



# TAKE A BITE

EAT YOUR WAY AROUND THE WORLD

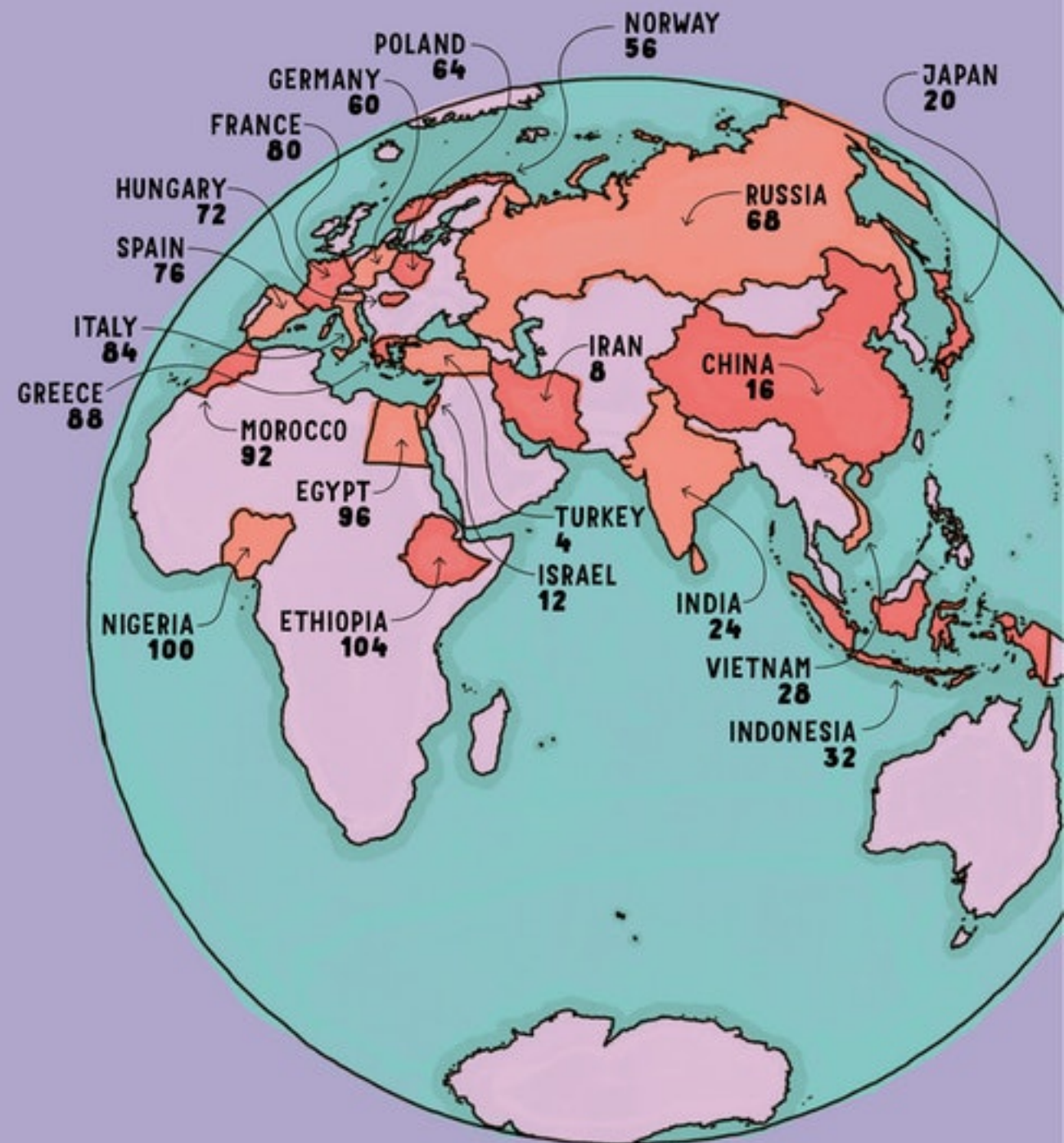
ALEKSANDRA MIZIELIŃSKA • DANIEL MIZIELIŃSKI  
NATALIA BARANOWSKA

TRANSLATED BY AGNES MONOD-GAYRAUD

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S



# CONTENTS



## INTRODUCTION

• Welcome aboard this culinary trail across the globe and through history — from the first wheat fields ever planted to the space age meals served up to astronauts in orbit. Each section will transport you to another country and cuisine, revealing the details of their most characteristic dishes and the history behind

their culinary traditions. What's more, we've included recipes so that you and your family can try your hand at creating lots of the treats in your own kitchen. You can read about food that kids from all over the world like to eat — and then sample some of the flavours for yourself!

• Skip over to China, Israel, Mexico and more... Using the **map** above you can easily navigate to your destination. And whenever you're looking for a dash of culinary inspiration, you can browse the **catalogue of featured recipes** on the next two pages. Towards the end of the book, you'll also find a **timeline** that will

transport you instantly to a particular moment in the history of food and feasting. Finally, you'll find the **index** at the back, which puts the main ingredients used in this book right at your fingertips.

• We've done our best to pack in as much information as possible, but even if

we had 1,000 pages to fill, it wouldn't ever be enough. So, we've put together a broad selection of countries and cuisines, with an overview of their culinary traditions — from classic dishes to lesser-known, but equally tasty tidbits. When it comes to recipes that are

popular in more than one country, they are only included once. In other words, this book is meant to serve as a mere introduction to the incredible history of food through the ages — and to sharpen our readers' appetites for further culinary adventures!



## RECIPES

A glass is 250 ml.

4

**IMAM BAYILDI**  
Stuffed aubergine  
TURKEY



6

**KAYMAKLI KAYISI TATLISI**  
Kaymak-stuffed apricots  
TURKEY



8

**TACHIN MORGH**  
Upside-down rice and chicken casserole  
IRAN



10

**KUKU SABZI**  
Fluffy omelette with fresh herbs  
IRAN



13

**HAMANTASHEN**  
Poppyseed-filled butter biscuits  
ISRAEL



14

**HUMMUS**  
Chickpea spread  
ISRAEL



17

**MAPO TOFU**  
Tofu in a spicy sauce  
CHINA



18

**CONGEE**  
Rice porridge  
CHINA



21

**MISO SOUP**  
An umami-flavoured soup  
JAPAN



22

**ONIGIRI**  
Rice balls  
JAPAN



24

**MILK BARFI**  
Creamy snack bar  
INDIA



26

**RAJMA CHAWAL**  
Spicy beans and rice  
INDIA



28

**BÁNH XÈO**  
Crispy stuffed crepes  
VIETNAM



30

**BÁNH CHUỐI NƯỚNG**  
Banana cake  
VIETNAM



32

**OPOR AYAM**  
Chicken in coconut sauce  
INDONESIA



35

**GADO GADO**  
Salad with peanut sauce dressing  
INDONESIA



37

**HAMBURGER**  
Minced beef patty  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



39

**PEANUT BUTTER PIE**  
A creamy peanut dessert  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



40

**TACOS**  
Folded stuffed tortillas  
MEXICO



41

**TOMATO SALSA**  
A spicy, tangy dip  
MEXICO



42

**GUACAMOLE**  
Avocado dip  
MEXICO



42

**TORTILLA**  
Round flatbread  
MEXICO



44

**PAPAS RELLENAS**  
Potato croquettes  
PERU



45

**SALSA CRIOLLA**  
Onion garnish  
PERU



46

**ALFAJORES**  
Sandwiched cookies  
PERU



49

**PÃO DE QUEIJO**  
Cheese bread  
BRAZIL



50

**BRIGADEIRO**  
Chocolate truffles  
BRAZIL



52

**CARBONADA CRIOLLA**  
Beef and vegetable stew with fruit  
ARGENTINA



55

**CHOCOTORTA**  
Layered chocolate cake  
ARGENTINA



57

**KJOTTKAKER MED BRUN SAUS**  
Meatballs in brown sauce  
NORWAY



59

**TILSLORTE BONDEPIKER**  
Layered apple trifle  
NORWAY



60

**KÄSESPÄTZLE**  
Cheesy drop noodles  
GERMANY



# TAKE A BITE

## EAT YOUR WAY AROUND THE WORLD

ALEKSANDRA MIZIELIŃSKA • DANIEL MIZIELIŃSKI • NATALIA BARANOWSKA

63

**KARTOFFELSALAT**  
Potato salad  
GERMANY



64

**BUCKWHEAT AND CHEESE PIEROGI**  
Stuffed dumplings  
POLAND



67

**HONEY GINGERBREAD**  
Cookies  
POLAND



69

**BLINI**  
Buckwheat pancakes  
RUSSIA



70

**KISSEL**  
Fruit dessert  
RUSSIA



72

**LECSÓ**  
Tomato pepper stew  
HUNGARY



74

**MEGGYLEVES**  
Sour cherry soup  
HUNGARY



76

**TORTILLA DE PATATAS**  
Potato onion omelette  
SPAIN



78

**GAZPACHO**  
Chilled tomato soup  
SPAIN



81

**CROQUE MONSIEUR**  
Ham and cheese toastie  
FRANCE



82

**MILLE-FEUILLE**  
Layered pastry dessert  
FRANCE



84

**TAGLIATELLE ALLA BOLOGNESE**  
Pasta with tomato-meat sauce  
ITALY



86

**PIZZA**  
Tomato and mozzarella pizza  
ITALY



88

**AVGOLEMONO SOUP**  
Chicken broth with egg and lemon  
GREECE



91

**MELOMAKARONA**  
Festive honey biscuits  
GREECE



93

**SEFFA**  
Sweet couscous  
MOROCCO



94

**BASTILLA**  
A sweet and savoury chicken pie  
MOROCCO



96

**HAWAWSHI**  
Meat-filled pita bread  
EGYPT



98

**UMM ALI**  
Bread pudding  
EGYPT



101

**GROUNDNUT SOUP**  
Nutty chicken stew  
NIGERIA



102

**JOLLOF**  
Slow-cooked rice  
NIGERIA



104

**INJERA**  
Flatbread  
ETHIOPIA



106

**DORO WAT**  
Stew with chicken and eggs  
ETHIOPIA



107

**BERBERE**  
Spice mixture  
ETHIOPIA





# TURKEY

## CROSSROADS OF CULTURE



Turkey's location means it links Europe, Asia, African and the Arab world. For centuries, this region endured attacks from the great Roman and Persian armies. Trading caravans also came from every direction. All this meant the customs and cuisines of many nations combined and created the unique traditions of modern-day Turkey.

In the 4th century CE, the Roman emperor Constantine the Great established the capital of the Byzantine Empire in the region. It was named Constantinople in his honour.

In the 11th century CE, nomadic tribes from Central Asia<sup>1</sup> invaded southwestern Asia and formed the Seljuk dynasty<sup>2</sup>.

Four centuries later, the Turks created the Ottoman Empire, a medieval superpower. They occupied a huge area that stretched between the Mediterranean and the Red and Black Seas. The empire was a mixture of Balkan, Arab and Asian traditions. The captured city of Constantinople changed its name to Istanbul, and the Turks built the magnificent Topkapı Palace<sup>3</sup> in the centre.

\* See more about Constantinople on page 90.

### NOVEL IDEAS

The Byzantine Empire was important politically and culturally, and it also became famous for its food. The variety of goods and ingredients that flowed in from around the world meant it was the place where new

dishes and flavours came alive. Byzantium became famous for its delicacies and the rest of the world picked up on these innovative recipes and did their best to replicate them.

Traditionally, all types of fish and seafood were eaten, along with roasted venison,

poultry and dried meats. Dishes were seasoned mainly with saffron, rosemary, aniseed, rose petals and aromatic oils.

For those with a sweet tooth, there were culinary delights made with honey, cane sugar or dates. Spiced with cardamom

and other flavours, these puddings, desserts, marmalades<sup>7</sup>, jams<sup>8</sup> and candied fruits<sup>9</sup> were just the start of the region's honeyed history.



### IMAM BAYILDI

Stuffed aubergines  
Soak aubergines for: 30 minutes  
Preparation time: 100 minutes, 3+  
3 medium aubergines, 1 lemon, 1/2 cup olive oil (85 ml), 2 small onions, 2 garlic cloves, 2 large handfuls of parsley, 1/2 medium tomatoes or 2 cans chopped tomatoes (400 g each), 1 tsp cumin powder, 1/2 tsp cinnamon, 1/2 tsp sugar, salt and pepper to taste, yoghurt to garnish.

The literal translation of imam bayildi is 'the imam fainted'. While it might be assumed the imam, or holy man, was overcome by the glorious taste of this dish, some believe his fainting was instead due to the cost involved. Aubergines tend to absorb quite a lot of olive oil when they are fried or braised, making this a rather pricey recipe!

