

VEGANIS TALK



VEGAN FOOD FROM
THE MIDDLE EAST
& MAGHREB

All the cash from this zine goes to Vafa Animal Shelter in Hashtgerd, Iran. "Vafa" means "loyalty" in Farsi. The shelter was founded in 2003 by Fatemeh Motamedi, who donated her own land and funds to see the shelter's creation. Today Vafa's volunteers care for over 400 dogs & depends on donations to keep the project running.

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Hallo!

Welcome to Veganistan. This is an attempt to smash popular misconceptions that you can't be a healthy, happy, belly-rubbin vegan in the Mid East.

In the beginning, there were fancy notions of making this zine more than it is. I wanted to interview vegans, vegetarians and activists from the Middle East & Maghreb and write essays about environmental and animal rights issues in the region. I wanted to get right up in the face of every chest-thumping Western animal rights activist that shot bigotry & xenophobia eastwards in the name of speaking out against animal cruelty. In the end, I decided that isn't my zine to conjure up. At least not solo.

I'm not from the Middle East. I hang out there a lot (deep down, possibly, an underlying motivation is the wholesale opportunity for delicious food to cross paths with me) & try to be as politically involved as an outsider can. But some comments and battles are not mine to make and fight. Some white, Western activists have projected their own subjectivities onto the region - I would like not to do the same.

The concept of the "Middle East" has historically been fraught with Orientalist notions of exoticism & "other"ness, stemming from European colonialism, American neo-colonialism and cultural hegemony. I'm not a big fan of borders & am in no hurry to define the region's cultural, let alone physical parameters. Some culinary commonalities can be traced throughout the Middle East and North Africa though, and are the only similarities I might wanna draw.

For the sake of balance, some background maybe warrants a mention. The Quran, originating from 7th century Arabia, preaches a message of compassion

towards all living creatures and contains a large number of quotes from Muhammad on the ethical treatment of animals and their ability to suffer and feel pain. 15th century Sufi poet Kabir Sahib denounced meat-eating as the ultimate failure of compassion. Today a number of Muslim vegetarian and environmental forums, groups and blogs can be found, centred often on promoting compassion with other creatures and critiquing what may truly constitute a halal diet in the 21st century. Each Lent, many Eastern Orthodox Christians abstain from animal products to cleanse oneself in preparation for Easter.

Through pulling these recipes together (all ripped, tried & loved from other sources: see above, under "outsider") I'm not seeking to project my own, Western-informed values onto another culture, nor romanticise these regions or skew their images. I sure hope it won't be taken as such. This zine is not a comment on anyone's diet or way of life. If there is any message at all, it is only that there is a kaleidoscope of delicious eatin's to be had.

So enough yak & more gnash & ample rubbing of bellies. Kapow!



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SOUP!

Moroccan Sweet Potato and Chickpea Soup

Makes 4 servings.

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large onion, roughly chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 teaspoon ground coriander
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon chili powder
600 g sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
500 g carrots, peeled and sliced
6 cups vegetable stock
300 g cooked chickpeas
Juice of 1/2 lemon

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat, add onion and garlic and cook for 3 minutes. Stir in spices and cook for a further 2 minutes.

Add sweet potato and carrot. After 10 minutes, add stock and cover the pan, bring to the boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Add chick peas and simmer for further 10 mins until chick peas are tender.

Blend until smooth, season well with salt and fresh black pepper and add lemon juice to taste.

Lebanese Gazpacho

2 cups cooked chick peas
3 spring onions, chopped
1 tomato, diced
1/2 cup oats
3 or 4 garlic cloves
1/4 cup olive oil
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground coriander
Pinch of cayenne pepper
Za'atar, a few pinches
Juice of half a lemon
1 pita bread or other flatbread
Water, as needed

Lightly fry the spring onions in the olive oil for a couple minutes. Add the chick peas along with one cup of water. Add the cumin and coriander and a bit of cayenne and let the mixture simmer for 30 minutes or longer.

Cut the pita bread into small squares in the pita bread and place in a pan, drizzle some olive oil and bake in a 150°C oven till the croutons are toasted and golden. Thirty seconds before you take 'em out, sprinkle the za'atar over and toss the croutons.

Add the oats to the chick pea pot and continue to simmer for 15 minutes longer. Crush the garlic and add. Remove the soup from heat and allow to cool a little, then blend until the soup is smooth but still a bit coarse. Add the lemon juice, taste and fiddle with the seasoning if you need to.

Serve with diced tomatoes, extra spring onions and the za'atar-flavoured croutons.

Apricot Soup

2 onions, diced
3 carrots, peeled and chopped
3 cups dry red lentils
300g dried apricots, chopped
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp cumin
Salt to taste

Heat the oil up and fry the onions and carrots. After 10 minutes add the cumin and stir well. Turn the heat up, cover the pot and let the veg sweat for 10 minutes.

Add the lentils, and pour in enough water to cover them completely. Bring to a boil, then bring it down to a medium heat and simmer for 20 minutes, or until lentils and carrots are tender. Add more water as needed as the lentils soften.

Remove from heat and stir in the apricots and salt. Blend until smooth and serve hot.



مهل

DIP!

