



Passport and Plate 2015

Receipes from around the world

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Passport & Plate: A Journey Through Food

One of the amazing things about food is its ability to transport us to the far corners of the globe, to places we've never heard of, places we've only ever dreamed of. Through our Passport & Plate scholarship, World Nomads has been making those dreams a reality.

In 2014 we sent Elena, Sofia, and Tri, to Italy. One of the great cultural cornerstones of our world. 2015 it was Lindsay, Mahsa, and Suresh's turn to head to Sri Lanka. That tiny island paradise that doesn't receive nearly the attention it deserves.

We saw some amazing scholarship entries. The recipes, the stories, say more about the World Nomads community around the world than we ever could.


What's in this recipe book?

For this cookbook we've collected the best of the best. All our favourite recipes from the 2014 & 2015 Passport & Plate scholarships. It's a fantastic collection. Our Nomads community brought us recipes from Myanmar, France, Bangladesh, and almost anywhere else you can think of. Twenty-two delicious recipes, gorgeous photography, and incredible stories from around the world.



We hope this inspires you. Whether it's to get into the kitchen, head down to the market, or to take off chasing that food dream you've always had, World Nomads is behind you.

Wherever this cookbook takes you, we hope to see you again next year. There's another Passport & Plate, another once-in-a-lifetime trip to be had.



Destination: Africa

The cradle of civilisation, Africa's amazing diversity has influenced cooking the world over. None more so than the rich flavours and simple methods of North African cuisine and it's signature dish - the tagine.



Fragrant Fish Tagine with Saffron & Olives

Moroccan Flavours

By Lucille Yvette in Morocco

I knocked on the door to the cooking quarters of our Essaouiran Riad to request some mint tea and was warmly greeted by Kassim who ushered me inside. "Please this is your home".

Simmering away over the gas stove were two fish tagines for Kassim and his boss. The oceanic, spicy scents emanating from the conical lids had pervaded the entire kitchen and flirted with my soul.

A small plate of sumptuous stew was cooling on the table and within moments Kassim had a fork in my hand offering a taste of his dish with humble generosity. Overwhelmed by the gesture and salivating at the prospect of trying a home cooked version of this quintessential Moroccan meal, I tucked in.

The flesh was meaty and subtle in flavor, perhaps swordfish and was accompanied by roughly chopped potatoes, carrots, lemon, and an abundance of coriander and spices. I asked Kassim what type of fish he had used and he replied "fish caught from my family", pointing towards the coast.

I realised from his discerning reply that it didn't matter what type of fish it was, but that it was fresh, local and typical to this region. The ingredients are necessarily cheap but the flavours have depth and the dish embodies

the colours and textures of a lively culture steeped in history and religion.

Kassim asked eagerly "You like?" I explained this was the best tagine I had tried and afterwards wandered down to the harbour, passed the white washed homes with blue shutters, through the souks, to the trawlers and dinghy's huddled together where the fish had arrived this morning. The people of Essaouira were clearly in tune with their sea and intent on enjoying its offerings.

On a two week food, cultural and religious exploration of Morocco this interaction had a real impact on me both due to Kassim's kindness in his offering, but also the insight it gave me into the food culture of this region which I felt a particular connection to given my upbringing in a small coastal town and inherent love of seafood.



Fragrant Fish Tagine with Saffron & Olives

Recipe: Lucille Yvette

Serves: 4 | **Cooking time:** 45 mins | **Preparation time:** 30 mins

Ingredients

2 carrots roughly chopped	8 small new or chat potatoes cut lengthways into quarters	handful of small black olives
1 brown onion finely chopped	4 medium sized fillets of firm white fish (Ocean Perch, Mahi Mahi, Kingfish, Blue-Eye Trevalla) cut into large chunks	3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp preserved lemon finely chopped		salt and pepper
8 large cherry tomatoes halved		
750ml fish stock		

Chermoula:

½ large bunch roughly chopped coriander	1 tsp freshly ground cumin seeds (or ground cumin)	1 ½ tsp sweet paprika
3 cloves garlic finely chopped	1 red finger chili seeded	1 tsp salt1 lemon (juice only)
1 tsp ginger finely chopped	4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil	1 tsp saffron strand

To serve:

Fresh coriander leaves	1 green finger chilli
1 red finger chili	Bread or couscous

Method

1. Blend all the ingredients for the chermoula in a food processor until smooth.
2. Heat oil in large heavy based pan over medium heat.
3. Add onion and fry gently for 5 minutes.
4. Add carrot and fry for further 3 minutes.
5. Add 1/3 of the chermoula, the preserved lemon, the tomatoes and the stock, bring to the boil and then simmer for 15 min.
6. Add the potatoes and simmer for a further 15 minutes covering with lid of tagine.
7. Add the remaining chermoula and the fillets of fish so they are submerged in the liquid and simmer for 6 minutes covered (or until fish is just cooked and tender).
8. Season with salt and pepper and add olives.
9. To serve, spoon tagine into bowls and garnish with fresh coriander and finely sliced red and green finger chili's. Serve with bread or couscous.



Destination: The Americas

Corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, potatoes, chocolate, peppers, avocados and pineapples – imagine trying to cook (or eat) without all the foods that originated in The Americas.



Fish green plantain cazuela / Cazuela de verde con pescado

Cecilia's cazuela

By Santiago Rosero in Ecuador

It was 1983. It was night. I was traveling with my parents around Manabí, a province of Ecuador well known for its magnificent beaches and its delicious seafood. The car had a malfunction and we got stranded in the middle of the road.

The damage was severe and we had nothing to do until the next day. We settled to sleep into the car, and when everyone had already achieved, someone knocked the window next to my father. It was a farmer in his 40s, who had a flashlight in one hand and a machete in the other. He offered to my parents a place to stay at his home and my parents agreed.

The house was about two hundred meters from the road deep into the trees. The man lit the way with the flashlight and with the machete cut branches impeding our way. At the house -a reed walled house of a single space- were Cecilia, Carlos Zambrano's wife -we soon learned their names and their three children: Jonás, Aurelio and Melisa. Cecilia stoked a little fire pit and Carlos showed us where we were going to sleep: a little corner where there was a rush mat and two blankets.

We sat around the fire and Cecilia put in our hands some rough clay smoky pots. "What is this that smells so good?" Asked my mother before giving the first spoonful. "It's a cazuela de pescado" said Cecilia. We did it today for Jonás's birthday.



The cazuela, a dish originally from the countryside in the coast of Ecuador but became urban and popular, my parents had eaten several times before, but swore that Cecilia's was unique.

They immediately knew that it's taste was due to cooking with firewood and to the fact that the Zambranos had practically all the necessary ingredients in their backyard. My mother asked Cecilia for her recipe.

We slept quite well. The next morning, a mechanic fixed the car and we were able to continue our journey. I was five years old when that happened. I vaguely remember certain scenes, the dancing orange light of the fire, the deformed shadows of the children projected against the reed walls. But my parents remember that night perfectly. They often refer to it as "a moment of infinite generosity," and since then, they adopted Cecilia's cazuela de pescado as the dish of the great welcome moments. Every time I return to Quito, or whenever I'm passing by, my parents receive me with a plato de cazuela. I learned to make it when I was 18.

Fish green plantain cazuela / Cazuela de verde con pescado

Recipe: Santiago Rosero

Serves: 2 | Cooking time: 30mins | Preparation time: 50 mins

Ingredients

2 green plantains	2 garlic cloves, chopped	2 tablespoons finely minced cilantro
200 gr dorada (or hake or tuna)	50 gr peanuts	1 teaspoon oregano
1 medium red onion, chopped	3 tablespoons achiote (annatto seed) oil	salt, pepper, cumin
1 medium green pepper, diced		
1 small tomato, chopped	1 L fish stock	

Method

1. Heat the achiote oil in a large pan over medium heat and sauté the chopped onion, tomato, green pepper, garlic, oregano (refrito) and seasoning (salt, pepper, cumin) until soft and fragrant. Remove from heat and let cook slightly.
2. Peel the plantains, chop them roughly and blend them in a food processor with half of the fish stock. Add the mix to the half of the refrito and mix until well blended and mostly smooth. Add little by little the rest of the stock to keep the whole mix thick but elastic.
3. Blend the peanuts with a little bit of water or half water half milk to make a soft cream. Season it and boil for 5 minutes.
4. Season the fish (salt, pepper, cumin) and sauté it slightly in another pan with the other half of the refrito (2-3 minutes).
5. Preheat the oven (180° C). In a clay pot put the plantain mix, then the sautéed fish and cover it with the peanut cream. Bake it for 15-20 minutes or until golden and gratin.
6. Serve warm with lime slices and fresh chopped cilantro (can be eaten with white rice).