1 Wash the aubergines and peel their skin to create a stripy pattern. Place them in a big bowl and cover with water. Add a teaspoon of salt and the juice of one lemon. Place a plate

over the bowl and leave for 30 minutes. Rinse the aubergines and then pat dry.

2 Heat the oil in a pan, and when hot, fry the aubergines whole.



Flip them over from time to time and fry for 10-15 minutes, until they are golden.

3 Cut the onion into fine strips, dice the garlic and parsley. Peel the tomatoes and chop into small squares (unless you are using chopped tomatoes).

4 Remove the aubergines from the pan, reduce the heat and add the onion to the remaining olive oil. Fry the onion for 10 minutes, until it is soft. Add garlic, cumin and cinnamon and fry for another 3 minutes, stirring often.

5 Add the tomatoes, parsley, salt, sugar and pepper. Mix the ingredients together and cook for 10 minutes, until most of the liquid has evaporated.

6 Once the aubergines have cooled, cut into them lengthwise, but be careful not to cut all the way through. Open them up and place on top of the vegetables. Cover with a lid.

7 Heat the oven to 180°C. Arrange the aubergines in a dish. Sprinkle the insides with salt and fill with sauce.

8 Garnish with parsley and a dollop of yoghurt.

Easy absolutely adores aubergines.



### MIRACLE DIET

In Ancient Greece, and later in Byzantium and other major parts of the medieval world, it was believed that a person's health, mood and well-being depended on the balance between four humours. These humours were represented by the fluids contained within the body: blood, yellow bile, phlegm and black bile.

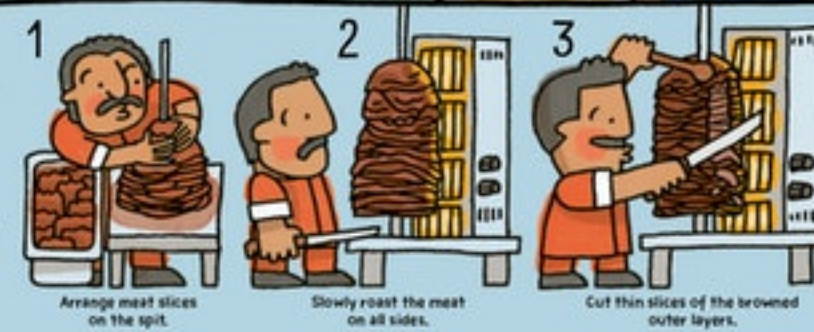
It was believed that what we eat could help balance the four fluids. Eating the right foods was therefore seen as a way to avoid or treat various illnesses.



### MEATY SUCCESS IN THE WEST

The kebab is a popular food across the entire Middle East. While there are many different types, the döner kebab is the fast-food favourite that has been adopted worldwide.

The kebab was originally an Ottoman invention and was exported to the rest of the world by Turkish immigrants. Turks who arrived in Germany half a century ago set up kebab shops. By sharing a taste of their homeland they were able to make a living, and hungry Germans were soon lining up for a bite of the now famous kebab sandwich.







## GRAINS FROM THE CRESCENT

- The cultivation of wheat began nearly 12,000 years ago in the region in the Middle East that is known as the **Fertile Crescent**. This is where the first farmers began to cultivate crops and the first human settlements were recorded. One of the earliest agricultural sites discovered is located in a region that is part of Turkey today.
- 2,000 years later, wheat made its way to modern-day Greece and then further west to the rest of Europe, and eastwards towards India.
- There are hundreds of varieties of wheat. Some are used to make pasta and grain dishes (such as bulgur), and others for bread and cakes.



## THIN AS AIR

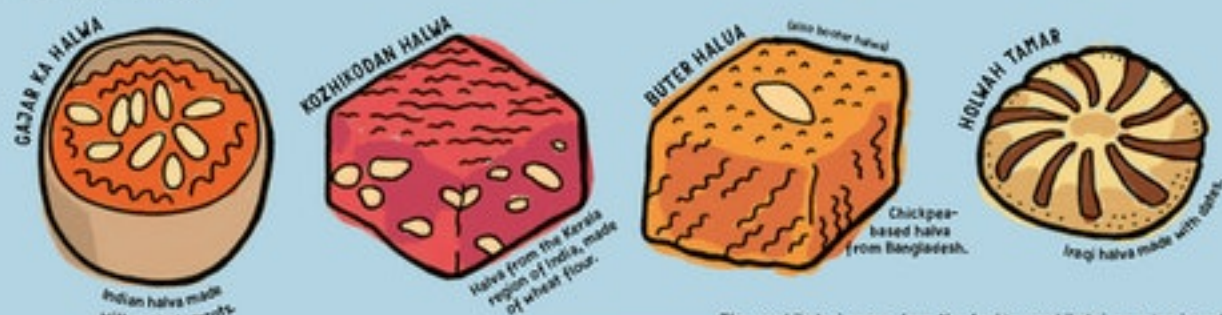
- How do you bake bread without an oven? Over 1,000 years ago, nomadic Turks had to find a solution to this quandary. Over their long voyages, they would prepare a type of bread made of many fine layers of dough, which they would fry in a pot.
- A few hundred years later, the master bakers at the Topkapı Palace would replicate this method – this time not out of necessity, but purely out of culinary fancy. They stretched unbelievably thin layers of dough out to create the bread known as **yufka**. They spread melted butter over each layer and stacked one on top of the other, creating the sweet and savoury pastries known as baklava and börek.



## TO EACH THEIR OWN

- While 'halva' (also written as 'halwa') is famous for being a sweet sesame-infused treat, there are a lot of different kinds. The traditional ones come from the Middle East but when these recipes migrated to Central Asia and India, new flavours were developed.
- Over 1,000 years ago, halva was already known as a sugary food made of sweetened wheat. It wasn't until later that the sesame version was devised. Then came the rest: nutty, fruity... and even eggy!

\* See more about sesame on page 15.



The word 'halva' comes from the Arabic word 'hulw' meaning 'sweet'.

## KAYMAKLI KAYISI TATLISI

Kaymak-stuffed apricots. Soak overnight. Preparation: 30 minutes, 25.



The name of this Turkish sweet treat means 'dessert of apricots with kaymak'. Kaymak is a thick, rich cream. If you can't find it, use mascarpone or extra-thick yoghurt instead.

- Soak the apricots in water overnight.
- The next day, pour the excess water from the apricots into a pot. If there is less than a glass, add more water. Bring to the boil and add the sugar, lemon juice and the apricots.

- Boil the apricots for 10-15 minutes, then set aside to cool.



- During cooking, the apricots should have opened up. If not, use a knife to cut them open. Fill each apricot with a spoonful of mascarpone or yoghurt.
- Sprinkle with some pistachios or other nuts.
- Drizzle the apricots with a few teaspoons of the syrup from the pot, some butter and sprinkle with flaked almonds.



# IRAN

SHIMMERING  
SAFFRON, GOLD  
AND DATES



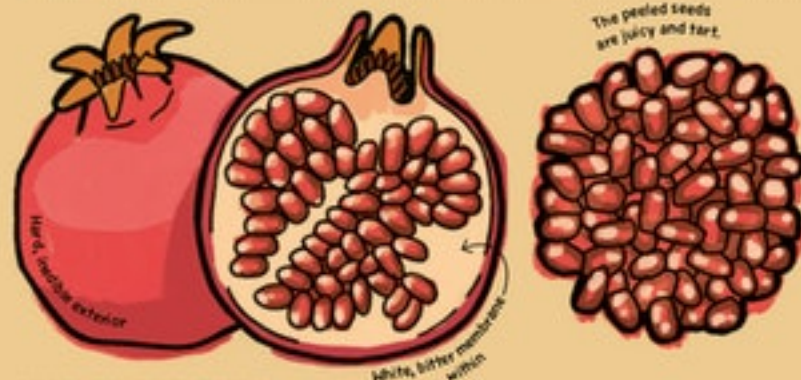
Iran, formerly known as Persia, has a remarkable history. Cyrus the Great (also called Cyrus II) founded the Persian empire over 2,500 years ago. While conquests and trade meant pomegranates, rosewater and saffron spread throughout the world, in turn Persia welcomed rice, aubergines and lemons from the Far East.

Persian cuisine is known as being luxurious: meat glazed in a saffron-tinted marinade and ceremonial dishes sprinkled with flakes of real silver and gold.

Persia saw many rulers and dynasties, including the conquest by the king of Macedonia, Alexander the Great\*. In the Middle Ages, Persia was ruled by Arabs but its people retained their language, customs and culinary traditions.

While a dinner table in Iran might feature many traditional Middle Eastern dishes such as kebabs, stuffed breads and baklava, they are likely to be paired with unique Persian dishes such as saffron rice, sour soup and fruit-based sauces.

\* Find out more on Alexander the Great on page 96.  
\* See more on baklava on page 6.



## HIDDEN TREASURES

Getting through the tough skin and membrane of a pomegranate to extract its juicy seeds may be a challenge but the sweet-and-tart taste of its juicy seeds has made it one of the most popular fruits in Persia for 5,000 years. Pomegranates were among the first fruits to be domesticated by humans – alongside figs, grapes, dates and olives.

Pomegranates originated in Persia and then made their way to Egypt, Greece (they even got a shout-out from the Greek poet Homer\*) and other Mediterranean nations.

Trade took pomegranates to Asia while Spanish colonial fleets brought it to the Americas.

\* Read up on Homer on page 96.

## TAHCHIN MORGH

Upside-down rice and chicken casserole  
Chicken prep time: 60 minutes  
Roasting time: 60 minutes  
Initial prep time: 30 minutes. 4+ people

- 1 onion
- 1 kg chicken (preferably legs and thighs)
- several allspice berries
- 1½ cups rice (270 g), preferably basmati
- a pinch of saffron
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup thick yoghurt (250 ml), plus extra for garnish
- ¼ tsp ground turmeric
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground cardamom
- 2 tbsp butter (30g)
- 2 tbsp soaked raisins
- salt to taste

- 1 Cut the onion into chunks and place in a pot with the chicken, salt and allspice. Cover with water and cook for an hour, until the meat is soft.
- 2 Take the chicken out of the pot to cool and cut into chunks. Set the broth aside.
- 3 Put the rice into the pot and cover with cold water. Stir vigorously with your hand, rinse out the water and repeat until the water runs clear.
- 4 Bring 4 cups of salted water to the boil (use 2 tsp of salt). Add the rice and boil for 5-8 minutes until the grains are cooked but still firm. Rinse with cold water and set aside to cool.

- 5 Crush the saffron with your fingers. Pour 3 tablespoons of boiling water over it and stir.

- 6 Beat the eggs in a large bowl and combine with the yoghurt. Add the saffron, turmeric and a teaspoon of salt. Add half the rice and mix again.

- 7 Combine the cinnamon, cumin, nutmeg and cardamom and then add the mixture to the rest of the rice, stirring well.

- 8 Heat the oven to 180°C. Melt the butter in a pan and use to grease a casserole dish from top to bottom (leave a bit of butter for later). The dish should be made of glass and include a lid, preferably 24cm x 24cm.

- 9 Place the mixture of rice, yoghurt and eggs at the bottom, then add a layer of chicken. Sprinkle over the raisins and then add the spiced rice on top. Use a large spoon to compress all the ingredients, then add ½ cup of broth and the rest of the melted butter.

- 10 Cover with the lid and bake for one hour – or until the rice begins to brown from below and on the sides.

- 11 Wait a few minutes for the dish to cool, then use a knife to scrape the rice from the sides. Serve with yoghurt.



## FAITHFUL FASTING

Islam, the most common religion in Iran, has a great influence on food. Here, and in other Arabic countries, foods are split up into those that are allowed (halal) and those that are forbidden (haram).

Muslims observe a month of fasting and prayer known as Ramadan, when they refrain from

eating from sunrise to sunset. The fasting period lasts between 29-30 days.

As there are no limits on what can be eaten between dusk and dawn, each region of the Islamic world has its own snacks, dishes and drinks that are served after the evening prayer.



## GOLD STANDARD

It takes about 150,000 blossoms of saffron to prepare about 2.5 pounds of saffron, the most expensive spice in the world. Each saffron blossom contains three delicate threads known as 'stigmas', which are removed and dried (the rest of the flower is discarded). These dried threads are what is known around the world as saffron. Persians have been producing, exporting and cooking with saffron for over 2,500 years.



## PRECIOUS PETALS

Persians began cultivating roses several thousand years ago. The petals were traditionally distilled into rose water, made into jam or used as decoration.

Mass production, together with the deft skills of Persian merchants, meant rose water became popular in Asia. When the Crusaders\* arrived back in Europe after the Holy Wars, they brought rose water with them.

Today, rose water is added to puddings and desserts.