Hummus

3 cups cooked chickpeas
¼ cup lemon juice
1 cup tahini
2 tsp cumin
1 tbsp salt
1 tbsp pepper
¼ cup olive oil
Paprika and parsley (to season)

Drain chickpeas and rinse really well. Have a quick check to pick out any blackened ones. If you have loads of time on your hands and are trying to impress someone with your hummus, your time will be well spent removing the chickpeas from their shells. It takes about 20-30 minutes, but afterwards you'll have a big pile of slimy chickpea shells and a new-found appreciation for how much better they taste *sans* shell. Rinse them again afterwards. If you're in a hurry, skip this step.

Set one tablespoon of chickpeas aside. Blend the remainder, or if you don't have one, you can use a fork.

In a separate bowl, mix together the tahini, lemon juice and spices. It will defy science and form a thicker paste than the one you started with. Now, add a little bit of water and keep mixing. Continue adding wee bits of water until you've reached a nice, runny-creamy consistency.

Blend the tahini mix and chickpeas together with the olive oil. For astronomical levels of nom, try using the leftover oil from a jar of sundried tomatoes!

The key to serving hummus is presentation. Serve in a deep plate, whisking a spoon over the top to form ravines over which you can pour a tad more oil, and sprinkle with paprika, parsley and leftover chickpeas.

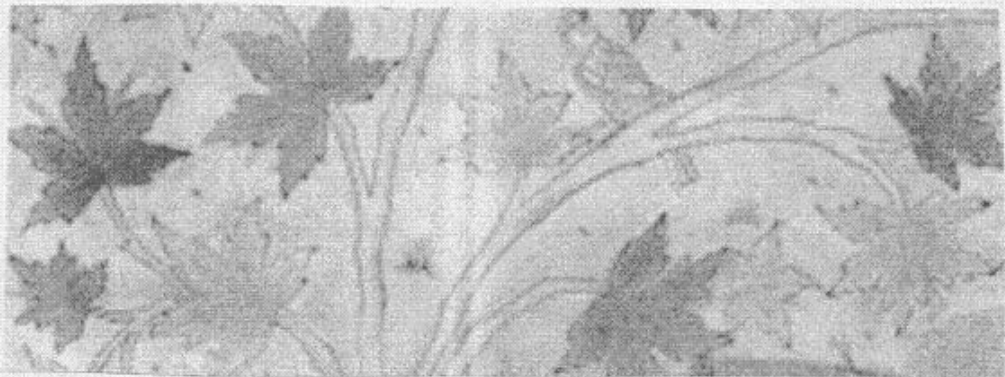
Extra credit: roast a whole red pepper, blend, then combine with the recipe above.

Baba Ghanoush

4 eggplants
4 onions
2 green or red bell peppers
2 garlic cloves
Juice of 1 lemon
1 tsp cumin
Salt and olive oil to taste

Preheat oven to 250°C. Peel and quarter the onion. Grill eggplants, onions and peppers for 15-20 minutes or until well done.

Slice open the eggplant and remove the soft, squishy inside with a big spoon. Blend the garlic, vegetables, olive oil, spices and lemon juice thoroughly together and feast.



Kara'a

A spicy Libyan pumpkin dip.

600g pumpkin, peeled, deseeded, and chopped into little cubes
1 tsp caraway seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 fresh red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
Juice of 1 lemon
1/3 cup olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Put the pumpkin in a saucepan with 2/3 cup of water, and bring to the boil. Simmer for about 10 minutes until soft. Drain the pumpkin and return to the empty pan. Season well with salt and pepper and mash with a fork until smooth. Set aside.

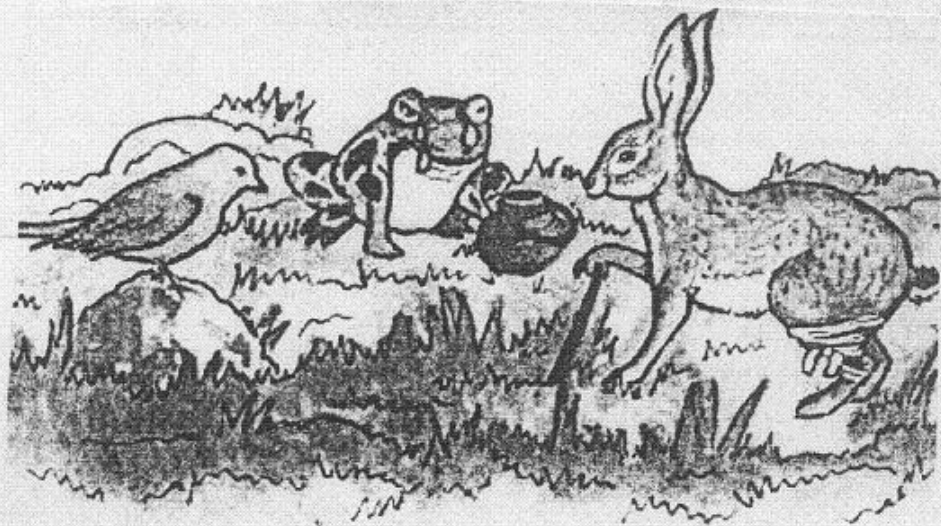
Dry-roast the caraway and cumin seeds in a small frying pan over a medium-high heat for a couple of minutes until aromatic. Crush the toasted seeds using a mortar and pestle then add the garlic, chilli and a pinch of salt, and work into a smooth paste.