Oaxacan Chocolate-Chili Sauce / Mole Negro

Aztec healing

By Rachel Glueck in Mexico

Last fall I found myself wandering the streets of Mexico's culinary capital, blissfully entangled with my fiancé, Noel - a native Aztec healer. It was there in the chaotic, grimy market place of Oaxaca that I had my first taste of mole negro.

In that moment, the essence of the Oaxacan spirit manifested on my palate: rich, complex, brimming with history, and roiling with revelry. If there is one spot in Mexico renown for vibrant festivals that blend native and European heritage, it's Oaxaca. And, without a doubt, mole negro is the culinary icon of this World Heritage City.

There's a celebration every day on the streets of Oaxaca – of life, love, marriage, death, and everything in between. Mole speaks to it all.

It was Vicky Hernandez – a Oaxacan native and my instructor in Pre-Hispanic cooking – who taught me to make mole negro. As she walked me through the subtleties of creating an authentic sauce, she infused the dish with the anecdotal wisdom of her people.

Vicky invited us to try her mother's mole at a celebration of Señor del Rayo in her village the following weekend. Noel explained that Señor del Rayo was a Catholicized version of the native celebration of



Tlaloc, the Aztec lord of rain. Once the sermon had finished and we'd all paid our respects to the Virgin de Guadalupe (or Tonantzin to the Aztecs), solemnity came to a screeching halt. The revelry began.

Twelve-year old boys ran back and forth serving beers to the thirsty crowd, while a bottle of mezcal was passed around. A monstrous vat of mole simmered at the back of the house. The band struck up and we swung our hips to salsa and cumbia alongside our hosts. Young girls and diminutive, straight-faced grandmothers followed me in a limbo line, along with all but the most timid of villagers.

With mole in my belly and mezcal whispering on my lips, writhing to modern rhythms for the sake of an Aztec-cum-Christian deity, I felt, for a moment, every bit a Oaxaqueña.



Oaxacan Chocolate-Chili Sauce / Mole Negro

Recipe: Rachel Glueck

Serves: 10-12 | **Cooking time:** 2 hrs | **Preparation time:** 30 mins

Ingredients

6 dried chilhuacles chilies	3 slices of “pan de yema” (or substitute thick slices of soft, white bread)	10 cloves
6 dried mulato chilies		½ tablespoon of cinnamon
6 dried pasilla chilies		4 tablespoons of sesame seeds
3 dried chipotle meco chilies	1 tablespoon peanuts	10 Roma tomatoes
1 onion, sliced	1 tablespoon walnuts	5 tomatillos
1 head of garlic, peeled cloves separated	20 almonds	125 grams dark chocolate
5 tablespoons vegetable oil	4 tablespoons of raisins	8 cups of chicken stock
1 plátano macho (large banana), peeled and sliced	1 teaspoon of thyme	2 tablespoons sugar
	2 tablespoons of oregano	salt
	10 whole black peppercorns	

Method

1. Slice all the chilies and remove all seeds and veins. Take care not to burn yourself with the seeds. Wash and soak chillies in hot water for 10 minutes.
2. Fry chilies, onion, and garlic in a dry pan (no oil – this is called *asado*).
3. Fry each of the following ingredients separately with a tablespoon of oil: plátano macho (large banana), slices of bread, peanuts, almonds, and walnuts. Place all these ingredients in a bowl along with the raisins, thyme, oregano, black peppercorns, cloves, and cinnamon.
4. Fry the sesame seeds dry (*asado*) with salt (to prevent them from popping out of the pan) until brown. Add to the bowl of ingredients.
5. Fry the tomatoes and tomatillos separately for 10 minutes. Allow to cool and then purée in a food processor and set aside. Blend all the other ingredients that you put in the bowl in a food processor to form a paste. Place this paste in a large pot and fry for 15 minutes.
6. Add the tomato puree, chocolate, 2 cups of chicken stock, 2 tablespoons of sugar, and 1 tablespoon of salt and cook for 1 hour, stirring constantly to prevent the sauce from sticking to the pot. You may need to add more chicken stock. Add chocolate, sugar, and salt every 20 minutes as needed.
7. Traditionally, you cook this for 8 hours, however, unless you have a lot of helpers and a lot of time, one hour will do just fine. The result will be a large pot of incredible flavor, sufficient to provide a sauce for 10 – 12 servings. Serve generously over chicken (breast, thighs, legs) or pork with rice. ¡Buen provecho!



Jamaican Style Pork & Apple Patties

Street food patties

By Carol Harris in Jamaica

For me, the street food of any country tells a story, usually of the people, the environment, and the climate to which the food belongs. In the case of Patties, Jamaica's favourite street food, the dish is also a link to my heritage and a nod to nostalgia.

It's believed that Patties came about after the British colonised Jamaica, bringing with them their working men's food of Cornish Pasties. As slavery ended, Indian indentured slaves arrived, introducing flavourful curry spices. The end result of these influences is the Jamaican Pattie, golden crisp pastry encasing a curried filling, enhanced with fiery Caribbean peppers and local thyme.

As children, it was always a special treat when my Jamaican Dad would bring Patties home after visiting the local Caribbean club. They were a fiery, exotic taste of sunshine and spice, livening up cold Lancashire evenings. We'd fight over the last crumbs. Little did I know at the time that these processed patties, made in the UK, did not live up to the freshly baked version in Jamaica.

I got to taste the real thing when I began working on cruise ships and visited Jamaica's Montego Bay on a weekly basis. On the high street in town there is a bakery, and whatever time of day or night, there is a queue of locals and tourists, waiting to buy the freshly baked treat.



Office staff, labourers, school children, we all would grab our food, packaged in small paper bags, and then find a spot in the shade to devour the goods. I always struggled to decide which filling to choose, traditional beef, vegetable, chicken, fish, or goat. I worked my way through them all at some point.

Some fantastic Patties are now available in the UK, but nothing beats making your own and eating them fresh from the oven. I've introduced new options - Turkey, and Pork 'n' Apple - equally as good as the more traditional fillings. There is always a list of family and friends, waiting for the next batch to hit the table.

Jamaican Style Pork & Apple Patties

Recipe: Carol Harris

Serves: 12 | **Cooking time:** 50 mins | **Preparation time:** 20 mins

Ingredients

400g minced pork or turkey
(or mix of both)
3 spring onions, chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
2cm piece ginger, peeled
and grated

1 scotch bonnet chilli, deseeded
and finely chopped
4 tsp Caribbean curry powder
Leaves from a small sprig of
fresh thyme

Salt and black pepper
2 large bramley apples,
peeled, cored, diced

Caribbean Curry Powder:

4 tablespoon whole
coriander seeds
2 tablespoon whole
cumin seeds
2 tablespoon mustard seeds

3 star anise
1 tablespoon fenugreek seeds
1 tablespoon allspice
(pimento) berries
3 tablespoons ground turmeric

Pastry:

250g butter
450g plain flour
½ tsp turmeric
Salt
3 eggs

Method

1. Fry the mince, spring onion, garlic and ginger until the meat is browned. Add the chilli. Stir in the curry powder and thyme and cook for 2 mins. Add approx. 100ml of water, and a good pinch of salt and pepper to the pan, cover and simmer for 5 mins.
2. Add the apple and cook for 5 minutes until the apple is just tender. Set aside to cool.
3. Blitz the butter, flour, turmeric and a pinch of salt to a coarse crumb. Mix in 2 of the eggs, and cold water if needed, until the dough comes together. Wrap and chill whilst the filling cools. Preheat the oven to 180C.
4. Thinly roll out the pastry and cut out 12 circles. Spoon the filling on half of each disc. Brush the edge with egg or milk and fold pastry over the filling, pinching the edges.
5. Put on a baking parchment-lined tray or two, glaze with the final beaten egg and prick the tops to let the steam escape. Bake for 30 minutes until golden.

Curry Powder:

1. Place all the ingredients for the Caribbean curry powder, except the turmeric, into a dry frying pan.
2. Toast the spices over a medium heat for about 5- 6 minutes or until they colour slightly and release their aroma. Allow the spices to cool and then grind them to a powder with a pestle and mortar or use a spice grinder.
3. Mix in the turmeric and store in an air-tight container.



Meyer Lemon Bundt Cake / I dolcetti al limone

Longing for my lemon tree back home

By Elena Valeriote in USA

I had just returned to my apartment in Los Angeles after spending Christmas at home with my family in Northern California. Upon opening my suitcase, I found a note informing me that the TSA had checked my bag. I laughed – it must have looked very suspicious.

If only I could have seen the serious face of a federal employee as he opened my suitcase filled with lemons. They weren't just any ordinary citrus. They were Meyer lemons, but more than that, they were bright yellow, juicy capsules that tasted of home.