\* Refers to wars fought between Christians and Muslims over the Holy Land (currently the territory of Israel and Palestine).







## DIVINE DECEPTION

Almonds have been grown in the Middle East, including Iran, for thousands of years. These nuts then became popular in Europe in the Middle Ages. When Christian knights travelled to the Middle East during the Crusades, Arabs from Persia taught them how to prepare almond milk.

Christians used to have very strict rules during Lent. All animal products, including cow's milk, were forbidden, so almond milk was especially handy during this period. This simple invention had already been adopted by Muslims for their own fasting holiday of Ramadan.



## GREEN PLENTY

Pistachios are native to Afghanistan, but they were brought to Persia at least 9,000 years ago. These nuts were introduced to Europe by Alexander the Great, along with other spoils of war. At first pistachios were only enjoyed by the rich, but today they are widely available snacks. They are used in many dishes and are key ingredient in pistachio ice cream.



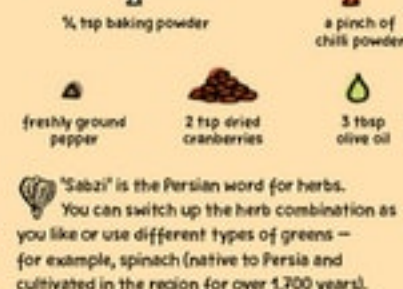
## KUKU SABZI

Fluffy omelette with fresh herbs

30 minutes, 1-2



- 1 Wash and dry the herbs. Cut the stems and finely chop the leaves.
- 2 In a small pan, roast the walnuts until they are browned. Once cooled, chop into chunks.
- 3 In a big bowl, whisk the eggs, then add salt, turmeric, cumin and baking powder. Mix well.
- 4 Add the chopped herbs, walnuts and cranberries and stir.



- 5 In a small pan, heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil. Pour in the egg mix and smooth the top. Cover the pan and lower the heat. Fry for 8 to 10 minutes, until the middle is cooked.
- 6 Cover the pan with a flat plate and turn upside down. Using the plate, slide the omelette back into the pan, fried side up. Continue frying with the plate covering the pan for several minutes.
- 7 Place the kuku onto the plate and allow to cool. Cut into triangles. Serve with yoghurt or bread.

## SWEET INDULGENCE

Dates most likely come from the Fertile Crescent. The warm and dry climate meant that they could easily be grown by early farmers of Mesopotamia and Egypt. These sweet and nutritious fruits proved popular and were enjoyed by everyone from the Ancient Romans to the Chinese and the medieval lords of Europe. Dates can be eaten on their own or added to sweet and savoury dishes. Dates are an important part of the daily diet of those living in hot desert regions.

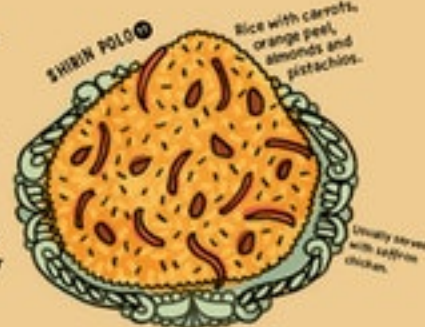
\* Find out more about the Fertile Crescent on page 6.



## FLUFFY PERFECTION

Rice appeared on Persian dinner tables as far back as antiquity. It came from India and China, and over time, thanks to the unique three-stage preparation method, it became a staple of many local dishes. The grains are first soaked in cold water for a long time, then briefly boiled and finally steamed until tender. Rice prepared in this way is light and fluffy and does not stick, achieving the pinnacle of Persian splendour when seasoned with butter and saffron.

\* Find out more about the history of rice on page 15.





# ISRAEL

## FAITH AND TRADITION ALIGNED



For Jewish people, Israel is believed to be the Promised Land given to Abraham by God. Around 3,000 years ago, the first Jewish leaders established the Kingdom of Israel and Judea, which fell to the Assyrian and Babylonian powers 300 years later.

Over the centuries, many nations attempted to take over Israel, including the Persians, Macedonians and Romans. The Jewish people had to continuously fight to defend their rights to the territory and were often exiled from Israel. There were later invasions by Arab

nations, Crusaders from Europe and Ottoman Turks.

Exiled Jews brought food from home, including wheat, chickpeas, figs, dates, pomegranates, grapes, olives and olive oil, as well as flatbreads, goats, sheep and cheese.

The Jewish people's dream of establishing their own nation came true in 1948 due to an accord brokered by the British colonial powers in Palestine.

The settlers who flowed into the new nation of Israel brought with them

flavours and ingredients from the lands of their exile. From the former Ottoman Empire came samosas, pastries made of yufka, yoghurt, couscous, pita bread, stuffed vegetables, rice and bulgur dishes.

From Central and Western Europe came schnitzels, strudels, herring, carp, borscht and chicken broth.

From Arabian cuisine came falafels, hummus, shakshuka, za'atar and fresh fruit.

Today, Israel is a spectacular mosaic of cultures and delicacies.

### BASIC BREAD

Aside from the rules of kashrut, other aspects of Judaism also have an influence on the food Israelis eat.

Passover (Pesach) is one of the oldest Jewish holidays. Lasting over a week, it celebrates the Israelites escaping enslavement in Egypt. During Passover, Jewish people are not allowed to eat or store chametz – foods that have been leavened or use leavening agents, including risen dough, or fermented drinks produced from grains.

The only exception to this rule is matzo, which is a wheat cracker made of just flour and water. Its simplicity represents the terrible conditions faced by enslaved Jewish people on their journey out of Egypt. During Passover, it is eaten at every meal and is used to make soup noodles or to thicken other dishes.

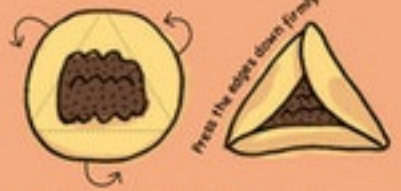
### HAMANTASHEN

Poppysed-filled butter biscuits  
Preparation: 30 minutes, chill for: 1 hour, bake for: 25 minutes, 25+

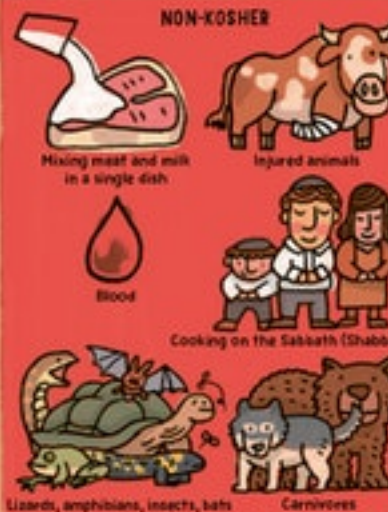
- 1 1/4 cups flour (180 g) plus extra for sprinkling
- a pinch of salt
- 1 orange
- 90 g butter at room temperature
- 1/2 cup sugar (50 g)
- 2 eggs, plus 1 for extra glazing
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract or 1/2 pod of vanilla beans
- 1/2 can poppyseed paste (150 g)

As per tradition, these biscuits are typically filled with a poppyseed paste. However, there are variations that include fruit fillings. So, if you can't get your hands on poppyseed, feel free to use marmalade instead.

- Sift the flour into a bowl. Add a pinch of salt and mix.
- Scald the orange with boiling water and peel the skin finely. Cut the butter into small chunks, add the sugar and mix for one minute, until the mixture is fluffy.
- Add the 2 eggs, vanilla and 1/2 teaspoon of orange peel. Continue mixing.
- Add the flour into the mixing bowl and combine all the ingredients with a spatula, then shape into a ball, cover with plastic wrap and set in the fridge for at least an hour.
- Heat the oven to 180°C. Roll the dough until it is only 3 mm thick and then start cutting out circles with a diameter of about 6-7 cm. Beat the remaining egg and glaze each circle with the mixture to make sure the biscuits stay intact as they bake.



- In the centre of each biscuit, place 1/2 teaspoon of filling. Fold three sides over to create the form of a three-sided pocket (as shown above) and arrange on a baking sheet covered with wax paper. Bake for 25 minutes until they are golden.
- Allow the biscuits to cool before serving as the filling can be quite hot.



### FORBIDDEN FOODS

In Judaism, as in many other religions, there are rules about what foods are permitted and how these foods should be prepared.

The principles of kashrut, or kosher, are not always clear. Rabbis today debate the

interpretation of these rules. For example, in 2008 giraffes were recognised as kosher.

Even though there are many Jewish people who don't strictly follow the rules of kashrut, this system still has a significant impact on the types of foods that Israelis eat.

### SUPER 7

The ancient Hebrew text of the Old Testament lists seven types of plants that are considered quintessential to Israeli cuisine. These two grains and five fruits still hold a principal spot in the hierarchy of Jewish culinary tradition.







## HUMMUS

Chickpea spread

Soak chickpeas: 12 hours

Cook: 40 minutes

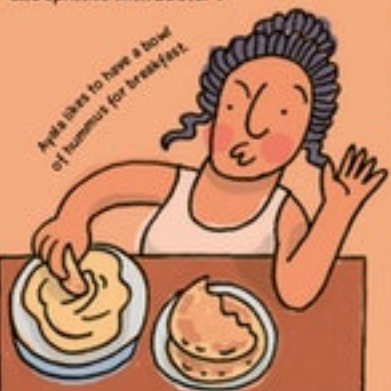
Prep Time: 10 minutes



1 Cover the chickpeas with plenty of water and soak overnight.

2 Drain the chickpeas. Add 6 cups of water, and the baking soda and cook on a low heat for 40 minutes, until the chickpeas are soft.

3 Use a blender to mix the cooked chickpeas with the other ingredients until you have a smooth paste. If it is too thick, add a bit of water. Serve with olive oil and sprinkle with za'atar\*.



## POCKETFUL OF POPPYSEED

The Jewish holiday **Purim** celebrates the defeat of Haman, a court official who sentenced the Jewish people to death. During Purim, there are energetic parties. One of the most popular Purim treats is **hamantaschen**, which means 'Haman's pockets' (these treats are also called Haman's 'hat' or 'ears').

\* See the recipe on the previous page.



## WORKING HARD TO RELAX

At the end of a work week, even God has to take a break. That period of rest and relaxation is known as the **Shabbat** (or the Sabbath), which begins every Friday evening and lasts just over 24 hours. Any type of activity related to labour is forbidden. Even cooking is not allowed.

This means that meals have to be prepared in advance. One popular shabbat dish is called **cholent**. It is slow cooked for a long time, so it's ready for Saturday lunchtime.



## PRECIOUS OIL

2,000 years ago, Judah Maccabee helped the Jewish people regain control of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. He then led efforts to purge the temple of Greek and Roman influences.

Olive oil was needed for this sacred ritual. While there was only enough oil for a single day, miraculously the flame kept burning for eight days!

The holiday of **Hanukkah** commemorates this amazing event. Candles are burned in a special candelabrum called a **menorah** and deep-fried treats, both sweet and savoury, are enjoyed.



## SWEET NEW YEAR

**Rosh Hashanah** is the Jewish new year celebration. This holiday also commemorates the divine creation of the world and the first humans, Adam and Eve.

The theme of this holiday is sweetness and good fortune: apples dipped in honey, dates, pomegranates, a sweet carrot stew known as **Tzimmes** and loaves of **Challah** bread speckled with raisins are all enjoyed.



## THE FIG MYSTERY

Humans have been cultivating figs for thousands of years, but it took quite a bit of time to fully understand the fruit's unpredictable life cycle. An individual fig is made up of over 1,000 tiny flowers that come from over 1,000 tiny seeds.



As in the case of other seed-bearing plants, the female flowers need to be pollinated with grains from the male flowers. Since male and female fig flowers develop at different times, the grains of pollen from male flowers have to be transported from another flower.

This is achieved by a small insect known as a fig wasp. It deposits its eggs inside the fig, but ends up trapped inside! When the fig blooms, the wasp's offspring hatch and escape. The females spread the fig pollen to the other figs that they crawl through to lay their own eggs.



## BEAN BABIES

Humans have been feasting on legumes for thousands of years. Popular beans include green beans, soy, peas, broad beans, lentils, peanuts and tamarind seeds.

Chickpeas are also legumes and are the main ingredient in **hummus** as well as **falafel**\* (which originally comes from Egypt).

\* Find out more about Egyptian falafel on page 30.

## SMALL BUT POWERFUL

They might be tiny, but **sesame seeds** are packed with healthy fats. They can be consumed whole, as an oil or as a paste known as **tahini**.

**Tahini** is a base ingredient for many recipes, including sauces, baked goods and ice cream. It's impossible to talk about tahini without mentioning **sesame halva**. A proper hummus also requires a dollop of tahini.