Stir the spice mixture and lemon juice into the mashed pumpkin, then mix in the olive oil. Serve hot or cold as mezze, with a lotta hot pita bread.

Al-Baqdunsiyye

1 cup tahini
1 bunch fresh parsley
2 tbsp lemon juice
2 cloves garlic
1tsp cumin
1 tsp olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
Water

Finely chop parsley leaves. Crush garlic and mix with parsley leaves with a pinch of salt. Pour tahini into a bowl and, stirring continuously, add lemon juice and spices, mixing until it has formed a firm paste. Add the parsley mix and slowly pour in the water as you continue mixing, until the tahini covers the parsley and you've got a nice creamy consistency.



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SPICE BLENDS!

Duqqa

Duqqa is a beautiful and unique Egyptian snowflake of herbs, spices and nuts. Dunk bread and good olive oil in it or sprinkle over salads.

200g sesame seeds
200g hazelnuts
35g large coriander seeds
35g cumin seeds
15g fennel seeds
1 tsp black peppercorns
1 tsp sea salt
1 tsp sweet paprika

Toast sesame seeds in a pre-heated oven at 175° for about 10 minutes or until they're a pale golden brown colour. On a separate tray, toast the hazelnuts for 10-15 minutes. Cool and place into separate bowls. Rub the skins from the hazelnuts in a clean tea towel.

Cool and place the toasted hazelnuts into a food processor and grind until fine, but stop short of letting them turn into a paste. Mix in with the toasted sesame seeds.

Toast the spices on a baking tray at 150° for 5 minutes. Cool, then grind in a blender to a fine powder.

Pound the salt and peppercorns with a mortar and pestle or a spice grinder until a coarse powder has formed. Add the paprika and mix well. Mix everything together, and voila.

Za'atar

Za'atar is a happy green gift to your tastebuds... put a little dish of it alongside flat bread, good olive oil & hummus.

1/4 cup sumac
2 tbsp thyme
1 tbsp roasted sesame seeds
2 tbsp marjoram
2 tbsp oregano
1 tsp coarse salt

Grind the sesame seeds with a mortar and pestle, or, if it's too 20th century, a blender. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well.

Store za'atar in a cool, dark place in a plastic zip bag or in an airtight container. If you keep it like this it stays good up to 6 months.

BREAD!

Manakish bi za'atar

Manakish bi za'atar is a soft flat bread topped with za'atar. Eating this will always remind me of winter mornings round a fire in East Jerusalem.

500g flour
1/2 tbsp dry yeast
1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp sugar
1/2 cup water
1/2 cup olive oil
1/2 cup fresh green za'atar

Preheat the oven to 250°C. Dissolve yeast and sugar in 1/2 cup warm water, then cover cup and leave in a warm place until a foam has formed from the yeast mixture. Sift flour into a bowl with salt. Gradually mix in the yeast mixture and oil, knead until dough is smooth.

Section dough into small pieces, about the size of the palm of your hand. Flatten them with a rolling pin to approximately 2 cm thick and allow them to sit for 10 minutes so that the dough can rise.

Arrange the dough on an oven tray (no need to grease) and bake for 10 minutes or until bread has become golden in colour.

Kessra

Kessra is an awesome semolina bread from Algeria. Semolina couscous and kessra flatbread is an Algerian Berber staple, who maintain that if you have semolina you'll never go hungry. Unfortunately a lot of the chunkier, cakier kessras contain milk, eggs and butter - but the basic version is all olive oil - and panache!

Makes 4 medium size flat breads

5 cups fine semolina
½ cup olive oil
2 tbsp salt
2 tbsp dry yeast
2 cups warm water
Handful black cumin seeds (also known as nigella)

Mix together all the ingredients except the water. Then, slowly, add the water to form a soft (but not squishy) dough. Knead for 10 minutes til you've reached a smooth consistency. Leave to stand for 10 minutes.

Divide the dough into 4 equal-sized balls. Knead a tbsp of black cumin seeds into each ball.

Heat a heavy frying pan, and roll the balls flat to about 1cm thick. Prick the surface of the dough with a fork a couple of times then place in the frying pan, dry cooking both sides on medium heat until the surface is golden brown. Cut into big pizza wedges and feast.

Naw Saci

Naw Saci is a Kurdish bread baked at Ramadan and delivered to the poor or friends who have lost loved ones.

500g plain flour
300ml water (approx)
1 tsp salt
2 tsp dry yeast
½ tsp sugar
½ tbsp ground fennel
½ tbsp ground fenugreek
½ tbsp ground coriander
1 tbsp sesame and black sesame seeds
Veg oil for frying



Mix the yeast with half the water and sugar, and leave to froth. Mix the flour, herbs and sesame seeds in with the yeast mixture and add the rest of the water slowly, to form a stiff dough. Cover with a wet cloth and leave to stand for one hour.

Divide the dough into 12 balls. Flatten each ball until it is about 1cm thick. Heat oil in a deep frying pan and fry each dough ball until they are golden. Remove from the pan and pop in a container with a tight lid to keep hot. Serve with a sweet syrup or jam and black tea.

SALAD!