In truth, "home" had not always been the house with the lemon tree. At the age of nine, when we moved from my childhood home, I was devastated and at first I refused to like our new residence, where I return nowadays to visit my parents. As I moped, my mom tried to point out the advantages of the new home to me. There's a lemon tree out back! She had said. I didn't yet understand what that meant – not until she brought in armfuls of the cheerful, little fruits and began preheating the oven. In the kitchen with the lemons, I stopped resenting my parents for making us move.

Baking had always been something special that my mother and I shared; the warmth of the oven, our buttery fingers, the sweet aromas swirling around us – no one could be unhappy in a kitchen.



Our culinary repertoire of lemon-inspired baked goods and savory dishes flourished, but nothing was ever so perfect as our Meyer Lemon Bundt Cakes. After moving to attend college, thoughts of these cakes hovered like pale yellow clouds in my mind. I found that store-bought citrus lacks an authenticity of flavor and so I packed a bag full of lemons to take to my apartment from home. An odd array of things have since filled my suitcase and I'm sure stranger things will occupy it in the future.

My longing for the familiarity of my mother's cake is now overcome with an insatiable wanderlust; I feel the emptiness of my suitcase and (though I may pack a lemon for comfort) I am ready to fill it anew.

Meyer Lemon Bundt Cake / I Dolcetti al Limone

Recipe: Elena Valeriote

Serves: 6 | **Cooking time:** 25 mins | **Preparation time:** 15 mins

Ingredients

Cake batter:

½ cup unsalted butter, room temperature, plus more for Bundt pan
1 ½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for Bundt pan

2 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup buttermilk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Zest of 1 lemon, finely grated

Juice of 1 lemon (approx. 2 tablespoons)
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs

Glaze:

2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 ½ cups confectioners' sugar

Method

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter and flour a mini Bundt pan. In a medium bowl, whisk the flour with the baking powder and salt. In a small bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, vanilla, and zest and juice of 1 lemon. Set aside.
2. With an electric mixer, cream butter and granulated sugar until light. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. With mixer on low speed, add flour mixture in three batches, alternating with two additions of buttermilk mixture.
3. Divide batter evenly in the pan. Bake until a toothpick inserted in center of a cake comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Cool 10 minutes in pan, then cool completely on a rack.
4. Set rack over wax or parchment paper. In a small bowl, stir confectioners' sugar with 2 tablespoons lemon juice until smooth. Pour over cakes and let set 30 minutes.



Destination: Asia

From the colder climes of China to the steamy tropics of Thailand, Asian cuisine is as varied as the many peoples who live here. Pork glazed with sweet and sticky sauces, or vegetables hardly fried with mint, fish sauce and noodles. Asian cuisine is a journey of its own.



Chairman Mao's Red-Braised Pork

The Umami of my mind

Pete Dillon in China

I am not Chinese, have no Asian heritage and my ability to cook Asian food is not handed down. I am a bog Irish Aussie lad who cooks for, and with, love. But, I have perfected this dish. It's not groundbreaking but I love it.

My partner and I have a favourite restaurant in Melbourne, and we will be having our non state sanctioned wedding there in December. Every time we have eaten there, we order this beautiful candied pork. – it's sweet, mildly spicy and deliciously sticky. We think the chef likes serving it for us as much as we love to eat it.

One afternoon, I decided to give it a go, and came up with what is now my own recipe. It has evolved and changed, and recently I was proud enough of the dish to show the chef. He loved it.

I love candied Chinese pork because it reminds me of the many times my partner and I have eaten at this restaurant together. We have seen in a couple of new years with friends and loved ones here, and cooking this dish reminds me of those times – of friendship, fellowship and love shared around a table.

I enjoy trying new things in the kitchen, and taking myself out of my comfort zone. It would be easy to cook what I know and like but the challenge of trying something, and making it my own is fulfilling.



As we grow older, I want to remember these times, and this candied pork will serve as a reminder of our younger days dating and getting to know each other – sort of like a photograph, but with taste – 'the Umami of my mind'.

I love that food can transport us to somewhere, to take us to a place far away. Smells like star anise, cinnamon and chilli remind me of times spent in other lands. This recipe does that. I don't have an old grandmother who inspired this recipe or any great culinary heritage that I can point to in my past. But I am creating memories for the future that I can pass on to others – my own taste stories.



Chairman Mao's Red-Braised Pork

Recipe: Pete Dillon

Serves: 2 | **Cooking time:** 45 mins | **Preparation time:** 20 mins

Ingredients

600g (1½ pounds) pork spare ribs (boneless)	125ml (½ cup) Shaoxing wine	100g (⅓ cup) moist shredded coconut
2cm knob ginger, peeled and sliced	125ml (½ cup) sherry	½ red onion
1 large red chilli, cut lengthways	8 cloves garlic	Coriander
3 cinnamon quills	teaspoon of salt	Mint
2 star anise	2 tsp vegetable oil	
	4 tbsp caster sugar	
	4 tbsp dark soy sauce	

Method

1. Cut pork into 2-centimetre-sized pieces. Cover with water
2. Add 6 cloves garlic, smashed with skin on.
3. Add the salt. Bring to the boil, and cook for 5 minutes.
4. Drain (keep the liquid). Remove the garlic. Set aside the pork.
5. In a heavy based wok, heat oil and half the sugar, until the sugar starts to dissolve. Add Shaoxing and Sherry (this will get very hot – be careful.)
6. Add star anise, ginger, cinnamon, chilli, 2 peeled garlic cloves. Allow to simmer for a few minutes. You can add another chilli, dependent upon how hot you want it.
7. Add the pork and soy sauce, and then cover with the stock from the pork. Allow to simmer for 20-30 minutes. Check seasoning.
8. Remove the cinnamon, ginger, star anise, garlic cloves and chilli.
9. Add the remaining sugar, turn heat to high and allow to caramelise. The liquid will reduce until the sauce on the pork is thick and sweet.
10. Finely slice red onion and mint, then tear the coriander, and make into a salad
11. Roll the candied pork in the coconut. Serve on the onion, mint and coriander salad. Have a side of steamed basmati rice and a glass of Riesling to enjoy.



Nikujaga

An alien finds home

Ludie Minaya in Japan

Far from home I am hungry, lonely and shoeless sitting in a brightly lit room. The scent of simmering dashi (Japanese stock) mingled with that of tatami mats is in the air. I'm thinking, "Here I go again. I'm plunging in, trying to learn how to swim."

It's been years since I lived in Japan and I am searching for remnants of my once less than basic Japanese to make small talk with Tomo, the lovely round-faced oba-chan (auntie) that greeted me with a radiant smile and hearty "Irrashimase!" (welcome) when I entered her quaint teishoku (home-style Japanese food) shop.

I sit quietly lost in my thoughts as she shuffles furiously through her kitchen to prepare my set meal. Now, a local Kanda girl, I am an alien fallen from the sky in this remote corner of the planet. As I fight back tears I hear her approaching and think this could be the only thing that might cure my existential malaise. She places the lacquered tray before me and I am relieved. I can feel the fears, worries and feeling of alienation slowly dissipate. "The Universe is in balance once more," I think to myself. This blissful feeling is brought on by a dish that is, literally and simply, meat and potatoes. "Niku" means meat and "jaga," from the word "jagaimo," means potatoes. This is a popular "ofukuro no aji" meal, which translates into "mother's taste."



The ingredients are slowly braised in sake, mirin, and soy sauce. This intoxicating brew creates the sweet and savory masterpiece. When I lived in Nagasaki, whenever I felt lost and alone, Nikujaga brought NYC a bit closer and lessened the sadness and longing to be home.

When I look down at the bowl and see the familiar fare, memories of my Abuela's (grandma's) food come back to me. I think of the similar dishes she so lovingly prepared for her family. I think of the grandmothers, their hands taking simple ingredients and adding their magic to dishes that comfort and reassure us that, no matter where we find ourselves in life, everything will be ok.

I spot Tomo's face beaming with pride as I carefully savor the heavenly dish. I wrestled up enough of my rusty Japanese to let her know how much I love it. Few words are exchanged between us but, her nikujaga is saying everything that she would like to say to me. The narrative flows fluidly and effortlessly from her dish. Her bowl of "ofukuro no aji" has assured me all will be just fine.