\* See more about halva on page 3.



## WORK, HUMMUS, COMMUNITY

More than a century ago, the first settlers arrive in what later became the official state of Israel. They began setting up cooperative farming communities known as a **kibbutz**.

The members of a kibbutz, no matter who they are, all share the same rights and duties.

There wasn't time to prepare elaborate dishes at a kibbutz, so workers would enjoy a hearty breakfast of vegetables, cheese, eggs, olives, hummus, bread, coffee and fresh juices. Today, this is known as an **Israeli breakfast**.





XIA DYNASTY  
c.2070–c.1600 BCE



Yu the Great

SHANG DYNASTY  
1600–1046 BCE



Chinese kitchens, wheat noodles and buns are more popular in the north.



### SIPS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Tea was discovered in China between 4,000–5,000 years ago. By the time of the Tang Dynasty, it was the preferred drink for most Chinese people.

from selecting the leaves to preparing the water.



### FIVE IN ONE

While there are countless varieties of tea in the world, they all come from a single type of

plant: the eternally green *Camellia sinensis*. The differences in colour, flavour and aroma

all depend on how the leaves are prepared after they are picked.

ZHOU DYNASTY  
1046–256 BCE



QIN DYNASTY  
221–207 BCE



HAN DYNASTY  
202 BCE–220



THREE KINGDOMS  
220–280



NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN DYNASTIES  
420–589



TANG DYNASTY  
618–907



### BEAN OF ALL TRADES

Together with wheat, corn and rice, soy makes up one of the fundamental foodstuffs consumed by both people and domesticated animals. Thanks to the exceptionally high levels of protein soy contains, it is a strong contender to replace meat products. This is especially relevant today, when raising animals is becoming costly both in terms of the financial and environmental impact.



### FRIENDLY FERMENTATION

In China, the full spectrum of soy products is referred to as *dou fu* (similar to its Japanese equivalent 'tofu').



### MAPO TOFU

Tofu in a spicy sauce

30 minutes, 3



but it's hard to find elsewhere, so we've left it out of this recipe.

- 1 Bring the water to the boil in a small pot with a teaspoon of salt. Add the tofu and cook for 1–2 minutes on low heat. Remove the tofu and when it cools down, cut into small chunks.
- 2 Mix the tomato paste with the gochugaru powder. Chop the garlic and ginger and set aside.
- 3 Heat the oil in a large pan. When hot, add the meat. Season with salt and cook for a few minutes, then add the spicy tomato paste, pepper, garlic and ginger. Cook for five more minutes.
- 4 Add the water from the pot and soy sauce. Add the tofu and mix gently. Cook the mixture for several minutes.
- 5 Finally, add a spoonful of starch (dissolved in a spoonful of water). Serve with rice and garnish with chopped spring onions.







## STARCHY STAR

- It's almost impossible to imagine the world without **rice** — it could even be claimed that it's the most important agricultural product in human history!
- Comparing rice with other starchy foods\*, it's easy to see its advantages. Rice can be dried, so can be stored for a long time without going bad, and rice harvests are more abundant than those of other grains. In addition, rice doesn't require much processing.

\* Read more about starchy foods on page 102.



## CONGEE

(also known as jook)

Rice porridge

2 hours, 4+



Congee is best known as a breakfast dish. While it may seem similar to porridge, it's actually a savoury dish served with toppings such as coriander, chives, garlic or ginger.



- Rinse the rice in cold water several times. Add three cups of water, bring to boil and cook for 2 hours on a very low heat, stirring from time to time. Add the chicken (if using).
- Cut the mushrooms into strips and mix with the soy sauce and ginger. Set aside for 30 minutes.
- Heat the oil in a pan, add the marinated mushrooms (drained) and fry them on a high heat. Then drain on a paper towel.

- Serve the congee in bowls alongside the toppings.



## GREEN STAIRWAYS

- There are about 8,000 varieties of rice cultivated today, feeding about half of humanity! Rice is often grown in regions that experience lots of rain — some crops are even submerged

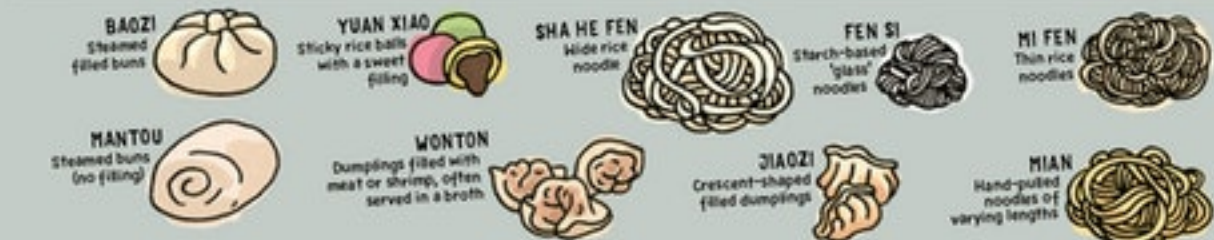
in several metres of water. There are also 'dry' fields of rice. In China, traditional **rice terraces** produce a lot of rice — they are both picturesque and labour-intensive.

- These lovely structures make it possible to grow rice even on hilltops! The terraces are so hydrated, it is possible for them to have up to three harvests a year.



## SHOOTING STARS

- Bamboo** is a type of plant that could have come straight out of a science fiction novel. It can grow at a speed of nearly one metre per day — reaching up to 30 metres in total. It is so strong that bamboo is used to make houses, bridges and other durable constructions. Most of these shoots bloom only once every dozen or so years. What's more, all the plants in a single group — making up entire forests — bloom all at once and then die, leaving behind a sea of seeds. The strangest thing about bamboo is that no one really knows how or why this happens!
- If that wasn't enough, bamboo shoots can also be quite a tasty snack. It's enough to peel its skin as soon as it is out of the ground, and then boil away the bitterness.



## ARRAY OF NOODLES

- When you think of noodles, it's probably Italian cuisine that comes to mind.

But China actually has the greatest array of doughy goodies — their noodles, dumplings

and buns are made using different types of flour.

## AROUND THE WORLD

- World experts still haven't agreed on when and where the first rice fields might have been cultivated. It's most likely that rice was first farmed in a region between eastern India and south China about 12,000 years ago.
- Over the course of a thousand years, rice gradually spread throughout the world, and ended its journey in the Americas.





- Japanese delicacies are famous across the globe: broths full of umami flavours, fine slices of sashimi and, of course, sushi.
- The people of the many islands that make up Japan were traditionally thought to be wary of adopting any new cuisine from the continent. They preferred instead to focus on local ingredients. The rich flavours and combinations of Japanese cuisine are therefore due to the ingenuity of Japanese chefs and the fact they made the most of just a few essential ingredients.
- When Japan opened itself up to influences from the rest of the world in the modern era, waves of culinary influence flowed in. Rice, soy, wheat and tea made their way to Japan from China. Even milk and potatoes became popular due to improved relations with the United States over a century ago.
- The one element that has shaped Japanese culinary arts through the centuries is the desire for beauty. Even snacks and appetizers are prepared with as much care as a ceremonial meal. Japanese cuisine is always a feast for the eyes and the palate.

### SEA GREENS

Japanese people traditionally follow a plant-based diet because of their religious beliefs and also because Japan's hilly islands just don't have enough room for animals to roam. **Seaweed** is among the

most popular greens in Japanese cuisine. Billions of leaves of seaweed are still consumed each year, either fresh or dried. Seaweed has a unique savoury flavour and rich mineral content. It can also be used as a thickening agent.



**NORI**  
Available in the form of thin sheets that are produced using the same traditional method as Japanese paper



**KOMBU**  
Its large leaves are either dried or marinated just after gathering



**WAKAME**  
Eaten fresh, dried or in powdered form as a topping or additive



### TURBOPOWERED GREENS

In 1908, the Japanese chemist and scholar Kikunae Ikeda discovered that kombu seaweed is packed with a type of amino acid that is essential to Japanese cuisine. After a series

of tests, it was found that glutamic acid is responsible for the 'meaty' flavour of even meat-free dishes. Professor Ikeda coined the term 'umami' to describe this flavour, which literally translates as 'delicious'.

In the years that followed, Ikeda's colleagues would go on to discover other sources of umami, including bonito flakes and shiitake mushrooms.



### MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

- Up until very recently, the cultivation of nori was a highly unpredictable undertaking. The underwater fields often contained no new plants, giving nori the nickname of 'lucky' or 'gambler's grass'.
- The mystery was solved by Dr Kathleen Drew-Baker, who discovered that nori seeds typically become attached to cracks in the shells of molluscs. When the water gets too cold, the sea creatures drift away and take the seeds with them.
- Dr Drew suggested that seaweed growers set up nets full of eggshells, and this has greatly increased nori production.



### INTENSELY UMAMI

Miso is a thick, savoury paste that is made when soy is fermented (it can also be made from rice or other grains). It is used in miso soup and many other dishes where a dash of umami is desired.

### FORBIDDEN FOODS

- When Buddhism became one of Japan's main religions over 1,400 years ago, meat consumption began to be considered at odds with its beliefs. For instance, Buddhism forbids the taking of a life and many scholars related this rule not only to the world of humans, but also animals (seafood and fish were not typically considered as meat).
- Today, these dietary restrictions don't have as much influence in Japan, but the main staples of the national diet are still fish and vegetables.

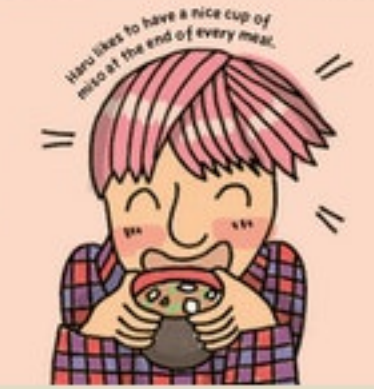


### MISO SOUP

Umami-flavoured soup 15 minutes. 4



\*Dashi is a broth made of kombu seaweed and flakes of katsuobushi (see more on the next page).



- 1 Soak the wakame in 1/2 cup of cold water and set aside for 10 minutes.
- 2 In the meantime, bring 6 cups of water to the boil and add the dashi and miso. Mix well and let the mixture come back to boiling.
- 3 Cut the tofu into smaller cubes. Dice the chives on an angle. Add both to the broth and cook for 5 minutes.
- 4 Drain the wakame and cut into thick pieces, add to the broth together with the mung beans (if using) and cook for another minute or so.





## SALTY FISH

- Limited access to meat and religious restrictions led many Japanese to shun beef and pork in favour of seafood. Before the time of refrigerators, it was quite a challenge to transport fresh fish inland.
- This is why various methods of preserving fish became popular. In Japan, it is referred to as **narezushi**, which simply means 'salted fish'.
- Delicate slices of fish are interlaid with rice (which is then discarded when it is time to consume the fish). Over time, the lactic acid in the rice pickles the fish. This precursor to sushi was for a long time the centrepiece of most meals.
- Today, vinegar is used to ferment the rice and the fish is served raw. This relatively novel method for preparing sushi only came about some 300 years ago.

## TINY BITES

- **Sushi** is the most widely recognised of all Japanese foods. It's served as both a delicacy in high-end restaurants, as well as at fast-food chains\* and local takeaway counters.

\* Read more about fast food on page 35.



### MAKIZUSHI

These 'sushi rolls' are made by placing a layer of rice and selected ingredients across a sheet of roasted nori seaweed, rolling it up and then cutting the roll into smaller discs.

\* Some maki-zushi also use different ingredients for the outer layer instead of nori.



### OSHI-ZUSHI

Also known as 'pressed sushi', a block of rice is compressed inside a special wooden box\* with selected ingredients (cooked or fermented). The block is cut into smaller pieces before serving.



### NIGIRIZUSHI

This type of sushi is prepared on a single layer of rice that is formed by hand and topped with a slice of fish or seafood.



### CHIRASHIZUSHI

Also known as 'scattered sushi', the toppings are served on top of a bed of rice in a bowl.

Sushi is typically served with slices of pickled ginger (garu), soy sauce (which provides a kick of umami flavour), eye-watering wasabi, white radish (daikon) and green tea.

- Of course, the quality of the sushi served varies across this range of establishments. Mastering the preparation of sushi is a skill that requires a great deal of knowledge, focus and years of practice.

## ESSENTIAL SOY

- Alongside miso, one of the most popular ingredients for umami flavour is **soy sauce**®. This salty sauce was first prepared in China during the time of the Zhou Dynasty\*.
- The many varieties of soy sauce come about when soybeans and wheat are fermented. In Japan and China, soy sauce is used to flavour dishes in the same way as Europeans use salt.

\* Find out more about soy and the history of China on page 16.