Strawberry Tabbouleh

1 ½ cups bulgur wheat
2 punnets strawberries
4 tomatoes
1 seedless cucumber
½ cup spring onions
3 garlic cloves
3 cups flat leaf parsley
¾ cup mint leaf
1 cup toasted pecans
¼ cup lemon juice
4 tbsp olive oil
1 cube vegetable stock
Salt & pepper to taste

Mix bulgur and 1 tbsp olive oil in a bowl. Dissolve the stock in 3 cups boiling water and pour over the bulgur. Cover and let stand for 15-20 minutes, or until soft.

Dice the cucumber, tomatoes, spring onions and strawberries. Chop the parsley, mint and pecans and crush the garlic.

Drain the bulgur well. Toss with the veg, herbs, strawberries, pecans, garlic and remaining olive oil. Add salt and pepper to taste, and refrigerate until ready to feast.

Orange Blossom and Carrot Salad

Serves 4.

800g carrots
2 cloves garlic
1 tbsp sugar
1 tbsp olive oil
2 taps orange blossom water
1/2 tsp salt
Black pepper
Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley and coriander to garnish

Peel carrots and chop into long, fine strips. Place in a pot with just enough water to cover them, with half the garlic and the sugar. Boil just until tender and drain.

While the carrots are boiling, mix together the olive oil, orange blossom water, remaining garlic, and pepper.

Return the carrots to the pot with orange blossom mixture and fry over a low heat for a few minutes to combine the flavours. Remove from heat, mix parsley and coriander and serve.

FALAFEL!

Spicy falafel

400g can chickpeas, washed and drained
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
2 tsp cayenne pepper
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground coriander
1 handful fresh parsley, chopped
1 tsp bicarb soda
1 tsp salt
¼ cup sesame seeds
Veg oil for frying

Heat 1 tbsp oil in a large pan and fry the onion and garlic over a low heat for 5 mins until softened. Mash together with the chickpeas and spices, til the chickpeas are totally broken down (you can use a blender too if you're lazy). Stir in the parsley and season to taste. Try squishing the mixture together to make sure it's a nice consistency. (if it feels a tiny bit too dry, you can always add a little bit of water - or, contrariwise, some flour if it's too moist)

Mould the mix together into little balls and flatten into patties. Give them a quick roll in the sesame seeds to coat them. Heat the remaining oil in the pan, then fry the falafels on a medium heat for 2 or 3 minutes on each side, until golden brown and firm. Drain on paper towels. Don't burn yo'self! Serve hot with just about anything.

Yemeni Falafel

500g green beans
2 small hot peppers
1 large onion
2 teaspoons ground coriander
1 teaspoon ground cumin
3 cloves garlic, mashed with a pinch of salt
1 cup cornmeal, polenta or semolina
½ cup chopped pecans or other nuts
2 cups veg oil for frying

Boil the green beans for 5 minutes, then drain, cut the ends off and chop roughly.

Chop the onion into quarters. Combine in a blender with the peppers, spices and green beans. Blend until nicely ground, then add the cornmeal and blend for a couple more seconds.

Heat some of the oil in a deep frying pan. Pour some cornmeal into a small bowl. When the oil is hot, take a large spoon and dip in water, then dip in the cornmeal. Then take a scoop of falafel batter, dip in the cornmeal bowl and gently plop into the hot oil. *Dir balak* - be careful! - not to splash the oil. You can add several spoons of falafel at once for frying, just make sure to keep an eye on them.

Flip each falafel over after one minute of frying. Remove and place on paper towels to soak up excess oil. Toast yr delicious work and pray for the downfall of President Saleh.

Tameya

Tameya is Coptic Egypt's answer to chickpea falafel, made with fava beans (broad beans) and much loved up and down the Nile.

2 cups dried, peeled broad beans or 3 cups cooked beans
6 green onions, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/3 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
2 tsps chopped coriander
2 tsps ground cumin
Pinch of chilli powder
1 tsp fenugreek seeds
1/4 tsp bicarb soda
2 tsps sea salt
1/4 cup sesame seeds
Veg oil for frying

If using dried beans, soak together with fenugreek in water overnight and drain. The following day, place beans (canned or soaked) in a blend with together with onions, garlic herbs, spices and bicarb soda. Wet your hands and shape the mixture into 4cm cakes. Coat lightly with sesame seeds.

Heat the oil in a deep frying pan over medium heat and cook the tameya cakes in batches, turning every 1-2 minutes until golden. Drain on paper towels.

PASTRY!

Spicy Veg Phyllo Pastries

Secret spicy goodies await within.

1/2 red onion, chopped
4 tsps Moroccan spice mix (??)
3/4 cup chopped red pepper
3/4 cup chopped yellow pepper
3/4 cup chopped green pepper
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper
3 garlic cloves, crushed
1 bunch arugula, sliced
3/4 cup Baba Ghanoush
4 sheets phyllo pastry
1/4 cup olive oil

Preheat oven to 220°C and line an oven tray with baking paper. Heat 2 tsp of the olive oil in a frying pan over medium heat.