Nikujaga

Recipe: Ludie Minaya

Serves: 4 | Cooking time: 45 mins | Preparation time: 15 mins

Ingredients

315 grams, thinly sliced beef (sliced into 1 ½ inch pieces)	1 inch pieces) check in Asian Markets	4 tablespoons of sake
5 medium potatoes, peeled and quartered	1 ½ tablespoons of canola oil	4 tablespoons of mirin
1 medium sized carrot, peeled and cut into half moons	2 cups of dashi or water + 2 teaspoons of powdered dashi (check in Asian Markets)	3 tablespoons of soy sauce
1 large onion, peeled and cut into 6 wedges	If you can't find dashi, substitute with low-sodium beef stock	100 grams of snap peas, trimmed and sliced in half on the diagonal
1 ball of ito konnyaku (devil's tongue in thread form, cut into	4 tablespoons of sugar	2 sprigs of chives, finely chopped to garnish

Method

1. Peel and cut the potatoes and soak them in a bowl of water for 10 minutes.
2. Rinse the ito konnyaku and in a pot bring to a boil. Drain and set aside.
3. Prepare a pot of salted boiling water. Add snap peas and leave for 1 minute. Remove from the pot and transfer to a bowl of chilled water. Drain and set aside.
4. Heat the oil in a large pot. Add the beef. When the beef has cooked through, add the onions, potatoes, carrots and ito konnyaku. Stir the ingredients until they are coated with oil.
5. Add the dashi or water+ dashi powder and increase the heat to high.
6. Bring to a boil and skim the foam that forms at the surface. Reduce the heat to medium low. Add sugar and sake. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add the mirin and soy sauce.
7. Cover the pot with a drop lid and reduce the heat to low. Simmer until the vegetables are tender and the liquid has reduced to about half. About 25 minutes.
8. Add the snap peas and let simmer for another 5 minutes.
9. Adjust the seasonings if needed. Ladle in a bowl and garnish with chives. Serve with rice. For authenticity, the rice would be served in a separate bowl.



Sate Lilit Ayam

Last year I quit my job to chase a dream.

Jessica Rigg in Indonesia

A dream that saw me falling to sleep with books like 'Around the World in 80 dishes' on my pillow, dreaming of eating in far exotic places, and waking with a grumbling appetite for adventurous eating.

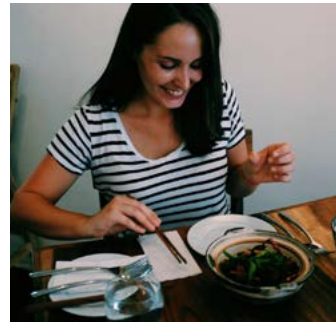
When I was 18 years old I faced the most difficult challenge of my life, fighting cancer. Seven years on I've had invaluable friendships, unforgettable moments and the pleasures that come with a comfortable life. With my comfortable life came routine; routine is a dangerous thing. It will give you tunnel vision, it will hear you complain, condemn and utter the words "one day" a thousand times over.



I spent years scrawling my dreams in a notebook, lists of destinations and culinary experiences I would fulfill 'one day'. But two years ago a wake-up call changed everything.

I was facing the threat of cancer once more, which meant the risk of my 'one day' list bearing a new name: 'I wish I had have'. I wasn't going to make the same mistake twice. I promised myself that if I came out of this alive, I wouldn't just be alive - I would live. And I stuck to it.

I quit my job, sold everything and bought a one-way ticket to begin a gastronomic journey. This is not a vacation, not a gap year, this is life. I began in Bali where I arrived ready for a food frenzy. After one week of hunting down warungs, chasing street-carts and befriending local chefs I was hospitalized with a parasite infection. Shaken, I needed something to turn this daunting experience around.



The day after being discharged I went to a local cooking class which left me with a renewed sense of confidence

and excitement. This recipe is from that day. A day when I was reminded of the conviction and courage that I needed to change, of the liberation of forgetting my fears and taking charge of my life. It is the first recipe that I learnt on my journey, the first recipe I sent home to friends and family and the recipe that I will now remember as the beginning of my new life.

Sate Lilit Ayam

Recipe: Jessica Rigg

Serves: 4 | **Cooking time:** 30mins | **Preparation time:** 45 mins

Ingredients

Base Gede:

Large red chili, halved, seeded and sliced
20g shallots sliced
100g garlic
150g galangal
75g ginger chopped fine
50g kencur finely chopped
175g turmeric finely chopped
75g candlenut
2 tsp coriander seeds
150ml coconut oil
250ml water
1 tsp black pepper corns
2 sticks of lemongrass, halved

2 bay leaves

3 kaffir limes leaves

2 tsp tamarind juice

3 tsp palm sugar syrup

Chicken Sticks:

300g ground chicken mince

200g grated coconut

½ base gede (see recipe)

5 kaffir lime leaves thinly sliced

2 tsp palm sugar syrup

1 tsp tamarind juice

lemon grass stalks

coconut oil to coat

Peanut satay sauce:

250g raw peanuts

5 cloves garlic thinly sliced

1-2 birds eye chillies, thinly sliced

25g kencur, finely chopped

3 tbsp palm sugar syrup

50ml coconut milk

2 kaffir lime leaves, thinly sliced

1 tsp kaffir lime juice

2 shallots, thinly sliced

1 pinch sea salt

1 cup coconut oil

125ml water

Method:

For peanut satay sauce:

1. Heat coconut oil in a wok over medium heat. Add peanuts, garlic, chillies and kencur stirring constantly until golden brown. Using a slotted spoon, remove from oil.
2. Using a mortar, pound ingredients to a paste. Heat coconut oil in a saucepan and add the paste and water, stirring until a smooth. Add kaffir lime leaves and stir until thick.
3. Add coconut milk and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Stir through the kaffir lime juice and palm sugar syrup.

For chicken sticks:

1. Combine chicken mince with all other ingredients (except lemongrass and coconut oil). Gently Mould a tablespoon of mixture

onto a lemongrass stalk or skewer. Coat in coconut oil.

2. Grill skewers over charcoal or bbq until golden brown.

Base Gede:

1. Grind chili, shallots, garlic, galangal, ginger, kencur, turmeric, candlenut, coriander seeds and peppercorns
2. Add to a pan along with remaining ingredients except for palm sugar and tamarind juice and simmer until golden.
3. Add palm sugar syrup and tamarind juice. Leave to cool. Once cooled, remove lemon grass, bay leaves and kaffir limes leaves.



Holy Snake Approved Roasted Eggplant Salad

A Burmese python laid on a bed littered with money

Andre Ferreira in Myanmar

After a hot morning in the summer heat riding bikes through the back roads of rural Bago, Myanmar, armed with only a hand drawn map dotted with scattered temples, we have finally found the temple that brought us to Bago in the first place.

Legend tells of a holy snake that was once a wise monk but now grants wishes for money and eats mice. Inside the temple, a gigantic Burmese python laid on a bed littered with money, much like a scene from Indiana Jones.

Our offering was a crumbly \$1 bill that was turned down by money exchange places before. We skeptically wished for “good things to come” as chances were something good would eventually come and that could be attributed to her holiness the snake, thus reaffirming

its mystical powers and most importantly, justifying our investment. Sure enough, good things came.

Stomachs growling, we asked around for a place to eat and were herded to a random house with a table outside, a pair of charcoal stoves and a wrinkly faced lady. Looking at us, she inquisitively opened her mouth and shoved an imaginary fork into it.

After a few smiles and nods, the chopping and grinding started. Two large eggplants



were thrown straight into the charcoal fire, peanuts crushed on a mortar and onions sliced. She would eventually poke the coals, flip the eggplants, stir a big pot, shove away chickens and smile at us.

Along with a pot of rice, a bowl of raw vegetables and a chicken neck curry, we were served the most delicious and original dish we've eaten: a silky mix of smoky eggplant with crunchy peanuts, red onion slices and toasted sesame seeds. We ate it all and would have eaten more. This was exactly what we asked the holy snake for.

We later discovered the name of the dish: khyan dhi pope thote - a Myanmar salad usually made in the northern Shan state, where we headed next and took a cooking class specifically to learn how to make it. We've since cooked it many times and became devotees of Bago's holy python.



Holy Snake Approved Roasted Eggplant Salad

Recipe: Andre Ferreira

Serves: 4 | **Cooking time:** 30mins | **Preparation time:** 45 mins

Ingredients

2 large eggplants	Wood charcoal (not briquettes
1 medium red onion	and without igniting fluids)
250g (6oz) toasted peanuts	
2 tbsp of peanut oil	
2 tbsp of sesame seeds	
Salt	

Method

1. Using a large pair of tweezers, extract each individual hornet from the nest.
2. Set the charcoal on fire, let it burn and then spread the coals.
3. Place both eggplants directly on top of the hot coals.
4. While they roast, peel and julienne the red onion as thin as humanly possible and set aside.
5. Keep an eye on the eggplants, keep rotating them once the bottom becomes burnt.
6. Toast the sesame seeds on medium heat with a sprinkle of sesame oil until they turn brown. Remove from the heat and set aside.
7. Once the eggplants are blackened on all sides, remove them from the fire and let them cool.
8. Set aside about one third of the peanuts. Coarsely grind the rest with a mortar or simply crunch them with the side of a knife.
9. Once cool, hold the eggplants by the stem and manually peel off the burnt pieces. Remove the stem.
10. Combine the peeled eggplants, sliced onions, crushed peanuts, two spoons of peanut oil and a dash of salt.
11. Mix until homogeneous and decorate with the whole peanuts and sesame seeds.