## PERFECTION

- Japanese tradition states that the most important part of preparing fish is to keep its unique flavour and texture. The processes of cooking, frying, baking or fermenting can often change the original flavour of the fish quite dramatically.
- This is likely to be the reason why the most popular food in Japanese bars and restaurants is **sashimi**®, which is essentially slices of raw fish, squid or other seafood.



## EYE-WATERING WASABI

- **Wasabi**® often accompanies Japanese dishes, served as a small portion of very fine shavings. Its sharp flavour rises all the way up into the nostrils.
- Outside of Japan, it is difficult to get hold of fresh wasabi roots. It is often supplemented with a paste or powder.
- Instead of wasabi, some European restaurants serve grated horseradish\* – which is coloured green. Even though the two roots are very different, the same peculiar effect on the nose is achieved!

\* See more about horseradish on page 71.



## ONIGIRI

- Tasty rice balls
- Rice preparation: 1 hour
- Formation: 20 minutes, 12-14\*
- 2 cups sushi rice (400 g)
- 2 1/2 cups water (600 ml)
- 2 sheets nori
- 1/2 can tuna in brine (60 g)
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 30 g smoked or baked salmon
- a few umeboshi (or other pickled fruit)
- salt
- sesame for garnish

Traditionally, onigiri® is a rice ball filled with a sweet-and-sour filling made of **umeboshi** (a pickled apricot-like fruit) or flakes of bonito that have been dried and fermented (**katsuboshi**). You can also make onigiri with any filling of your choice (e.g. pickled pumpkin, or pear, shrimp, anchovies) or no filling at all.

1 Pour the rice into a bowl and fill with a generous amount of water. Mix the grains around in the bowl then drain the water. Repeat until the water runs clear.

- 2 Drain the rice and place in a pot with the water. Set aside to soak for at least 30 minutes (up to a maximum of 8 hours). Cut the nori into strips that are around 7 x 3 cm.
- 3 Set the rice to boil and then reduce the heat to low, cover the pot and boil for 15 minutes without stirring. Set the covered pot aside for 10-15 minutes.
- 4 Gently stir the rice and let it cool. Onigiri is easiest to form when the rice is warm.



- 5 Drain the tuna and mix with soy sauce. Flake the salmon. Mince the umeboshi (or alternative pickles).
- 6 Wet your hands and sprinkle your fingers with a little bit of salt. Place 2-3 teaspoons of salt into your hand and squeeze tightly, making a triangle shape. Make a small indent in the middle for your filling, then seal it back up by squeezing the ball with your hand again.
- 7 Place a strip of nori underneath the onigiri and sprinkle with sesame.



Yumiko packs onigiri for her son's lunch each day.





As far back as 5,000 years ago, an advanced civilisation formed in the Indus Valley (modern-day India). Its lengthy history and multitude of customs, languages and religions influenced the many cuisines of India.

There is no single Indian culinary tradition — every region has its own signature style of cooking.

- Indian food is very much shaped by faith and tradition. Holy Hindu scriptures say that what we eat not only impacts our

body, but our spirit too. The scriptures also advised how to prepare food.

- Because of these religious beliefs, many Hindus don't eat meat (beef, in particular).
- The idea behind this comes from the concept of ahimsa, the principle of non-violence that

states all living beings are part of a universal whole. The belief in reincarnation is also part of ahimsa.

- Curries are among the most well-known Indian specialties, typically made with spices, and a sauce made of coconut, tomato or yoghurt.

There are also lots of different types of biryani — rice served with vegetables, meat, and a hearty amount of seasoning.

- Dishes are often served with a flatbread known as chapati or naan, baked in a clay tandoori oven.

In India, it is customary to eat with the right hand, as the left hand is considered 'unclean'. Indian cuisine is ideal for people who adore fragrant spices, sweet treats and creative vegetarian dishes.

### HOLY COW

- In India, cows are endowed with a respect that dates back 4,000 years. They are considered sacred and are free to roam the streets. The reason is certainly rooted in religion, but there are also some practical factors to consider...
- Milking cows provides a great deal more food than if they were raised for their meat: cream, yoghurt, ice cream, different types of cheese, butter and ghee. Cattle are also helpful farmhands, helping to pull ploughs and other equipment. Cow manure is also a great fertiliser and can be used as fuel for stoves. Cows don't need much upkeep but they give a great deal in return!
- Even the Indian government has made significant efforts to protect cows, forbidding their slaughter.



### MILK BARFI

Creamy snack bars

10 minutes prep, chill overnight, 14

- 6 tbsp ghee or butter (80 g)
- 1/2 cup milk (125 ml)
- 1 cup powdered sugar (120 g)
- 2 cups powdered milk (140 g)
- 1/2 tsp ground cardamom



- Melt the ghee or butter in a pan over low heat, then add the milk, sugar and powdered milk. Stir vigorously as you continue to heat the mixture, until it thickens.
- Add the cardamom and stir it all the way through the mixture.
- Place the mixture on a greased plate or pan, creating a layer at least 2 cm thick. Put into the fridge to cool overnight, then cut into bars. Store in a cool place.

### STAYING FRESH

- Ghee is a type of clarified butter\* that is entirely made up of fat. Even when ghee is stored at room temperature, it stays fresh. For this reason it predates the invention of refrigeration by thousands of years.
- Ghee is considered an ideal product because it is produced from pure cow's milk. In India, it is used for nearly everything: preparing curries and sweets, frying up spices, and as a spread.
- Ghee is also offered as a sacred gift to the gods and it is believed to have certain health benefits.

\* See more on page 105.







## SPECTACULAR SPICES

Indian cuisine is best known for its hot and fragrant spice combinations. This type of spice mix is known as a **masala**<sup>1</sup>, while dishes

cooked in a spicy sauce are known as curries, even when there is no **curry** leaf or powder in the dish at all.

<sup>1</sup> The first masalas were mainly composed of turmeric powder, ginger and garlic. The first people to inhabit the Indian valley used this mixture in their cooking as far back as 4,000 years ago.

One of the most famous mixes is **garam masala**<sup>2</sup>, made up of cumin, black pepper, coriander seeds, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and nutmeg.

<sup>2</sup> Garam masala is an essential seasoning in the preparation of **rajma chawal** (or **rajma masala**) – see the recipe at the bottom of this page.

**ASAFOETIDA**  
Also known as 'stinking gum', sap is extracted from the stem and roots and dried. This spice is best known for its pungent smell, which disappears when it is cooked, leaving behind a rich oniony-leek flavour.

**FENUGREEK**<sup>3</sup>  
This herb has a tangy smell and bitter flavour.

**PEPPER**<sup>4</sup>  
As the fruit of the flowering vine known as *Piper nigrum*, black peppercorns are what we get when the fruits are cooked and dried. White pepper is the same peppercorns but with the dark outside layer removed. Green pepper is made up of dried unripe peppercorns.

**CARDAMOM**<sup>5</sup>  
These are the dried seeds of the cardamom plant. Once they are ground, the seeds quickly lose their aroma, which is why they are typically used in cooking just after grinding.

**CLOVES**<sup>6</sup>  
The dried buds of the tree known by the Latin name *Syzygium aromaticum*, which is native to Indonesia. Cloves have an intense, sharp flavour and vibrant scent.

**NUTMEG**<sup>7</sup>  
Both of these spices come from the nutmeg tree and share a similar flavour, however mace is a bit subtler.

**MACE (NUTMEG FLOWER)**  
dried seed coating

**CINNAMON**<sup>8</sup>  
Cinnamon verum is the dried bark of the Ceylon cinnamon tree, which is native to Sri Lanka. Known as 'true cinnamon', it is considered superior to its more affordable alternative, 'cassia cinnamon'.

**CORIANDER**<sup>9</sup>  
This plant is consumed in its entirety – leaves, stems, seeds and all. It gives a refreshing scent and citrusy dash of flavour to every dish.

**TURMERIC**<sup>10</sup>  
Boiled, dried and ground into a powder, these roots have a gently piquant flavour that is related to ginger. It has been used as a spice for thousands of years and its golden colour has also been used as a dye.

## RAJMA CHAWAL

Spicy beans and rice  
Soaking time (beans): 8 hours  
Cooking time: 60-90 minutes  
Preparation: 45 minutes, 3+

1 cup dried red kidney beans (175 g)  
4 cups cold water (1 l)  
salt  
1 large onion  
ginger stem (3 cm)  
3 garlic cloves  
1 can chopped tomatoes (400 g)  
5 tbsp vegetable oil (75 ml)  
2 laurel leaves  
1/2 tsp ground cumin  
1/4 tsp chilli powder (or cayenne pepper)  
1 tsp clarified butter (ghee)  
a bunch of fresh coriander  
boiled rice for serving

1 Cover the beans with water and soak for at least 8 hours. Drain the beans, rinse with fresh water and cook in a covered pot on a low heat for 60-90 minutes. The beans should be soft to the touch but not mushy. Towards the end, add a teaspoon of salt. Drain the beans, keeping the water in a separate container for later.

2 Dice the onion, peel the ginger and garlic cloves. Mix them in a blender with two tablespoons of water and set aside. Blend the tomatoes into a paste.

## CANDY CANES

People have always been suckers for the sweet taste of fruit and honey. Today, sugar is the most popular sweetener, but it is nonetheless a relatively recent invention.

As far back as 10,000 years ago, sugar cane<sup>1</sup>, began to be cultivated in Asia. The sweet cane

juice was squeezed out of its stalks. It wasn't until 8,000 years later that Indian farmers came upon the idea of drying this juice out in the sun. In this way, they obtained granules that were essentially the first type of sugar. These granules were used to sweeten drinks and dishes.

After originating in India, sugar made its way across the world. For centuries, it was considered a luxury. Today, sugar is so accessible that most humans consume too much of it. People still press cane juice today, but sugar can also be obtained from sugar beets<sup>2</sup> through a method perfected 150 years ago.

\* More on page 71.



The stalks are cut into strips.



The strips are put through a press.



The sugar cane juice is boiled. The water evaporates and a syrup known as molasses is left behind.



Microscopic grains of sugar are added to stimulate the production of more crystals.



The crystals are separated from the rest of the mixture.



The brown sugar is now ready to enjoy (or it is bleached to make white sugar).



Because both sugar and lemons are native to India, it's widely believed that the first lemonade came from there too. The traditional version contains lemon juice, lime juice and ginger, along with the addition of mint, apples, pomegranate seeds, cumin or saffron.

3 Heat the oil, adding the laurel leaves. Cook for a minute, stirring the whole time.

4 Add the diced onion and cook for 4 minutes on medium heat, until soft. Add the ginger and garlic blend and cook for another minute.

5 Increase the heat and add the tomato paste. Add salt to taste and cook for 8 minutes, stirring from time to time until the mixture thickens.



6 Add the cumin, chilli and half a teaspoon of garam masala (save the other half for later).

7 Add the beans, along with 2 cups of the bean water. Cook under a lid for 15 minutes on low heat, then increase the heat, remove the lid and cook for another 10-15 minutes. Add the remaining garam masala, along with the fenugreek leaves (if desired) and a tablespoon of clarified butter. You can also mash up some of the beans to thicken the mixture.

8 Serve with rice and garnish with fresh coriander.





## MILLE-FEUILLE

Layered pastry dessert

1 hour, 6+

- Ingredients:**
- 1 cup milk (250 ml)
  - 2 tsp sugar
  - 300 g frozen French pastry dough
  - 6 tsp powdered sugar
  - 1 vanilla pod (or 1 tsp vanilla essence)
  - 1 tsp flour
  - 1 tsp potato starch
  - 2 tsp powdered sugar (for spreading)
  - 1 tsp water
  - cocoa

! The day before you plan to bake, put the frozen pastry into the fridge.

1 Pour the milk into a pan. Add the vanilla beans and pod to the milk and heat. Separate the egg yolks from the whites. In a large bowl, combine the yolks with the sugar and the flour and starch, mixing thoroughly.

2 Take the vanilla pod out of the mixture and keep stirring as you pour the milk into the yolks. Then pour it all back into the pan and cook for several minutes, stirring constantly, until it is smooth and thick.

3 Cover the cream with cling film and set aside to cool.

4 Heat the oven to 200°C. Place the pastry dough on a flour-dusted surface. Cut into 18 even squares (they'll need to be cooked in two batches).

5 Cover a baking tray with baking paper. Arrange half the pastry squares, spear with a fork and dust with a pinch of powdered sugar. Cover with another sheet of baking paper, place another tray on top and press down (this will keep the pastry from rising). Bake for 15-20 minutes, until the squares are golden and flaky. Repeat for the second batch and allow to cool.