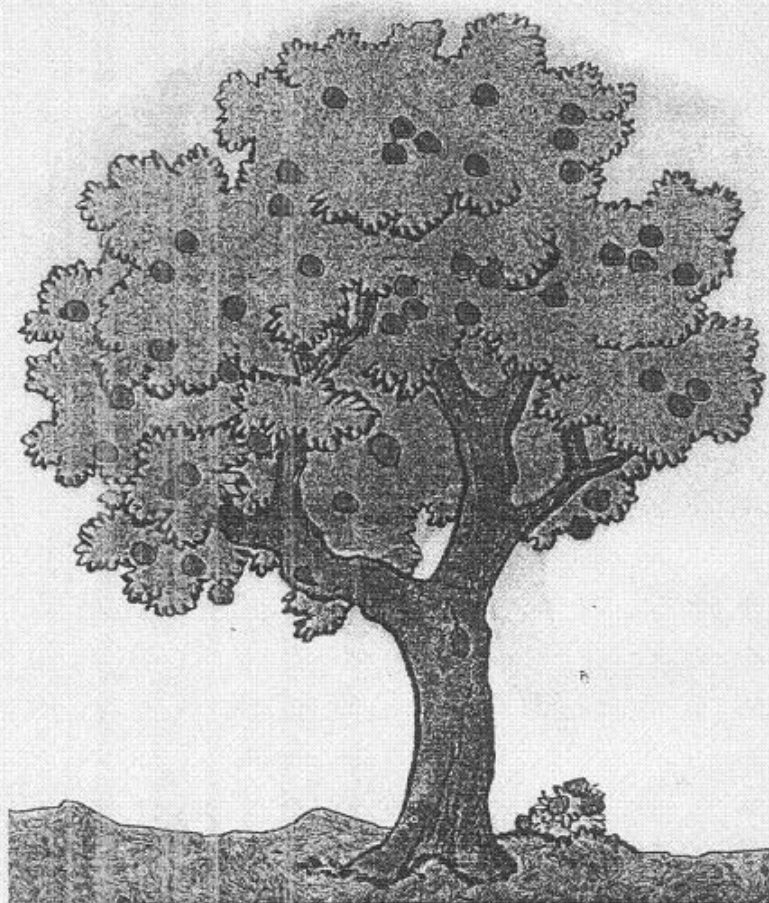
Fry onions and spices for 3 minutes until softened. Add peppers, salt, pepper and garlic and fry until tender, for about 2 minutes. Add arugula. Remove from heat, transfer to a bowl and allow to cool a bit. Mix in the Baba Ghanoush.

Lay 1 sheet of phyllo on work surface. Brush the whole sheet lightly with olive oil and lay the second sheet on top. Cut into 4 strips lengthwise. Place 1/8th of filling mixture at one end of each strip. Fold the phyllo over to make a triangle. Continue the triangle fold to the end of the strip.

Fold remaining strips. Repeat with remaining 2 sheets of phyllo and filling. Place triangles on prepared baking sheet and brush lightly with

remaining olive oil. Cook for 15 minutes or until golden and crisp.

Serve with more Baba Ghanoush!



دار

Spinach Fatayer

A golden pie from the Fertile Crescent.

250g plain flour
1/2 tsp dried yeast
500g baby spinach, finely chopped
1 onion, finely chopped
1 small tomato, finely chopped
Olive oil
1 tbsp sumac
1 tsp salt

Combine the flour, yeast and salt in a large bowl. Gradually add 160ml lukewarm water and stir to form a dough. Sprinkle dough over a work surface and get kneadin' on the dough. Knead until smooth, adding a tad more flour if too sticky. Leave in a covered bowl for 1 hour until the dough has doubled in size.

Meanwhile you can make the filling! Combine the onion, spinach, tomato and sumac in a large bowl. Season with salt and stir it up. Now dip into a sieve and drain, pressing down with the back of a spoon to remove any excess moisture.

Heat your oven to 200°C. Divide dough into 20 balls, and cover again to prevent dough drying out. Roll each ball onto yr work surface (flour it again first), then, with a floured rolling pin, roll out until 4mm thick. Place a tablespoon of the filling in the centre then fold the dough in from 3 sides to form a triangular parcel. Press edges together with your fingertips to seal and place on a lined baking tray. Repeat til you're ready to bake.

Lightly brush each fatayer with oil, then bake for 25 minutes or until golden and cooked through. Cool. Dust with extra sumac and munch.

STUFFED STUFF!

Yaprax Kuleke

Yaprax Kuleke is a stuffed zucchini dish from Mardin, a small town on a big cliff in north Kurdistan.

200g rice
8 small onions, finely chopped
2kg zucchini
500g tomatoes, finely chopped
2 tbsp tomato puree
100g almond flakes or pine nuts
400ml olive oil
100g raisins
1 small bunch fresh mint, finely chopped
1 tbsp sugar
1 tbsp cumin
Salt and pepper to taste

Soak the rice in boiled water. While it soaks, cut the tops off the zucchinis, peel and cut each one across the middle and scoop out the pulp in each.

Fry the onions in the olive oil for a couple minutes, then add the nuts, salt, pepper and cumin.

Drain the rice, rinse, and drain again. Add it to the onion mix and stir well. Cook on a medium heat for ten minutes. Add the tomatoes, raisins, sugar, mint and one cup of water. Mix and cook for a further ten minutes, covered, over a low heat.

Remove from heat and carefully stuff the zucchinis with the rice mixture. Lay them side by side on a baking tray and cover with a thin tomato sauce by mixing the tomato puree with water. Bake at 150°C for 30 minutes and serve hot.

GRAINS!

Al-Maqlube

Maqlube means "upside down" in Arabic and is the culinary equivalent of Mr. Scribble. A real masterpiece and great for feeding large hoards of people at once.