Dinuguan: Filipino Pork Blood Stew

Lard is definitely not the strangest ingredient in this recipe

Ashlyn Frassinelli in The Philippines

“Lard?!” That’s what the recipe says, according to my transcription. Wil, my boyfriend, doesn’t seem too pleased. Can we use anything else, he wants to know? Oil? Butter?

I tell him to call his grandmother. It was in her old, scrawled-in cookbook that we found this Filipino recipe: dinuguan, also known as chocolate meat. I had sampled it at Filipino restaurants before and loved its rich, comforting taste. Now for the first time I was trying to make it from scratch.

I laugh a bit as Wil dials her number, because lard is definitely not the strangest ingredient in this recipe. The cocoa color of the stew comes not from adding chocolate but from a healthy splash of pig blood. The pig blood cooks and thickens, coating the tender slices of pork butt in a salty, irresistible gravy. I still remember my first bowl of dinuguan, from a Filipino diner in Virginia. Once I knew what was in the stew I had to try it.

“Are you sure?” Wil kept asking, certain that I was going to spit it out and waste my money. Luckily my sensibilities are a bit less delicate than he expected. My bowl was spotless.

“She says butter is okay!” Wil tells me. I would have used the lard but I throw half a stick of butter in the pot. An hour later the kitchen is fragrant with the stew’s porky scent. Wil is eager for a bite but I’m a perfectionist. The seasoning has to be just right. Once I’m satisfied I pop a spoonful into his mouth.



“Just like home,” he sighs, a glaze forming over his eyes. Nailed it. A few days later, over bowls of leftovers, Wil tells me how impressed his grandparents were that I managed to pull the dish off. Apparently it’s uncommon for an American to cook dinuguan at home. Maybe it’s because of the blood.

“When I told my granddad,” Wil says, “he said, ‘She cooks dinuguan? You have to marry her!’” I laugh, blushing, and shove food in my mouth. I’m not sure this stew is worth a marriage proposal. But, as I stuff my face full of bloody pork meat, I have to admit: it’s pretty damn good.

Dinuguan: Filipino Pork Blood Stew

Recipe: Ashlyn Frassinelli

Serves: 6-8 | **Cooking time:** 1 hr | **Preparation time:** 10 mins

Ingredients

500-600g (1-1.3lb) pork shoulder, cubed	2 tbsp butter (or lard)	Salt, to taste
250ml (1 cup) vinegar, mixed with 500ml (2 cups) water and 1 tbs salt	2 tbsp cooking oil	2 long green peppers (or 1 jalapeño)
1 bay leaf	1 onion, diced	Cooked medium grain rice, to serve
	3 cloves garlic, pounded	
	375ml (1½ cups) pork blood	
	825ml (3½ cups) water	

Method

1. Begin by slicing the pork butt into stew-sized cubes. Put the vinegar, water and salt mixture in a large saucepan and dump in the cubed pork butt and the bay leaf. Turn the heat on medium and allow the meat to boil until it's cooked through.
2. While the pork is cooking, dice the onion and pound and mince the garlic. When the pork is nearly done, put another (large) pot on the stovetop and heat the butter and oil over medium heat. Sauté the onion and garlic until soft and fragrant.
3. Using a slotted spoon or a strainer, remove the pork and stir it into the onion and garlic. You can discard the vinegar and the bay leaf. Stir and cook the pork with the onion and garlic for about five minutes.
4. Prepare the pork blood. If there are any big solid chunks of it that can't be broken up, remove them and discard.
5. Slowly add the blood, little by little, to the cooking meat, stirring as you add. The blood should begin to turn into a dark brownish color as it heats.
6. Keep stirring until all of the red color changes - it should begin to look like melted chocolate.
7. Next, add the water and stir everything together. The blood-meat mixture will turn very watery, almost souplike. Turn the heat up and let everything boil, uncovered, for about 20 to 30 minutes. The dinuguan should become thick, like a gravy.
8. Once the stew has thickened enough, give it a taste. Add salt liberally and keep seasoning until it tastes just right. Once properly seasoned, it should taste very rich and very delicious.
9. Serve the finished product with white rice and with a long green pepper or some jalapeño slices on top. Masarap.



Yema Balls

An element of surprise and a kick in every bite

Joan Manalang in The Philippines

I am a Filipino who has been traveling to different countries for more than 10 years and living abroad for 5 years. Through my journey I met a lot of people from the flip side of the world that always ask me what is Filipino cuisine?

It has been a big challenge for me to answer that. Most people here in our planet know nothing about Filipino cuisine.

Came Christmas 2012, I was invited by my foreign friends to spend the holiday in a cold town in Vietnam named DaLat. The light bulb in my head suddenly sparks and I thought of bringing something for the Christmas Eve dinner. That was my chance to let them know about Filipino cuisine!

Filipinos have a sweet tooth in general and I am not an exemption. So I decided to bring a dessert called Yema.

It is arguably Spanish in origin and means egg yolk when Google translated. It is a recipe every Filipino would learn from their mom or grandma. But being a passionate and creative cook, I love to re-create! I decided to pull this traditional Filipino sweet into a delicate gourmet balls.

Yema may be the meekest of all desserts invented in humanity, but because of its delicate characteristic, it helped me to bring out its charm by infusing nuts and granules. I coated my yema balls with my favorite matcha powder, chocolate powder, almonds



and pistachios. It transformed to a surprisingly truffle-like dessert and suddenly looks intimidating. My foreign friends were deceived, thinking it looked like truffles but very impressed by the interesting taste and texture it brings. They really liked what I did.

There's an element of surprise and a kick in every bite, they said. They may not get a full picture of what a Filipino cuisine is, but I am pretty sure I gave them a good teaser of what they should look forward to the cuisine that has been underrated globally. Beyond the story of my dessert, this also tells about my dream to let the world take a look at Filipino cuisine and somehow be embraced by the people I meet when I travel or while living abroad.



Yema Balls

Recipe: Joan Manalang

Serves: 4 | **Cooking time:** 30mins | **Preparation time:** 45 mins

Ingredients

Yema balls

2 cans condensed milk
6 egg yolks (beaten)
50g (1.75oz) butter
300g (10.5oz) mashed potatoes
(boiled and mashed)
Vanilla bean or syrup

Coating

Cocoa powder
Matcha powder
Pistachio (chopped)
Almonds (chopped)

Method

1. Heat the pan with butter and allow it to melt down. Add the two cans of condensed milk and constantly stir it for about 10 minutes.
2. Add the mashed potatoes into the mixture and continue stirring for about 10-15 minutes or until it fully mixes into the condensed milk.
3. Make sure there are no lumps and the mixture is smooth. Add the beaten egg yolks slowly as you stir the mixture for another 15-20 minutes.
4. Add the vanilla syrup and stir for another 5-10 minutes or until it thickens.
5. When ready, set aside and cool down.
6. Prepare four plates and put the coating on them.
7. Scoop a teaspoon of the yema and shape it into a ball.
8. Roll it on the plate where each coating is placed.
9. With each ball you can create different coating that varies from chocolate powder, matcha powder, pistachio and almonds.
10. Serve as a dessert snack for the sweet tooth.



Bak Kwa (Chinese Pork Jerky)

Simulate bak kwa for Chinese New Year

Vanessa Ip in Singapore

Bak kwa, or "rougan" in Chinese, is a pork jerky that has been grilled to sticky sweet perfection and is traditionally eaten as part of Chinese New Year celebrations. I, however, have never had bak kwa from any of the popular stands in Asia.

Growing up in Toronto, the only "rougan" I'd ever had was that made by my mother, who perfected her own recipe based off of her memory of the "rougan" she ate in Hong Kong. It was a simple recipe that I often helped her with, and eventually memorized by heart. However, I never knew just what this unassuming snack food could signify until this year.

I was studying abroad in the Netherlands when an exchange student from Singapore mentioned that he wanted to caramelize bacon to simulate bak kwa for Chinese New Year. Having never heard of bak kwa before, I asked what it was, and soon realized that he was describing the "rougan" my mother made.

When I offered to teach him how to make it, he was blown away - he'd never heard of anyone making bak kwa at home before! If I made bak kwa, the Chinese New Year's potluck would be complete. Intrigued, I set about teaching him my mother's recipe, and when we finished, he swore it was almost exactly the same as the bak kwa they had back in Singapore.