6 Cover 6 squares with cream, then cover 6 more squares with cream and place on top. Do this for a third layer.

7 Make a glaze from the powdered sugar mixed with water and top with cocoa. You can experiment with patterns.



## THICK AND BUTTERY

A **croissant** is a delicate crescent of flaky pastry and a symbol of a traditional French breakfast. There are many myths about how it came about, but the most contemporary version dates back to around a century ago. The croissant gets its fluffy texture from a special **laminating technique**, which consists of kneading and rolling layer after layer of dough and butter.

As it bakes, the butter melts, leaving behind gaps that are filled with hot air. This is why the croissant puffs up.

- Place butter on dough.
- Encase the butter in the dough.
- Roll the pastry.
- Fold into 3 layers.
- Roll the pastry again.
- Fold into 3 layers (again).
- Roll the pastry, yet again.
- Fold into 3 layers for a final time.
- Roll the pastry a final time.
- Cut into triangles and roll up.
- Allow the dough to rise.
- Bake!

Croissant pastry dough contains yeast. The butter makes it delightfully flaky, and rich too!

## CHEESE PARADISE

France is famous for its wonderful cheeses. Cheese is served with most meals and even as an actual course.



This bright orange, semi-soft cheese is coloured with the essence of the tropical seed annatto.

The French make cheese from cow, sheep and goat's milk. It can be hard or soft, fresh or mature – in fact there is a different type of French cheese for every day of the year!



## SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE

Milk is an ideal environment for microorganisms that cause illnesses or make food turn mouldy.

**Pasteurisation** was developed by the French chemist Louis Pasteur and requires heating liquids to just under 100°C. His work led to a new field of science known as microbiology.

The heating process halts the reproduction of microorganisms in foods without changing their nutritional content or flavour.

Thanks to pasteurisation, milk stays fresh for longer and there's no risk of passing on diseases such as tuberculosis, or bacteria such as salmonella.



## CURDLING ACTION

One way to turn milk into curd (a base for cheese) is to add rennet, a digestive enzyme.

Rennet is required to make lots of different cheeses. It can be obtained from the stomach of a young calf and can also be found in certain plants, but the quickest way to get hold of it is to make it in a laboratory.

\* Check out the secrets of cheesemaking on page 65.





# ITALY

## INGREDIENTS ARE KEY

► The leaders of Ancient Rome first won the territory of modern-day Italy and then neighbouring regions, creating one of the most powerful regimes in history – the Roman Empire.

► When the empire finally collapsed, its territories were divided up into individual kingdoms, republics and cities, but Italy wasn't officially united until 1861.

► Italy is made up of 20 distinct regions, each with its own customs and traditions. The south is known for its

tomatoes, fiery peppers, artichokes and aubergines. Fish and seafood are plentiful along the coast, and Sicily is famous for its juicy oranges and delicate wines. A national speciality is a rice dish known as risotto and polenta. The region of Liguria is famous for making the most aromatic of olive oils.

► In Italy, there is always a reason to celebrate. Italian cooking is relatively straightforward, but the key to its unique flavours is high quality

ingredients. Pasta is often made at home and its shape adapted to each type of sauce. The average Italian person eats about 27 kg of pasta each year! This can be boiled, baked, stuffed or layered, like lasagne.

► Italian cuisine has become famous all over the globe. Pizza parlours are found in most cities, along with Italian restaurants and gelato shops. And who can resist a creamy tiramisu?

► The great expansion of Italian cuisine continues.

### LEAFY SAUCE

► Pesto is a wonderfully simple sauce made of basil. Its flavour depends on the quality

of the individual ingredients. Simply mash everything together in a mortar, and then add to hot pasta!

► But do be careful! This simple recipe can't allow for any shortcuts or substitutions – limp basil just won't cut it!



### TAGLIATELLE ALLA BOLOGNESE

Pasta with a tomato-meat sauce. Preparation: 30 minutes, simmer: 1 hour, 4 =



Bolognese is a type of ragu (a slow-cooked, meat-based sauce) from the city of Bologna. While spaghetti is often associated with this dish, Italians believe a true Bolognese calls for tagliatelle!

1 Cut the onion, carrots, celery and bacon into small cubes. Take a deep pan and heat up a few tablespoons of oil. Add the vegetables and salt and fry for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

2 Add the ground beef and bacon. Cook until the meat has browned.

3 Pour in a cup of broth and cook for a few minutes on a high heat, until half the liquid has evaporated.



4 Add the chopped tomatoes and puree. Cover and simmer on a low heat for 1-2 hours, stirring from time to time.

5 Midway through, add the second cup of broth. Add the milk at the end and cook for a few minutes. Season to taste.

6 Cook the tagliatelle according to the packet instructions and cover with sauce. Sprinkle with parmesan and pepper. Buon appetito!

### UNDERGROUND ELITE

► One of the most remarkable and expensive delicacies in the world is the truffle. Edible fungi that grow underground, truffles can be enjoyed raw or cooked as part of a dish.

► It's extremely difficult to find truffles, which is why hunting for them is a popular sport. Pigs were once used to sniff them out, but today specially trained dogs are used.

► Anyone who manages to find a truffle has a real treasure on their hands – a few kilograms of white truffle can possibly even fetch enough cash to buy a car!



There are about a dozen different truffles, but two are in high demand:

**BLACK TRUFFLES**  
Gathered mainly in France, these are more common than the white variety.

**WHITE TRUFFLES**  
The queen of all fungi, these are mainly gathered in the Piemonte region of Italy.



### PETALS OF DELIGHT

► According to legend, the Greek god Zeus fell in love with a mortal named Cynara. He made her a goddess and took her back to Mount Olympus. Cynara missed her family so returned home. Furious, Zeus turned her into an artichoke – a flower that is both beautiful and tasty, as long as it's eaten before it blooms.



Artichokes can be boiled, fried, stuffed, baked or marinated.







## FOR ANY OCCASION

Italy has hundreds of regional cheeses and each one has its own unique character.

Some have even risen to the ranks of world-class status!



**PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO**  
Made of cow's milk, this type of cheese has been produced for nearly 1,000 years. In English, we tend to call it 'parmesan' for short. It takes about 12 months to mature.



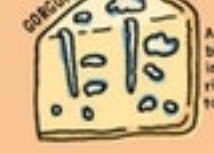
**MOZZARELLA**  
A soft, squishy cheese from the milk of a cow, buffalo or even a goat. It is a key pizza ingredient.



**MASCARPONE**  
Made from the thick, sweet cream skimmed from cow's milk, it is ideal for making creamy sauces and rich desserts – in particular tiramisu.



**PECORINO**  
Sharper in flavour than its cousin Parmigiano-Reggiano, pecorino is made from sheep's milk.



**GORGONZOLA**  
A classic blue cheese, mouldy bits form in holes drilled into the cheese during the ripening process. This adds to the intense flavour.



**RICOTTA**  
A delicate cheese made from whey, which is the liquid left behind after separating the curd. Ricotta is used to make Italian pastries known as cannoli.

## HAMMING IT UP

Another Italian classic is **prosciutto crudo**. This raw ham has been produced for thousands of years. The curing process takes nine months.



## SWEET AND SOUR

Balsamic vinegar is made by fermenting grape juice. It brings out the flavour of cheese, cold cuts, fruit and ice cream. Authentic balsamic vinegar is only produced in Modena and Reggio Emilia according to an age-old process, which makes it one of the priciest condiments in the world. Traditional **aceto balsamico** is fermented in wooden barrels for at least 12 years, and up to 25 or even more. It is left to mature until it forms a syrupy consistency and it is poured into smaller barrels.



## LA DOLCE VITA

There's always room for dessert, isn't there? Of course Italy has a lot of delicious desserts to choose from.



**GELATO**  
Italian ice cream is served at a slightly warmer temperature so that it is nice and creamy.



**CANNOLI**  
This Sicilian treat is a tube made of deep-fried dough filled with a sweet ricotta filling.



**PANNA COTTA**  
A dessert of thick cream served with a drizzle of fruit sauce.



**TIRAMISU**  
Made of coffee-soaked ladyfinger biscuits layered with a thick cream of mascarpone beaten with egg yolks.

Italians often enjoy an espresso with dessert. It is also served at coffee bars for a quick pick-me-up.

## PIZZA MARGHERITA

Tomato and mozzarella pizza

Preparation: 15 minutes, baking: 15 minutes, 4 people

Pizza dough		Sauce		Toppings	
1 cup lukewarm water (250 ml)	1 pack instant yeast (7 g)	2 garlic cloves	1 bunch of fresh basil	250 g mozzarella	olive oil
1/2 tsp powdered sugar	3 1/2 cups wheat flour (500 g)	1 can chopped tomatoes (400 g)	1/2 tsp salt and pepper	olive oil	olive oil
1/2 tsp salt				olive oil	olive oil



Pizza dough should be stretched by hand to maintain the bubbles of air that form as the dough rises. With a little practice, anyone can learn to make a perfectly thin and crispy crust, but you can use a rolling pin at first to get you started.

- Add the yeast and sugar to the water, mix and set aside for a few minutes.
- Sift the flour and salt into a large bowl. Slowly add the yeast mixture, using a fork to mix. Place your dough on a large flour-dusted surface.

- Knead the dough for 10 minutes. Start to stretch the dough, then roll it up into a ball. From time to time, slap the dough against your worktable. When the dough is smooth and elastic, set it aside, sprinkle with flour and cover with a cotton tea towel. Wait 30 minutes – or until it has doubled in size.
- Chop the garlic and basil. Heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil in a pan, add the garlic and fry for a minute. Add the tomatoes and sugar, and season to taste.

- Simmer the sauce for 20 minutes, until it thickens and the tomatoes start to fall apart. Add the basil towards the end.
- Pre-heat your oven to 240°C. Divide your dough into 4 balls. Cover them with a tea towel.
- Take a ball of dough and stretch it out (but be careful not to make any holes). When it is ready, place on a baking tray covered in baking paper.

- Spread 4-5 tablespoons of tomato sauce on top, avoiding the edges. Scatter mozzarella pieces across your pizza. Add salt to taste, drizzle with olive oil and decorate with basil leaves.
- Bake for 12-15 minutes, until the edges are golden. After you remove the pizza from the oven, add freshly ground pepper and another drizzle of olive oil. Then, do it all again with the rest of your pizza dough!









## CURDLE SAC

- Thanks to traces found in prehistoric Greek vases, we know that people drank cow's milk 8,000 years ago. But when did humans begin making and eating cheese?
- As milk goes off quickly, people probably started making cheese quite early on. Cheesemaking may even have been discovered by accident – if someone left some milk in a sac made of a sheep's stomach.

\* Read up on reinnet on page 83.



## SWEET, DRY AND MERRY

- For Greeks, the **grapevine** is the most precious of plants, alongside the olive, and has just as many uses.
- Grapes can be dried into raisins or pressed into juices and syrups. They can be added to both sweet and savoury dishes.
- Grape leaves also come in handy for wrapping meat or rice specialties,

such as **dolmades**, which originated in Turkey.

- The grapevine's starring role however is in **wine production**. Wine was so important to ancient Greeks that it even had its own god, Dionysus. Every Greek banquet included toasts and offerings to their boozy benefactor.

\* Read up about balsamic vinegar on page 83.

## DIVINE DELIGHTS

- Of all the Greek contributions to European arts and philosophy, the finest things to come from Greece are the array of delicious sweet treats, including cakes and biscuits.
- It was the Greeks who first came up with the idea of dousing cakes in honey or filling pastry with **sweet cheese**. Historical references to sweet Greek treats go back as far as 2,500 years.



## CHEESEY POETRY

- The first description of Greek cheesemaking appears in Homer's epic tale *The Odyssey*. Homer tells the story of **Polyphemus** – a giant, man-eating cyclops who apparently liked to wash his human victims down with a piece of cheese.
- The cyclops arrives at his cave, which is full of jars of milk and baskets of maturing cheese. When he spies the humans who have broken into his workshop, he flies into a rage and starts to devour them.
- Did Polyphemus really have a taste for human flesh, or was he merely attacking the humans to protect his precious store of cheese?

## MELOMAKARONA

Festive honey biscuits • 60 minutes, 35–45°C

Syrup	Biscuits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/2 cup water (120 ml)</li> <li>2 cinnamon sticks</li> <li>1 cup runny honey (250 ml)</li> <li>runny honey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/2 cup sugar (150 g)</li> <li>4 cloves</li> <li>1 orange</li> <li>1 cup runny honey (250 ml)</li> <li>coarsely chopped walnuts</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 cups flour (420 g)</li> <li>1 tsp cinnamon</li> <li>1/2 tsp ground nutmeg</li> <li>1/2 tsp baking powder</li> <li>1 orange</li> <li>1/2 cup fine sugar (100 g)</li> <li>1/2 cup olive oil (85 ml)</li> <li>1/2 cup vegetable oil (170 ml)</li> <li>1/2 cup orange juice (125 ml)</li> <li>1/2 tsp baking soda</li> </ul>

1 Start by making the syrup: place the water, sugar, cinnamon, cloves and orange peel in a pan. Boil for several minutes until the sugar has dissolved. Take the pan off the heat and add the honey. Stir and set aside to cool.