500g eggplant
500g cauliflower
500g potatoes
5 tomatoes
2 peppers
2 onions
2 cups cooked chickpeas
2½ cup rice
½ cup vegetable oil
½ cup pine nuts
1 cube veg stock
3 L water
2 tbsp salt
1 tbsp turmeric
1 tbsp cumin
3 tsp pepper
2 tsp fenugreek
2 tsp allspice

Soak rice with salt in hot water for one hour. Slice all vegetables into thick pieces. Then, in separate batches, lightly fry the vegetables and then leave to stand on separate plates.

Pour at least a third of a cup of oil into the bottom of a super large pot. Sprinkle the pine nuts over the bottom then layer the fried tomatoes over the top. Layer the eggplant, peppers, cauliflower and potatoes over this, and finally the chickpeas. Drain the rice then pour it over the top of the vegetables.

Add spices and remainder of the salt. Dissolve the stock in the 3L of water and pour into the pot, ensuring the maqlube is submerged by 2cm of water. Bring the pot to boil on a high heat, then lower and allow to simmer for 45 minutes or until all water is absorbed.

When the maqlube is ready, remove the pot lid and cover with a large serving tray. With one person holding either handle of the pot and either end of the tray firmly together, quickly turn it over upside-down with the pot resting on top of the tray. Slowly lift the pot, allowing the maqlube to stand alone, with layer after layer of beautiful veg, legumes and rice revealed. Served best on the floor at the centre of a circle of hungry people with spoons.



Madfoonet loobyeh (Bulgur & beans casserole)

A dish from rural Lebanon. "Madfooneh" means buried, here, green beans are buried under a pile of bulgur and chick peas.

1 large onion
600g green beans
2 cloves garlic
1 ½ cups coarse bulgur
4 cups cooked chickpeas
5 tomatoes
1 ½ tsp cumin
1 tsp cinnamon
½ cup olive oil
Pinch of salt

Dice the onion and tomatoes. Heat the oil in a large pot and add the onions. Fry until golden-brown. Blanch the green beans in boiling water for a couple minutes. Remove the beans and save 2 cups of the water.

Add the tomatoes and spices to the onions. Cover the pot and simmer on a low heat for 30 minutes. Crush the garlic and add, along with the bulgur, chickpeas and a pinch of salt, stirring well. Add the green beans water. Simmer for another 20 minutes.

Remove the lid, allowing some of the liquid to evaporate. Once the bulgur is soft, add the green beans.

Serve hot with green onions, radishes or other fresh veg.

Mjadara

Mjadara is big in Egypt and the Mashreq, but especially amongst Antiochian Orthodox at Lent, when abstinence from meat and dairy makes Orthodox Christian tables good ones to get invited to dinner for.

1 cup small grain brown rice
1 cup medium grain brown rice
4 tsp salt, plus extra to taste
600g brown lentils, soaked overnight and rinsed
5 small onions
11-12 cloves of garlic, crushed
1 ½ tsp cumin
1 ½ tsp allspice
¼ tsp black pepper
Olive oil for frying

Soak rice in very hot water with 4 tsp salt. While the rice is soaking, slice onions as thinly as possible.

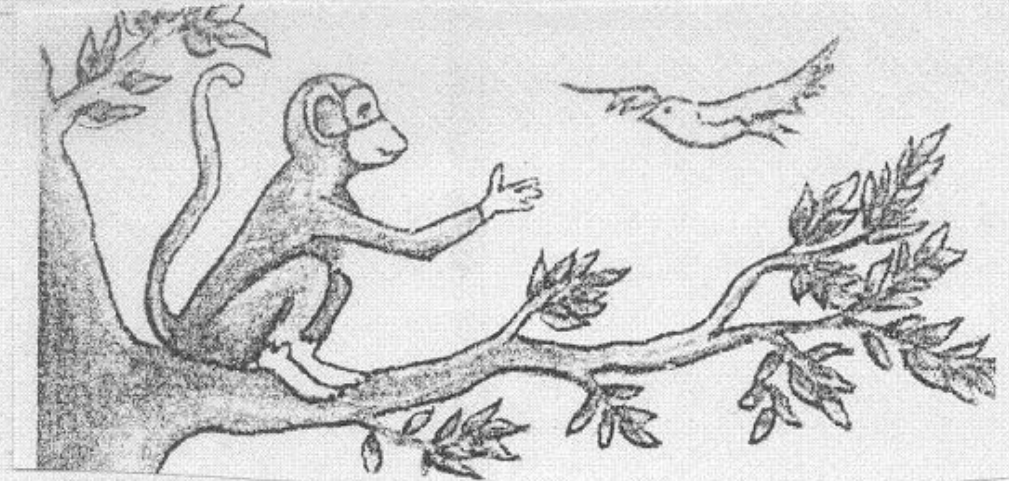
Put the lentils in a pot and cover with about 2cm of water. Add the garlic and bring to a boil, then lower to a medium heat and cook covered, stirring occasionally. Rinse rice well and drain and add to the lentils. Taste the water, adding salt as necessary. Add the spices and black pepper to taste.

Fry the onions in olive oil over a low heat until caramelized and just crispy. When finished, strain from oil and set aside.

When the rice is done, stir in the oil from the onions and cook on a low heat for 5 minutes. Serve hot with a few of the fried onions on top.

SWEET THINGS!

There is a reason why this is Tripoli-longer (ho ho!!) than all the other sections.