At the potluck, the bak kwa was snapped up in seconds, and many of the Singaporean exchange students told me how nostalgic eating the bak kwa made them feel - it wasn't something they thought they'd be able to eat outside of Singapore. For them, it was a dish strongly associated with family gathering to celebrate Chinese New Year together, something they would line up on the street to buy.

For me, "rougan" simply reminded me of my mother's cooking, but now, as bak kwa, it took on a whole new association. Now, whenever I eat bak kwa, it makes me think of Chinese New Year in Singapore - a celebration in a place I've never visited, but one I somehow feel tied to.

Bak Kwa (Chinese Pork Jerky)

Recipe:Vanessa Ip

Serves: 4 | **Cooking time:** 18 mins | **Preparation time:** 15 mins

Ingredients

500g (1lb) minced pork (the fatter, the juicier your bak kwa)	½ tsp salt
3 tbsp soy sauce	½ tsp garlic powder
1 tbsp oyster sauce	3 tbsp orange juice
50ml (¼ cup) honey	½ tsp sesame oil
60g (¼ cup) sugar	red food colouring (optional - I did not use it in mine)

Method

1. Mix together the soy sauce, oyster sauce, honey, sugar, salt, garlic powder, orange juice and sesame oil. Add the minced pork and stir until thoroughly incorporated. The meat mixture should have a gluey consistency.
2. Cover meat mixture and refrigerate for anywhere from an hour to overnight for maximum flavour (alternatively you could skip this step and go straight to the next step)
3. Line a baking tray with tin foil and spread half the meat mixture on top, evening it out with a fork - you want to make it as thin as possible without any holes. (It should be roughly 0.5 cm thick.) Lumps will make it cook unevenly. (You will need a second baking tray for the second half of the meat mixture.)
4. Heat your oven to 160°C (320°F) and put tray in for 15 minutes.
5. After 15 minutes, take the meat out and set the oven at 240.
6. Cut the meat into smaller pieces, roughly 2 by 2 inch squares.
7. Put the pieces back in the oven for 2 minutes to char, remove the tray, flip the pieces, and put them back in for 2 more minutes. The charring is what makes it authentic bak kwa - just make sure you keep an eye on it because it can burn quickly because of the high sugar content!
8. Take the bak kwa out and enjoy! It will look sticky and have slightly charred bits. Bak Kwa is best fresh, but can be stored in the refrigerator for 2 or 3 days - simply heat it in the oven or in a pan before serving.



Steamed Turbot with Som Tam

Food is the vehicle I use to travel home now and again

Gemma Chilton in Thailand

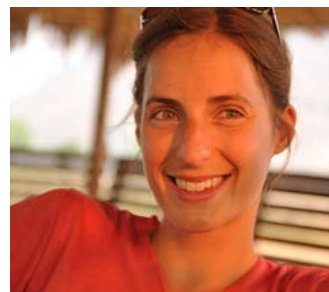
It's low tide on the River Torridge; boats lean over on the exposed mudflats, rain has cleared and sunshine peeks through the clouds.

If I close my eyes, lift my face to the sun and breathe in the briny air, I could almost be home – 15,000km away on Australia's east coast. When I open them, I might find myself crouched by a running tap, scaling freshly caught yellowfin bream or a glistening red morwong – speared by my husband or my brother in the ocean that day. Waves crashing within earshot, the hot sun on my bare shoulders... I open my eyes and greet the little English town I currently call home.

It's not a bad alternative – it's unfamiliar and exciting; an adventure.

I'm at the farmers' markets to meet Dan the Fisherman and pick up the catch of the day, turbot. It's not a fish I grew up eating, but it'll work with my recipe, Dan assures me with a whiskery grin.

The seafood I ate growing up was fresh and simple – pan fried whiting fillets, thin sliced abalone, oysters flipped open and eaten standing knee-deep in an estuary. Over time, my own cooking took on influences from around the world and Sydney's vibrant multiculturalism – particularly from South East Asia, our exotic neighbour.



In Australia, I often cooked fresh-caught fish as I have in this recipe – in a bamboo steamer bought at a local Thai supermarket, using Asian-inspired ingredients. I've served it with a newer discovery, green papaya salad or som tam, from my honeymoon in Thailand last year. For those three weeks I ate it whenever I could – usually under a whirring ceiling fan, sticky with sweat, and blissfully happy. Som tam is fresh and spicy, and like most Thai food it's about finding the perfect balance between sweet, salty and sour.

This recipe represents things I miss from home – the bounty of the Pacific Ocean, Asia at my doorstep – but it's also a reminder that food can be the vehicle in which I travel back every now and again, while exploring all the rest of the world has to offer.



Steamed Turbot with Som Tam

Recipe: Gemma Chilton

Serves: 4 | **Cooking time:** 25 mins | **Preparation time:** 45 mins

Ingredients

Fish

1 fresh whole firm white-fleshed fish, gutted, scaled, finned and cleaned
2 garlic cloves, crushed
½ bunch of coriander chopped
6-8 spring onions,
1 lime - half juiced, half sliced
2cm chunk of ginger, finely chopped
2 red chillies, finely chopped

2 tbsp peanut oil
1 tsp sesame oil
4 tbsp oyster sauce
2 tsp soy sauce
1 tsp salt

Green papaya salad (som tam)

1 large green papaya, shredded or julienned (1-2 green mangoes work as an alternative)

Juice of 2 limes
2 red chillies, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
2cm chunk of ginger, minced
2 tablespoons fish sauce
1 tbsp palm sugar, grated
Handful of green beans
1 large ripe tomato, pulp removed, sliced

Method

Green papaya salad

1. Gather som tam ingredients (bar the beans and tomato) and pound with a pestle, or wooden spoon.
2. Blanch beans in lightly salted water for 2 mins, then run under cold water. Slice lengthways.
3. Add the beans and the sliced tomato to the papaya mix. Set aside.

Fish

1. Pat the fish with paper towel and rub with salt.
2. Place the fish in a bamboo steamer, on a bed of foil (to catch the juices!). If the fish is too big, you can cut it in half.
3. Mix the garlic, chilli, ginger, oyster sauce, soy sauce, the juice of half the lime and the sesame oil in a bowl.
4. Stuff the fish with the contents of the bowl, all of the coriander and a few spring onions.
5. Baste the fish with the rest of the mix, scatter spring onions around it on the foil and place slices of lime on the fish.
6. Place the bamboo steamer over a wok or saucepan filled with 5cm of boiling water. Tightly fit the lid and reduce the heat. Cook until the flesh is white and flakes easily (20 mins)
7. Before serving, heat the peanut oil in a small saucepan until you see smoke, then pour the sizzling oil over the fish skin to make it crispy.
8. Put the fish and the salad in the middle of the table along with fluffy steamed rice to soak up the juices. Then dig in!



Crepe-Fried Flowers / Dokmai

A different kind of Valentine

Asia Nichols in Thailand

The flower festival had the city coated in colors, from the tangy orange of bougainvilleas to the sugary blossoms of pink petunias. Chiang Mai, Thailand is a place so known for its exotic flowers that it is called the “Rose of the North”.

In Februaries, the air carries a sweet aroma, marking the time of year when flowers are in full bloom. But if you follow your nose six kilometers north of the city moat, you’ll come to an organic garden where flora are taken by the forkful.

Saimok Kab Dokmai (“Flowers and Mist” in Thai) is a cozy, rustic restaurant that specializes in floral cuisine. As folk music plays in the background, Ms. Potiwat, the restaurant owner, snips flowers from her private garden to serve venturesome patrons an assortment of

vibrant dishes: spicy rose petal salads, spring rolls stuffed with begonias and pansies, and crepe-fried platters of roses, hibiscus, banana flowers and frangipanis. Close your eyes for a moment, as I had, to bask in this olfactory world.

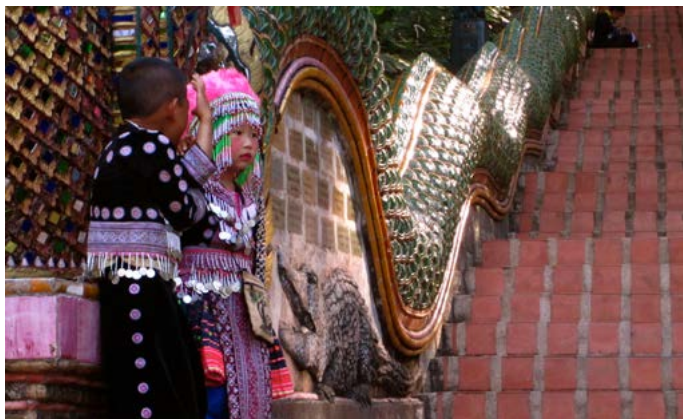
In the Western world where I grew up, February is the time when lovers buy bouquets to celebrate romance, to put on windowsills, never to eat. But there I was, on the other side of the globe, stuffing a crispy frangipani in my mouth on a dinner date with my husband.