2 Now for the biscuits. In a small bowl, combine the flour with the ground cinnamon, cloves, baking powder, orange peel and sugar. In a second, larger bowl, combine the oils.

3 Add the baking soda to the orange juice and mix until it bubbles. Add the orange juice to the oil blend and mix.

4 Gradually add the flour mixture to the orange-oil blend. Use a spoon to combine the ingredients, then use your hand to knead it together, but not for too long.

5 Heat the oven to 180°C. Shape the biscuits into ovals about 3 cm long.

6 Arrange the biscuits on a greased baking sheet about 2–3 cm apart. Bake for 25 minutes.

7 When cooled, dip the cookies in the honey for 10–15 seconds (do this in batches). Arrange on a plate and sprinkle with walnuts and cinnamon.

\*Yayia Maria serves her melomakarona at Christmas.







• Numerous cultures came together to shape Morocco's rich heritage and cuisine, including the native Berbers of the north and the nomadic Bedouins (accompanied by their camels, sheep and goats). It was ruled by the Roman Empire for 400 years, until the Arabs conquered most of North Africa, and then snatched up by the colonial powers of France and Spain. Morocco didn't gain its independence until 1956.

• It is no wonder that this melting pot of influences created a varied cuisine of

African, Arabian and Mediterranean flavours: olives and olive oil, wheat breads, aromatic soups and fish dishes, fluffy couscous, and pairings of sweet fruits with meat and vegetable dishes.

• Moroccan cuisine is made up of hundreds of unique dishes. It is full of inimitable aromas and unmatched flavour pairings, all washed down with a swig of strong, sweet tea.

### ONE FOR THE ROAD

- Berbers spent most of their lives travelling, so needed foods that were filling, nutritious, light, easy to prepare and long-lasting.
- Couscous fulfils all these requirements. It can be stored for years without losing any of its nutritional content and it requires a lot less water and heat than rice, or any other type of grain.

### DECORATIVE DISHES

- **Tagine** refers to both the name of Morocco's signature dish and the clay pot used to prepare it.
- A tagine is a slow-cooked stew. It can be sweet or sweet-and-savoury thanks to the addition of honey, fruit or nuts.

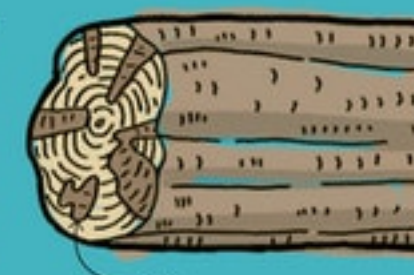
• A tagine is served in the same dish it is cooked in. The cone-shaped lid not only looks good, but keeps the humidity from escaping and allows the stew to simmer.



Tagines are prepared with orange water, pickled lemons and, for special occasions, agarwood crushed with sugar.

### A PINCH OF LUXURY

- The **agarwood tree** (oud kmari) is the most expensive cooking ingredient in the world and is even pricier than white truffles.
- This luxury item is produced by a tree that is native to Asia. When a particular type of fungus attacks the tree, it releases an aromatic resin. The resin-infused wood is then powdered and used in the production of incense and perfumes – and occasionally added to ceremonial tagines prepared for the most illustrious occasions.



agar

### SEFFA

Sweet couscous 30 minutes, 6

- 1/2 cup pitted dates (120 g)
- 1 cup couscous (200 g)
- salt
- 1/2 cup milk (125 ml)
- 1/2 cup raisins (40 g)
- 1/2 cup hot water (125 ml)
- 3 tbsp butter (45 g)
- 1/2 cup almonds (40 g)
- 2 tbsp finely milled sugar

Seffa is usually prepared with a particularly fine type of couscous, but any type you can find will do just fine.

- 1 Cut the dates into small pieces. Mix the salt into the couscous, along with the dates and raisins. Pour in the milk and set aside for 10 minutes.
- 2 Then pour the hot water over the mixture, cover and set aside for another 10 minutes.
- 3 Melt the butter and chop the almonds. Add to the couscous along with the sugar. Try shaping it into a pyramid and sprinkle with cinnamon and the remaining almonds.



Josef makes the fluffiest seffa in town.



Sprinkle water on the flour. Roll into balls by hand. Sift the couscous.

### LIGHT AS AIR

• Every civilisation has its own methods for quickly filling up a hungry belly. Grain is used to make kasha and porridge, tubers can be boiled or fried, while milled flour can be used to make breads, cakes and pasta. Morocco also has its own starchy staple.

- **Couscous** is an essential ingredient in North Africa. The tiny grains are produced by hand, by rolling damp semolina flour into tiny balls.
- Steamed couscous is the ideal accompaniment to any main dish or appetizer.
- Most couscous is made from wheat, but any type of grain can be used.



\* Read more about starchy foods on page 102.  
\* Read more about grain dishes on page 64.





## PERFECT PRESENTATION

Close your eyes and imagine a warm sunny day in a splendid garden. Picture yourself standing inside an enormous tent. All around you, there are low tables circled by seas of soft pillows to sit on. Wherever you

look, there are wonderfully fragrant dishes: steaming tagines, succulent meats and roasted fish, fluffy pyramids of couscous and aromatic pots of soup. For dessert, a spread of fruits and brightly coloured

treats await you. And this is all to be washed down with a perfect pot of sweet tea.

This ideally illustrates the scene at a *diffa* – a Moroccan-style feast which celebrates special occasions.



## SOUR LEMONS

Morocco has a plentiful supply of citrus fruits. Stalls sell freshly squeezed orange or mandarin juice and enormous jars of pickled lemons are everywhere. The pickling process\* gives the lemons an intensely sweet-bitter taste and ensures excess fruit doesn't go to waste. Added to a meal, the lemons bring a unique dash of flavour.

\*Read more about pickling on page 85.



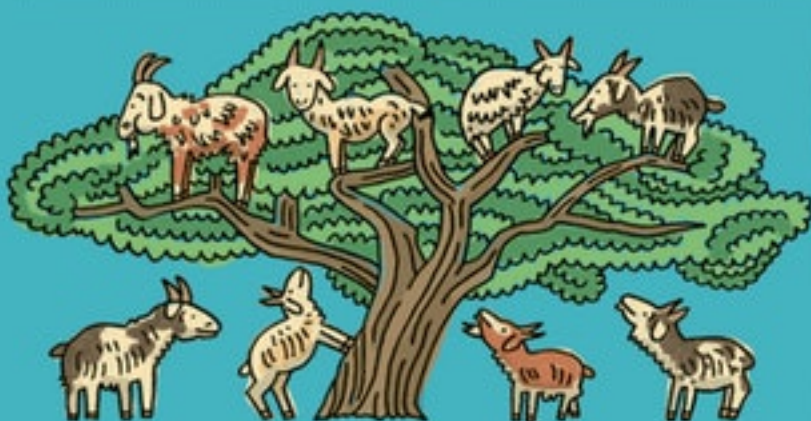
1 Slice the lemons part-way down.

2 Heap plenty of salt inside.

3 Stuff the lemons into a jar.

4 Soak with lemon juice.

5 Seal for the lemons to pickle.



## ORGANIC PROCESS

Argan oil is used to make bread, savoury dishes and even desserts. It is made by pressing the seeds of the argan tree, which is native to Morocco and is now a protected species. For centuries the task of extracting the oil was carried out by women... and goats! Goats

loved the taste of argan seeds so much, they climbed into the trees to reach them. The seeds were plucked from the goat's droppings, then cleaned and pressed. Today, this process has almost entirely been mechanised but women are still in charge and the oil is very popular in the beauty industry.

## BASTILLA

A sweet and savoury chicken pie  
Cooking time (chicken): 1 hour  
Preparation: 40 minutes  
Baking: 15 minutes, 6



Bastilla is traditionally made of warka dough but it's fine to use filo\* as a substitute in this recipe.

1 Cut the onion into strips. Dissolve the crushed saffron in two tablespoons of warm water.

2 In a large pan, melt the butter and fry the chicken. Add the onion, parsley, ginger, half the cinnamon, turmeric, saffron water and salt. Add two cups of water and cook on low a heat for 1 hour.

3 Heat the oil in a pan and fry the almonds until browned. Drain on paper towels, cool and then zap in the blender. Mix in the powdered sugar and cinnamon.

4 Remove the chicken from the broth and let it cool. Take the meat off the bone and cut into smaller chunks. Continue reducing the broth until there is around 1½ cups left.

\*Read more about the Turkish version of filo dough on page 6.

Whisk the eggs and add to the pot slowly, stirring constantly. Cook for a few minutes longer, until the mixture resembles scrambled eggs. Season to taste.



6 Spread a layer of chicken, then a layer of the egg mixture and top with another two sheets of filo. Brush with butter and sprinkle the almonds on top.

7 Fold the edges of the filo back over the bastilla and cover with the final filo sheet, making sure to tuck it underneath. Brush melted butter over the top. Bake for 15 minutes.

8 Serve hot, decorated with powdered sugar and cinnamon.







- This PDF extract was generated on Wednesday 1 June 2022. Visit [bookshelf.bonnierbooks.co.uk](http://bookshelf.bonnierbooks.co.uk) for full length preview and latest information.





## FULL EGYPTIAN BREAKFAST

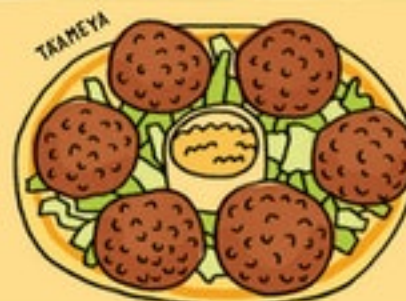
- Many Egyptians start their morning with **ful medames** ① – a hearty bowl of cooked beans.
- This rich stew is made of dried fava beans ② that are soaked and then cooked

for hours ③. It can be cooked with olive oil, butter, egg, sesame paste, meat or vegetables.

Another beany favourite is **ta'ameya** ④ – the Egyptian version of falafel. They are made using dried fava beans, which are then shaped into balls or cakes and deep-fried ⑤.

- Ta'ameya spread to the Middle East, where it became known as falafel. Instead of fava beans, chickpeas ⑥ became the bean of choice.
- These traditional dishes are full of health benefits, as well as being tasty. Beans are a great source of fibre and protein.

\* Check out the page on page 15.



## BEANS OF LEGEND

- In ancient times, cooked fava beans ① were a popular, but also feared food!
- Egyptian priests were not allowed to touch the beans, the Romans believed that the souls of the dead were trapped within, while the philosopher Pythagoras forbid his students from eating them.
- We don't know the reason for these fears, but the root may be because of a rare genetic disease known as **favism**, which is caused by a reaction to eating the beans.

\* The words 'fav' and 'favism' come from the Italian word for bean.



## UMM ALI

Bread pudding  
Preparation: ① 15 minutes  
Baking: ② 15 minutes, 8-9



Umm Ali ① is a popular dessert made using dry aish baladi or pastry. Old croissants work well!

- Soak the raisins in warm water and set aside for 15 minutes. Heat the oven to 180°C.
- Heat the milk, sugar and vanilla in a pan, until it begins to boil. Use a hand mixer to whip the double cream with 1 tablespoon of powdered sugar. Chop the nuts.



- Arrange a layer of croissant pieces in an oven-safe dish about 26 cm across. Sprinkle with the nuts



(saving some for the garnish), raisins and coconut flakes. Add another layer of croissant pieces and pour over the sugary milk.

- Top with whipped cream and powdered sugar.
- Bake for 15 minutes. For the last 2 minutes, turn on the grill to brown the top. Sprinkle over the nuts and serve warm.

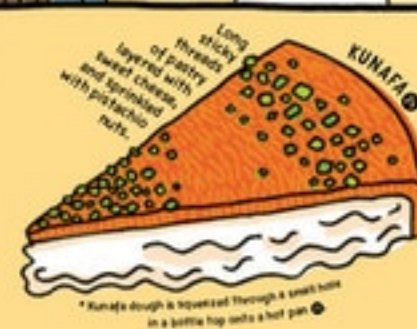
## TEA DUTY

- Black tea ① is the drink of choice in Egypt and is more popular than coffee. People drink it from early in the morning to late into the evening.
- Tea is served at all types of gatherings – from casual meet-ups to formal ceremonies – and many Egyptians believe that offering tea to their guests is a duty and not a polite gesture. This is why tea is often referred to as 'wajib', which translates to 'duty' in Arabic.
- In Egypt, tea is known as 'shai'.
- There are several types of Egyptian tea and infusions:



## EXTREME SWEETS

- Decadent desserts are the perfect finish to a good Egyptian meal.