Zalbiya

Zalabiya is a traditional donut cooked in oil and sprinkled with sugar.

1 kg flour
6 cups corn or vegetable oil
3 cups olive oil
½ cup sesame seeds
1 tsp salt
1 tsp dry yeast

To decorate:

1 cup roasted sesame seeds
½ cup poppy seeds

Mix flour, salt, yeast, sesame seeds and water to form a soft dough. Allow to stand for one hour to rise.

Cut the dough into medium-size loaf shapes.

In a deep pan, combine the oils and heat. Fry the dough pieces until golden brown, then drain of excess oil on paper towel and coat with extra seeds.

Lebanese sweet tahini swirls

Makes 4 large swirls.

Dough

1 teasp dry yeast
120 ml lukewarm water
200 g plain flour
2 tsp sugar
1 tbsp olive oil

Filling

4 tbsp tahini
4 tbsp sugar
4 tsp olive oil
4 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp grated lemon zest
White castor sugar and flour to dust worktop

Dissolve the yeast in the lukewarm water, and add the sugar and oil. Add the flour, handful by handful. Quickly knead into a floppy, flexible dough. If it still sticks to your hands, add a bit more flour. Cover the bowl with a tea towel and leave to rise for 2 to 3 hours.

Divide the dough into four balls. Roll out one ball at a time, into a rectangle shape about 2 or 3 mm thick. Scatter a teaspoon of olive oil over it. Then combine the tahini with the sugar and lemon zest, to form a thick, almost crumbly paste. Scatter over the dough. Dust with cinnamon. Gently press it flat with the back of a spoon. You're now ready to roll.

Pre-heat the oven to 190° C, dust the worktop with a bit of castor sugar and flour to help with the rolling and cut squares of baking paper about 17 x 17 cm. Now roll up the dough rectangle, gently twisting it as you roll to form a much longer sausage shape,

40-50 cm. Starting from one end of the sausage, roll it flatly around itself, forming a rolled bun. Gently press it flat with your hand, then transfer to a piece of baking paper. Press flatter and wider with a rolling pin, until it is about 1cm thick. Prepare as much swirls as your oven can hold in one go, and leave the rest covered up for the next round.

Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the surface turns a deep golden brown. Remove from the oven and leave them to cool and get nice and crispy on a wire rack. Eat while warm and crunchy-gooey with apple tea.

Nan-e Nokhodchi

Nan-e Nokhodchi is one of seven sweets served at Nawruz, Persian New Year, a tradition dating back to the Zoroastrian times of Iran, when King Jamshid was said to have discovered sugar. The word "candy" is derived from the *qand*, the Farsi word for "sugar".

1 cup canola oil
1 1/2 cups icing sugar
4 tsp finely ground cardamom
1 tbsp rose water
4 1/2 cups fine, roasted chickpea flour, sifted 3 times
4 tbsp unsalted slivered pistachios to garnish

Combine oil, sugar, cardamom and rose water in a bowl and blend with an electric mixer for 2 minutes until white and creamy. Add chickpea flour all at once, and mix for 1 minute until dough is no longer sticky. Dust work surface with chickpea flour, knead dough 2 minutes by hand and flatten dough on surface until 12cm square and 2cm thick. Wrap in plastic wrap, place on plate and stand for 1 hour in refrigerator.

Preheat oven to 150°C. Unwrap dough. Use cloverleaf cookie cutter to cut out the cookies. Place cookies on

an oven tray lined with baking paper, leaving 2cm between pieces to allow for spreading. Decorate each with a slivered pistachio.

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until cookie bottoms are light golden. Remove cookies from oven and allow to cool.

Ma'amoul

Ma'amoul is a friendly, squishy date biscuit. Make & munch in vast quantities.

Dough

2 cups semolina
½ cup all purpose flour
¼ cup margarine
¼ cup icing sugar
1 tbsp rose water
1 tsp active dried yeast
1 tbsp lukewarm water
Pinch of salt

Date Pistachio Filling

2 cups fresh soft-pitted dates
½ cup shelled pistachios
¼ cup icing sugar
1 tsp rose water

If you manage to get yr mitts on one, special Ma'amoul moulds to press and shape the cookies exist and are widely used in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine - specially at Ramadan. If you can't find one, it's fine to use your hands.

Melt the margarine and cool it to room temperature. Sift flour together with semolina and margarine. Dissolve the yeast in the lukewarm water and combine with rose water, powdered sugar and salt. Add to the flour mixture. Mix well, adding a little bit of water to form a dough. Cover and allow to stand for 3 hours.

Grind the pistachios in a blender. Add dates, sugar and rose water, blending together into fine paste.

Preheat the oven to 175°C. Knead and divide the dough into lime sized balls. Flatten each ball using your hand and lift the sides up to form a hollow. Place one tablespoon of the date-pistachio filling into the hollowed dough. Close the dough over the date mixture, pressing the edges to seal well. Press it into the Ma'amoul mould (if you have it - if not just press well with your hands). Turn the mould over and shake gently to loosen it from the mold. Prepare each one in this way and place them neatly in rows on a lined baking tray.

Bake for about 20 minutes. Turn the tray around halfway through for totally even baking. When Ma'amoul are lightly golden, remove from oven and allow to cool.

Turkish Apple Cake

A traditional Turkish cake for scoffing w/ apple tea and shisha.

