eats alone, dies alone' is a common proverb.

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Article Body:

Each Friday night the streets of the towns and cities fall silent as Israelis go to eat the Shabbat meal with their families. Then on each festival they're obliged to go home and gorge at their mothers' table again. What they eat varies a great deal as Israelis come from all corners of the planet and the food ranges from Polish soups to Yemenite bread.

There are some things though that almost every Israeli eats and which you shouldn't overlook if you travel in Israel.

Aubergines - Called hatsoolim, the eggplant in Israel is baked and then made into a paste for sandwiches and pitta bread.

Bagels - They're ring-shaped, coated in sesame seeds and assured to block up your intestines for days.

Felafel - Common to many Arabic countries, this is the original one stop fast food in Israel. Boiled chick pea are mashed with onion, coriander and other spices and then deep fried in balls. These are inserted into pitta bread with a generous quantity of hummous and tahina and, though damn healthy, can constipate you for days. The Israelis had some troubles with deceitful falafel stalls using machine oil in the deep pan but they say it's been sorted out now.

Hummous - The standard food of hippies all over the world, few refrigerators in

Israel won't have a tub of hummous on hand. It's chick peas boiled up and the mashed with tahini, lemon, garlic and, hopefully, olive oil. The commercial hummous is often full with saturated oil so it's best to buy in the markets or, preferably, from the Arabs. Israelis often add extra olive oil and the zatar herb on top.

Israeli Salad - Israelis cut their vegetables small and the usual salad is tomatoes, cucumber and onion in small cubes.

Jacknun and Malouach - Shabbat law prohibits Jews from doing any kind of work on a Saturday so they get around it by leaving bread to cook slowly overnight on the Friday (turning ovens off is allowed. Jacknun and malouach are chunky and greasy and are best with a kind of tomato salsa.

Pitta Bread - If you ever felt silly trying to balance slices of meat and salad on bread it's because you're a dumb goy. In the Middle East they've been eating bread for thousands of years with a pocket in it so that you don't have to replace your shirt after each meal. Pitta bread is quite heavy though, made with oil.

Shakshuka - The favourite Israeli breakfast, this is basically eggs boiled in tomato and onion juice. The consistency varies from a tomato stew to something more like scrambled eggs with tomato. You need to eat it with thick bread and then you're set for the day.

Tahina - This is mashed sesame seeds that comes in a concentrated form that the rest of the world calls tahini. The rest of the world thinks it's a sandwich spread though and Israelis find it funny to watch Europeans getting their jaws stuck on the thick tahina paste. What you're supposed to do is dilute it with lemon juice and warm water, mixing it in with a fork and then throw in some garlic and parsley. Then it's great with bread and salad.

Wine - Israelis don't really have a drinking culture (if you don't count the recent Russian arrivals) but wine is essential for every Friday meal or holiday. Grapes are grown in the Carmel region and whilst the vineyards of Bordeaux aren't losing any sleep, it's not a bad drop.

Zatar - This is a Middle Eastern herb that gives some flavour to your hummous or tahina. The fact that it's full of salt kind of helps too.