- Nigeria has a long history of different kingdoms and city states. Nigeria's coast also functioned as a major slave-trading post for hundreds of years. This abhorrent practice was developed by Europeans during the colonial period and wasn't abolished until the 20th century.
- Today, Nigeria is among the wealthiest nations in Africa. The country is made up of hundreds of different ethnic tribes and while English is the official language, 500 others are spoken.

- Lagos is the nation's largest city, famous for its nightlife, music scene and film industry — known as 'Nollywood'.
- Nigerian cuisine has remained resilient in the face of change and Nigerians still relish a bowl of hot red rice and a ball of pounded yams dipped in gravy, just as their ancestors did before them. You would be hard-pressed to find a Nigerian who would turn their nose up at handful of nuts, bursting with caffeine.



Peel the white shells to see the fresh seeds.

## NUTTY KOLA

- Kola nuts are seeds which can be chewed or made into a drink. Nigeria produces over half of the world's supply of them!
- The tree that produces kola nuts is related to the cocoa tree, and it is native to tropical Africa. Kola nuts can be eaten raw, but care needs to be taken — one nut has the same amount of caffeine as two cups of coffee!

- In Nigeria, kola nuts are often bought from a street vendor and chewed. They are considered a valuable supplement or even medicine.
- The most famous kola nut product in the world is Coca-Cola®, which was invented over 100 years ago. The original recipe was devised by an American pharmacist named John Pemberton.

\* Find out more about cocoa on page 13.

## STRONG SEEDS

- To add a richness to Nigerian soups, stews and other fish and meat dishes, various vegetable oils are used including palm oil, peanut oil, sesame oil and shea butter.

\* Read more on page 33.  
\* More about sesame on page 15.



- Palm oil is made of the fruits of the tropical oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*). To make palm oil, either just the seeds are pressed, producing a yellowish oil, or the entire nut (producing an intensely red oil).
- The oil is used to make margarine and other spreads and can be used for frying. It is even used as an ingredient in fuel and in the cosmetics industry. The development of palm oil on a mass scale has however led to widespread deforestation, so many people are trying to reduce its production and consumption.



- Shea butter is made from the nuts of the shea tree (*Vitellaria paradoxa*). It's used in cooking and to make soaps, candles and creams.

## GROUNDNUT SOUP

Nutty chicken stew  
● 1.5 hours, 6+



You can use any type of meat to make this soup\* or replace with potato and root vegetables.

- Heat the oil and butter in a deep frying pan. Add the chicken and flash fry it on both sides.
- Add the water, laurel leaves and salt. Cover and simmer for about 45 minutes, until the chicken is tender.
- Roast the nuts in a hot, dry pan. When they are golden, let them cool and then blend into a paste (if you are not using peanut butter).
- Blend the onion, garlic, chilli and tomatoes — but not too finely.
- Ladle the meat out of the pot. Add the groundnut paste, the tomato-onion blend and oil. Cook for 10-15 minutes, stirring from time to time.
- Put the chicken back in the pot, add the spinach and cook for a few minutes. Serve with rice.

\* Nigerian soups are more like a stew or sauce.



Samuel loves to cook for his family.





## JOLLOF

Slow-cooked red rice, 1 hour, 6+



1 Rinse the rice thoroughly. Chop 1 red onion and blend the other (coarsely) with the tomatoes, garlic, chilli and paprika.

2 Fry the chopped onion in oil for a few minutes, then add the tomato puree and cook for another 2 minutes. Then add the tomato-onion blend. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

3 Add the salt and seasonings, then the rice and water (or stock). Mix well. Cover and simmer on a low heat for 15-20 minutes, or until the liquid has evaporated. If the rice is still too firm, add a bit of water and simmer for another 5 minutes.

4 Let the rice settle for 15 minutes, then serve.

## STAR STARCHES

The basic desire to feel full and satisfied has always driven humans to find nutritious and filling food. Every civilisation on Earth has found their own local source of starch – a type of complex carbohydrate that is metabolised slowly and keeps the belly feeling fuller for longer. Popular starches include various grains, beans, tubers and other root vegetables. It's clear from this book just how important starchy foods are to local cuisines around the world: from wheat bread in Egypt, rye bread in Germany and rice in China and Japan, as well as kasha in Poland, cassava in Brazil and many types of noodles and dumplings from the Far East to Western Europe and beyond. Nigeria's star starches are:



## MINE'S BETTER

African varieties of rice were domesticated independently from their Asian cousins. Today, all kinds of rice are popular. Rice is the main ingredient in jollof. Its intense orange colour comes from palm oil and tomatoes. There are many different types of jollof rice and Nigerians, Senegalese and Ghanaians all argue about whose jollof came first and which is the best.



## BIGGEST OF THE BUNCH

The massive yam – which can reach as much as 20 kg in weight – is an integral part of daily life in Nigeria. Yams require quite a lot of water to grow so they are usually harvested after the rainy season. The harvest period is also a time of celebration, with the yam starring as the guest of honour.



1 Peel the yams.



2 Boil in hot water.



3 Pound the yams.



4 Knead and shape.



5 The yam balls are ready!



6 They can be enjoyed with lots of dishes.

## YUMMY YAMS

Yams are typically pounded until they form a single ball of goodness. The yams are boiled before they are pounded. There is a powdered form, however, which just requires water.

Pounded yam doesn't have any flavour of its own, so it is the perfect accompaniment to spicy dishes. It is traditionally eaten by tearing off a piece by hand and using it to scoop up a stew or sauce. In many African countries, this type of starchy ball is often called 'fufu'.





# ETHIOPIA

THICK. BUTTERY.  
SOUR AND SPICY

• The earliest traces of human activity in Ethiopia date back over 200,000 years. The ancient city of Aksum, which stood here for 1,000 years, had a powerful empire. Despite many attempts from other regimes to conquer the nation, Ethiopia has stayed largely independent. Its main challenge however has always been the harsh climate and the long-lasting dry spell which means just three months of rainfall each year.

• With the rainy season comes luscious green fields. The harvest needs to be gathered quickly, and historically the provisions had to last the entire year. A failed harvest was catastrophic, as Ethiopian people would be at risk of starvation, or even death.

• Close ties with tradition and mistrust of outside influences, alongside harsh conditions, created a simple but distinctive cuisine. At the heart of every Ethiopian meal is a traditional fermented flatbread, aromatic clarified butter and a range of hearty meat and vegetable stews.

## SOURDOUGH STAPLE

• **Injera** is a thin, pan-fried flatbread made of teff flour. **Teff** is native to Ethiopia and is its most important foodstuff. The fermenting process gives injera its sour kick.

• Ethiopia is known for its thick stews, served on top of an injera. To enjoy, diners use their

hands to scoop up a piece of injera with the stew. There's no need for a knife or fork! Typically, a whole table of people shares a single dish, so licking your fingers is forbidden (and you must wash your hands before sitting down!).



## FRAGRANT BUTTER

• The other Ethiopian must-have is **niter kibbeh**\* (also spelled nit'ir qibe) – clarified butter with herbs such as cumin, cardamom, fenugreek, cinnamon, nutmeg or ginger. The milk solids are drained off, leaving behind a golden tub of pure fat that can be used in cooking. It last for many months – even up to a whole year.

\* Similar to ghee – described on page 25.

## JUST FOR YOU

• No matter where in the world you go, eating a meal together is an act of hospitality and kinship. In Ethiopia, this is expressed through the gesture of kindness known as **gursha**.

• When friends and family get together over a plate of injera, one person prepares a **gursha** (meaning 'mouthful') of injera and stew to serve to the person sitting beside them.



## HEARTY AND SPICY

• A plate of injera is loaded with various sauces and condiments.

• **Mat** refers to a spicy dish, typically prepared with a chilli and spice mix known as **berbere**. **Alichu** dishes are milder.

• **Kitfo** is a traditional type of beef tartar seasoned with an aromatic dash of niter kibbeh.

## CLASSIC INJERA

Flatbread  
Fermentation: 2-3 days  
Preparation: 20 minutes, 7+

- 1 cup brown teff flour (160 g)
- 1 cup wheat flour (150 g)
- 2½ cups lukewarm water (625 ml)
- ½ tsp salt
- clarified butter

Injera's sour flavour is due to the fermentation process of the dough but if you're in a hurry, try the express version on the righthand page.



- 1 Take a large glass jar and add both types of flour. Add water and mix. The mixture should be thick but still runny (add more flour or water if needed).
- 2 Cover the jar with a tea towel and set aside for 2-3 days, mixing as often as you can.
- 3 When fermentation is complete, the mixture should have a slightly sour smell and bubbles should appear when mixed.



- 4 Add salt to the mixture just before frying and stir.
- 5 Heat clarified butter in a pan and spread out an even layer of dough. When the top starts to get crispy, cover the pan and cook for another minute. Continue until you've used up all your dough.



## INJERA EXPRESS

20 minutes, 4+

- ½ cup teff flour (80 g)
- ½ cup rye flour (75 g)
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 cup water (250 ml)
- 3 tsp yoghurt
- 1 tsp vinegar

In a large bowl, combine the two types of flour, baking soda and salt. Add the water, yoghurt and vinegar until smooth. Fry as per the main recipe.





## DORO WAT

Stew with chicken and eggs

●● 2 hours, 6+ ●



Doro wat is traditionally made with *niter kibbeh*, but you can use ghee or your own clarified butter instead.

- 1 Place the chicken in a large bowl and cover with water. Coarsely chop the red onions.
- 2 Melt half the butter in a deep pan and cook the onion on a low heat and cover for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

- 3 Add the rest of the butter, the berbere seasoning, chopped garlic and ginger. Cook for another 30 minutes.

- 4 Add the chicken, honey and a teaspoon of salt. Add a bit of water to ensure the meat is covered. Cover and cook for an hour, until the chicken is tender.

- 5 Hard boil the eggs, peel and poke them with a knife. Add them to the pot and cook for a few more minutes. Season to taste and serve with injera\*.

\* Find the injera recipe on the previous page.



## BERBERE

Spice mixture, 10 minutes, 1+ ●



- 1 Shell the cardamom and dry roast the seeds together with the fenugreek and coriander seeds, pepper and cloves. When cool, zap in a blender.
- 2 Add the rest of the seasonings and zap again. Berbere can be stored in a sealed jar for about 3 months.



## FIT FOR AN EMPRESS

- More than 130 years ago, Empress Taytu Betul decided to host the party of the century in order to celebrate Ethiopia's new capital **Addis Ababa** (which translates to 'new flower') and to show off Ethiopian culture to the world.
- The party was a great success. A giant tent was set up with 1,000 baskets of injera.

Jars of butter, seasonings and sauces filled the room along with plenty of meat stews. A total of 5,395 sheep and goats were slaughtered for the great feast! The empress even cooked some of the dishes herself. The food served that night went down in history and set the foundation for Ethiopian cuisine.

## A BANANA BUT NOT REALLY

• **Ensete** is the Egyptian version of a banana – except that the fruit is inedible. Instead, the plant's roots and pulp are eaten. A single plant can provide as much as 40 kg of **kocho** – a sweet pulp that can be boiled, baked or made into a drink.



An Ethiopian shepherd apparently noticed his goats were more alert after eating the fruits of a coffee plant.



Syrian traders bring coffee to Turkey. (Over 100 years ago.)

## LUXURY FOR ALL

- **Coffee** is a stimulant\*. It is made from the fruits of trees and shrubs native to Ethiopia. The mature coffee beans are dried in the sun, roasted, ground and brewed.
- No one knows exactly when humans first discovered the effects of coffee.
- Coffee contains caffeine, which has a stimulating effect on the brain.



Islamic mystics (Sufis) drank coffee before a night of prayers. (Over 1,000 years ago.)



A Polish nobleman called Jerry Franciszek Kulczycki set up one of the first coffee shops in Vienna. (Over 300 years ago.)



Sufis from Yemen came up with the idea of roasting and grinding coffee beans. (About 6,000 years ago.)



In Paris over 22,000 cafés open up to meet the demand for coffee. (Over 100 years ago.)

- At first, the raw beans were chewed, or the shells brewed into a drink. Arab traders realised the potential and began transporting coffee through the Middle East.
- Coffee became popular in Europe later. At first, it was treated as a medicine, and drunk when someone needed to be 'perked up'. Soon enough, the flavour also became popular.

Today, coffee is drunk all over the world, with the greatest number of coffee drinkers in the north of Europe. Scandinavians tend to drink an average of three cups per day! From Europe, coffee then made it to the colonies in the Americas and Asia. It was discovered anew in Ethiopia and is the nation's number one export product.