675 g cooking apples, peeled, cored and chopped	
100 g brown sugar	Juice of 1 lemon
100 g plain flour	A dash of apple juice
50 g mixed nuts, chopped	1 pinch salt
50 g sultanas	1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp cinnamon	½ tsp vanilla essence

Preheat the oven to 180°. Put the chopped apples into a large bowl and sprinkle with the lemon juice.

Combine the nuts, sultanas, sugar, flour, salt and baking powder and mix well. Mix this up with the apples, then add the vanilla essence and mix some more.

Pour the mixture into a lightly oiled cake tin and bake in the preheated oven for 20 minutes, or until lightly browned on top.

Charoset

Charoset is a thick, chutney-like condiment eaten at Passover to symbolise the mortar used to bind bricks together during the ancient Egyptian enslavement of the Jewish people. Charoset varies throughout Jewish communities around the world. This style combines dates, banana and apple and is big in Iran.

1 cup whole pitted dates
1/3 cup hazelnuts
1/3 cup whole blanched almonds
1/4 cup raisins
1/4 cup golden raisins
2 tbsp sweet red wine
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup shredded peeled granny smith apple
1/3 cup sliced banana

Place the hazelnuts on a baking sheet and bake at 175° for 10 minutes, shaking once halfway through. Turn the nuts out onto a towel. Roll the towel up to rub the skins off the nuts.

Combine hazelnuts, dates, almonds, raisins, and golden raisins in a blender. Process until ground, scraping the sides of bowl occasionally. The mixture should be thick and crumbly but will hold together when pressed. Add wine, ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, and cloves and blend until all is unified!

Add the apple and banana and blend once more. Transfer mixture to a bowl. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Safra

Safra is a traditional Libyan spice cake. Chow down and get sweet on it as you watch sour-face Gaddafi on Al Jazeera.

Date filling

3 tbsp sunflower oil
700g pitted dates, chopped
1 tsp cinnamon
1/2 tsp ground clove

Syrup

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup water
1 cup honey
Juice of 1 lemon

Cake

900g semolina (fine or medium)
450g granulated sugar
2 tsp baking powder
1 cup sunflower oil
3/4 cup water
Blanched almonds

or whole cloves, to garnish

Heat the oil and dates in a heavy frying pan over a low heat, stirring continuously, for about 20 minutes until a thick paste has formed. Remove pan from the heat and stir in the cinnamon and cloves and allow the paste to cool.

Mix cake ingredients together, except the almonds/cloves, into a thick batter.

Pour half of the batter into a cake tin. Put the date filling over the top, pressing it into the corners of the tin so that it covers the batter. Pour in the rest of the batter and smooth out the surface.

Lightly run a knife over the top of the cake to create a diamond pattern. Press one almond or clove in the centre of each diamond. Bake at 175° for 45 minutes.

Mix together syrup ingredients in a pot and simmer over a low heat for 10 minutes, stirring continuously. When you've got the cake out of the oven, pour the hot syrup over the top and allow it to absorb. Let the cake sit for at least 6 hours before eating.

(In the spirit of staying true to the original recipes, so that ye can venture forth & chow down contentedly on site as well as in yr own kitchen, honey is listed here. I also don't like the "bottom line" argument that honey isn't vegan (but say, consuming genetically modified Monsanto cropped Brazilian soy beans is). Anyway, if you don't want to use honey, just replace it with maple syrup, agave nectar or whatever in equal amounts.

Qatayef

Qatayef is like a gift of delicious chopped nuts wrapped up in a pancake, made during Ramadan. Eat your presents wrapping & all.

Pancake

1 ½ cups flour
¾ tsp dry yeast
1 ½ cups warm water
1 tsp sugar
Pinch of salt
Veg oil for frying

Syrup

2 ½ cups sugar
1 tsp orange blossom water
1 tsp rose water
1 ½ cups water
1 tsp lemon juice

Nut filling

200g chopped walnuts
4 tsp sugar
2 tsp cinnamon

Mix pancake ingredients up into a batter. Heat a little oil in a frying pan on a medium heat, then pour several spoonfuls of batter at a time into the pan and cook on either side until done.

Mix the filling ingredients together in a bowl. Now combine the syrup ingredients in a saucepan over a low heat, stirring continuously until it boils. Continue to stir until the mixture thickens and the sugar is totally dissolved.

Spoon some of the filling in to the center of each pancake and fold one side over towards the other and

stick them together by pressing on the sides to form a crescent shaped pancake. Fry or bake until golden brown on both sides, then coat in syrup. Serve hot and delicious.

Loqum (aka Kurdish Delight)

1kg sugar
1 litres water
200g cornflour
1 tsp lemon juice
100g walnuts, coarsely chopped
2 tbsp rose water or 2 tsp cardamom powder

Mix half the water with the cornflour. Pour the other half of the water into a saucepan and, over a low heat, add the sugar and lemon juice. Keep stirring as the sugar dissolves. Add the cornflour mixture and mix well to get rid of any lumps. Keep stirring as the mixture thickens. Add the nuts and rose water and mix well.

Sprinkle a little cornflour or ground nuts over a flat serving dish. Pour the mixture over the tray, spreading it evenly, and leave to cool. Sprinkle a little more nuts over the top. Once cool cut with a sharp knife into 2-4 cm squares.