I never would’ve known I was eating a flower. They taste like warm chips. Some flowers even have health benefits, according to Ms. Potiwat. (e.g. “Roses are good for the heart.”) Despite the abundance of tropical flowers in Thailand, floral food doesn’t lure all locals.

“Some still think it’s too crazy,” said Ms. Potiwat. “They think flowers should be for decoration only, that flowers are good for the eyes, not for the stomach.”

Also, she cautioned, some flowers are toxic. Getting farmers to stop using pesticides has been an ongoing movement, with Ms. Potiwat at the forefront. Considering I just washed down my last rose petal with a butterfly pea flower drink, I say it’s safe to pass on this delicate dish to Mother.



Crepe-Fried Flowers / Dokmai

Recipe: Asia Nichols

Serves: 2 | Cooking time: 15 mins | Preparation time: 20 mins

Ingredients

1 cup flour	Organic flowers
1 tablespoon cornstarch	Roses
1 1/2 cups water	Hibiscus
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper	Banana flowers
1/2 teaspoon paprika	Frangipanis
Salt and Pepper	
Vegetable oil for frying	

Method

1. Heat one inch of oil in a large frying pan. In a medium bowl, whisk together all ingredients for tempura batter until smooth. Season with salt and pepper to taste then set aside bowl.
2. Snip stems from flowers, leaving just enough to grasp. Check to see if the oil is hot enough by splashing a few droplets of water into the pan. If oil crackles instantly, it's good to go.
3. Gently dip flowers into tempura batter then place directly in hot oil. Rotate flowers until evenly fried on each side--this should take about five minutes or until golden brown. Place on platter lined with an oil catcher (such as paper towel) and season with salt.
4. During the last minute, drizzle a few extra petals on top and serve right away with sweet and sour sauce (or your favorite sweet dipping sauce) and a side of ginger.

* Platters may vary, depending on flowers available at the time of year. Make sure you don't use flowers that bloom from chemical pesticides (e.g. a store-bought bouquet from an unwanted admirer). Cooking the flowers will not make them safe to eat. You can find fresh pesticide-free flowers at local farmers markets, organic gardens or specialty grocery stores.



Destination: Asia Subcontinent

Spicy and fragrant, the curry is the signature dish of the sub-continent. But not all curries are the same, a fiery blast or a subtle coconut cream – the choice is yours.



Surul Poli & Badham Kheer

Our family's most prized heirloom

Abi Ramanan in India

Ever since my cousin found me as a baby immersed in a tub of ghee at our grandmother's house in Tanjore, having eaten my way through a boulder of jaggery, I knew that I had very special spot for all things sweet.

This recipe is our family's most prized heirloom, passed down from my great-great-grandmother and far beyond, with an almost sacred reverence.

Assembling the ingredients for surul poli and badham kheer is an adventure I'd look forward to from the moment I set off from Heathrow back to Tamil Nadu, lost in daydreams of accompanying my grandmother to the local market in Kumbakonam, where the piles of almonds would be taller than the men selling them.

We'd soak them overnight underneath the 'mitham', a gateway to the stars in the courtyard, and I'd sit on her giant 'oonjal' (wooden swing), on the 'thinnai' (porch) and blanch them while she plaited my hair (no more oil, ammama, please!).

I'd beg to be allowed to the farmland at the back to milk the cows and we'd slowly condense the fresh milk over the outdoor stone stove, as the giant banana tree leaves rustled above.



The swirling aromas of freshly ground cardamom and saffron would linger for days, especially after occasions like 'Bogi Festival', where teams of women would pound rice on one side and wheat on the other, in perfect rhythm, singing as they worked into the evening. I would duck and dive between them, using the pestle of the 'ural' as a microphone while sneaking lumps of sugar into my pocket.

This recipe is steeped in childhood nostalgia, and I can hear my grandmother explaining how the poori balls should be roughly the size of a lime every time I make the dough, and almost reach out and touch her as she carefully ladles the milk over each one.

I can now carry on with the rest of my days safe in the knowledge that my ammamma's surul poli and badham kheer has been served at one of our pop ups, and I know she would be proud to see all those empty plates, save for a few rose petals: my personal touch.

Surul Poli & Badham Kheer

Recipe: Abi Ramanan

Serves: 4 | Cooking time: 30mins | Preparation time: 45 mins

Ingredients

Surul Poli

250g (1 cup) wheat flour
80ml (2.75oz) lukewarm water
1.5L (6 cups) full cream milk
125g (½ cup) sugar
2 tbsps ghee
A pinch of salt

Oil for frying

A few strands of saffron
½ tsp of ground cardamom
Rose petals and edible string
for decoration

Badham Kheer

250g (1 cup) almonds
125g (½ cup) sugar
500ml (2 cups) water
750ml (3 cups) full cream milk
½ tsp freshly ground cardamom
A few strands of saffron
A pinch of grated nutmeg

Method

Surul Poli:

1. Heat milk. Once it boils reduce heat, and keep stirring until the milk thickens. Add the sugar, saffron and the freshly ground cardamom. Keep the milk hot on a very low flame.
2. Knead and prepare a soft dough by mixing flour, salt, ghee and water. Cover and set aside for 15-20 minutes at room temperature. Divide the dough into small balls and roll out into even round shapes - pooris.
3. Heat the oil in a pan and fry the pooris, one at a time, on medium heat, until golden brown. Remove and set aside on absorbent paper.
4. Add pooris to the hot milk. After a few minutes transfer pooris to a dish; add a ladle of milk to each. Soak overnight.
5. Before serving, gently roll the (very soft) pooris into cylinders and onto the edible string, and tie a bow. Warm up the leftover sweet milk and drizzle over the pooris. Garnish with rose petals.

Badam kheer:

1. Soak almonds for 6 to 8 hours or overnight. Gently squeeze the almonds and remove the skin. Blend the almonds, adding water, to form a fine and smooth paste.
2. Heat a heavy pan and add the almond paste. Bring to boil and simmer on a low heat, while stirring, until all the water evaporates. Add the sugar gradually until it dissolves. Add the milk and bring to boil.
3. Add the saffron, grated nutmeg and cardamom powder.
4. Reduce heat and simmer for 10-15 minutes.
5. Cool the badham kheer and it is ready to be served with the surul poli.
6. Enjoy your delicately flavoured South Indian sweet treat!



"Tuscan" Besan Burfi / Indian Chickpea Flour Fudge

My hosts lived in an incense-filled 400 year-old stone farmhouse

Lindsay Anderson in India

Six years ago, I found myself in a Hare Krishna temple in Italy, plucking something off the top of my dessert and asking incredulously, “Wait, is laddu INDIAN?”

My time as a WWOOFER - a Willing Worker on an Organic Farm - led me to that moment. When I was 24, I volunteered on a farm south of Florence, and spent my days herding 80 stubborn goats around the grape-covered hills. My hosts lived in a 400 year-old stone farmhouse, and when I climbed its stairs for the first time, the heady smell of incense filled my nose. Later, after my first meal of vegetarian curry, I learned that my born and raised Tuscan hosts were also practicing Hare Krishnas.

The greatest influence this had on my life was when it came to food. My host mother prepared both Indian and Italian dishes, and one of my favourite treats was laddu. She made it by cooking chickpea flour with butter and sugar until it turned dark brown, then pressed it into a pan and let it cool. Since chickpeas are common in Italian cooking, I automatically placed laddu (despite its name) into the “Beloved Tuscan Treats” category in my mind. One evening, we trekked up to the local Krishna temple



for a festival. Amidst the colorful music and dancing, an enormous cake depicting Krishna rescuing a town from a flood was paraded out (I was thrilled to discover this religion formally involved cake). Later, after an Indian feast, the cake was cut up for dessert.

My plate included some of the mythical town's river, as well as a chunk of laddu, which I removed from the icing and held up, confused.

Slowly, and to the Italians' amusement, I came to the realization that laddu is an Indian sweet, not a Tuscan one. Embarrassing? Yes. But all that really mattered is that my host mother shared her recipe with me, and its taste will forever be a reminder of that patchouli-scented stone house in the hills.



"Tuscan" Besan Burfi / Indian Chickpea Flour Fudge

Recipe: Lindsay Anderson

Serves: 16 | **Cooking time:** 35 mins | **Preparation time:** 10 mins

Ingredients

250ml (1 cup) unsalted butter or ghee	½ tsp ground cardamom
500g (1lb) chickpea flour (also called gram, besan, or chana flour)	½ cup shelled salted pistachios, roughly chopped
	500g (1lb) powdered sugar

Method

1. Line a 9x9" pan with baking paper and set aside.
2. In a stainless steel or nonstick 9-inch frying pan, melt the butter or ghee over low heat. Add the 2 cups of chickpea flour, and stir until they're well mixed.
3. For the next 15-25 minutes, let the mixture simmer on low heat, stirring every few minutes to ensure it doesn't stick to the bottom and burn. Keep this up until the mixture turns a dark, golden brown color and takes on a nutty fragrance.
4. Once it's golden brown, remove the pan from the heat and let cool for several minutes.
5. Stir in the cardamom, then the chopped pistachios, and finally the powdered sugar. Combine well, then press the mixture into the parchment-lined pan.
6. Let it cool on the counter for 10-15 minutes, then in the fridge to harden up completely.
7. Once it's cooled, cut the laddu into 16 squares, or break it into chunks. Enjoy!



The Perfect Pol Sambol - two ways

Served with a steaming hot plate of rice, it is my ultimate comfort food.

Dinusha Jayatillake in Sri Lanka

Having been born and raised in Sri Lanka, a country abundant in all things green (think of lush verdant forests, tree-canopied footpaths, blue mountains, endless paddy fields... I can go on forever).

It took me a while to get used to the flat, sand-hued landscape of Dubai which I have been calling home for the past 8 years. It wasn't just the absence of green things that I had to get used to, I also had to let go of those elaborate rice and curry lunches I used to tuck into every day, back home.

Whenever I think of Sri Lankan food the first thing that comes to my mind is pol sambol – a coconut relish made with freshly grated coconut, dried red chillies, red onions, salt, lime juice and umbalakada

(also known as Maldive fish) which is cured fish traditionally produced in the Maldives and commonly used in Sri Lankan dishes. It is a must have dish in any Sri Lankan meal (especially those elaborate rice and curry lunches I mentioned before!). Served with a steaming hot plate of rice, it is my ultimate comfort food.

This dish also brings back so many memories, especially of picnics we used to have in a place called Riverston in Sri Lanka. It's an isolated little mountain range where you find



grass growing in the middle of the road and tall fragrant pine trees growing thick on either side. Our picnic spot used to be next to a beautiful little stream. We would take a dip in the icy cold water before tucking into parcels of rice, pol sambol, and other gorgeous curries all wrapped in banana leaves. The aroma of the banana leaf and the rich curries combined with the fresh mountain air and the gurgle of the stream was just divine...

Whenever I need to bring back the flavours and smells of home or treat myself to that occasional rice and curry lunch all I have to do is roll-up my sleeves, dust the cobwebs off my grinding stone and whip up a delicious mound of fiery red pol sambol!



The Perfect Pol Sambol - two ways

Recipe: Dinusha Jayatillake

Serves: 5 | **Cooking time:** 20 mins | **Preparation time:** 15 mins

Ingredients

1 freshly grated coconut (substitute - desiccated coconut. Before using, sprinkle some water over the coconut and microwave for a minute to moisten the coconut)
5 whole dried red chillies, substitute red chilli flakes or 1 tsp of red chilli powder

6 red button onions, or 2 tbsp chopped red onion
1 tbsp Maldive fish
1 tsp salt
Juice of one lime

Method

1. Throw the chillies and salt into a mortar and pestle (or grinding stone) and grind till it turns into a fine paste (there should be no visible chilli seeds).
 2. Add the Maldive fish and mix in with the paste.
 3. Add the onions and using the pestle crush them into little chunks and combine with the chilli paste.
 4. Add the grated coconut and give it a good mix with the pestle till the paste is completely mixed in with the coconut.
 5. Once the ingredients are combined well, add lime juice or sauté as below. If you are using chilli powder, add all the ingredients (except the lime juice) and give it a good mix.
2. Add the grated coconut and give it a good mix with the pestle till the paste is completely mixed in with the coconut. Once ingredients are combined well, add lime juice.
 3. Add a generous squeeze of lime juice and mix well. Serve immediately with rice, string hoppers (stringy rice pancakes), hoppers (fermented rice pancakes) or roti.

To finish: follow one of 2 recipes below

Basic pol sambol:

1. Add the onions and using the pestle crush them into little chunks and combine with the chilli paste.

Sautéed pol sambol:

1. Heat around 1 tablespoon of oil in a frying pan till very hot.
2. Add 1 teaspoon of mustard seeds. When the seeds start to splutter, add around 2 tablespoons of chopped red onion and 5-6 curry leaves.
3. Sauté till onions turn golden brown. Add the coconut mixture and give it a good mix.
4. Sauté the sambol till the coconut turns slightly dry (around 2-3 minutes) and serve. This can be kept in an airtight container in the refrigerator for about a week.

A close-up photograph of a man with dark hair and brown eyes, wearing a wide-brimmed brown hat and a dark blue jacket. He is holding a large, golden-brown croissant in front of his mouth, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a soft-focus green field with trees.

Destination: Europe

Synonymous with fine cuisine and intricate technique European food is brimming with flavours that will transport you back to “the old country”. But it’s also a basket of fresh seasonal produce to enjoy simply.



Farmhouse Fig and Chèvre Tart with Blackberry Balsamic

The Little Provençal Kitchen

By Sofia Levin in France

"Fetch the fig jam from the attic, dear?" asks my grandma at the farmhouse, a Napoleonic mas in Salernes, Provence, that's been in the family since Mum was 12. Steph – who is far too eclectic to be labelled 'Grandma' – has made the same tart every summer since 1974, her English enthusiasm palatable in every bite.

With the Indian Ocean and 17 000 kilometers usually separating us, we don't treasure the tart for its freshly-picked produce, but for the rare chance it affords three generations to cook together.

The kitchen dates from the late 1700s: an irritably shallow terrazzo sink, a fractured fireplace strung with bundles of dried herbs and a clunky cast iron stove kept alight during winter. Wild fig trees grow beside the house nurtured by

a gurgling stream, their ripe odour permeating the rooms in the dry heat. During the occupation the Resistance hid in the maquis at the bottom of the farm, foraging for figs and blackberries.

"The jam?" Steph repeats. The attic hasn't been opened since she stored September's batch. I warily climb the wooden ladder keeping an eye out for field mice while Mum plucks rosemary from the stone wall at the property's edge. Steph



kneads the pastry, the wooden table wobbling on cracked carrelage tiles.

As we cook in chaotic harmony, memories flow like the nearby stream: the time Mum chased her teasing uncle around the bassin with a kitchen knife; the wild boars that sent us sprinting into the house; the gypsy neighbour who joined us for aperitifs, pet monkey perched on his shoulder.

The tales continue at the table outside, competing against a cacophony of invisible crickets. We polish off the crumbs with our fingers and Steph leans back in her chair, repeating a phrase that follows every farmhouse feast: "I feel like crying because it's over." With only a few days left before our flight back to Melbourne, her familiar words are particularly poignant.



Farmhouse Fig and Chèvre Tart with Blackberry Balsamic

Recipe: Sofia Levin

Serves: 8 | **Cooking time:** 15 mins | **Preparation time:** 45 mins

Ingredients

300g (1¼ cups) goat's cheese
4 tbsp heavy cream
3 sprigs rosemary
Zest of 1 lemon
Flour for dusting
Salt and pepper to taste
60g (¼ cup) fig jam
1 sheet puff pastry
Blackberry balsamic

Homemade Puff Pastry:
250g (2 cups) plain flour
250g (1 cup) unsalted butter
100ml (3oz) iced water
1 tsp fine salt

Wild Fig Jam:
1kg (2lb) figs
1kg (2lb) sugar

Blackberry Balsamic:
1 punnet blackberries
125ml (½ cup) balsamic vinegar
50ml (¼ cup) honey
1 tsp black peppercorns
1 tsp mustard seeds
½ chilli, seeds removed
1 clove crushed garlic

Method

Farmhouse Tart:

1. Preheat oven to 220°C. Mix goat's cheese & cream in small bowl.
 2. Roll pastry into a rectangle. Cut in half to form two rectangles. Cut a rectangle 3cm from edge of each base. Moisten cut line. Fold & pinch to create raised edge. Blind bake for 10 mins.
 3. Remove from oven. Spread jam & goat's cheese over base. Scatter 1/2 lemon zest, pepper & rosemary. Bake for 10-15 mins until pastry is golden. Layer sliced fresh figs over tart. Finish with remaining zest, rosemary & drizzle with blackberry balsamic.
2. Cling wrap & refrigerate for 30 mins. Knead dough in one direction. Using a rolling pin (or wine bottle for authenticity), roll until 20cm by 50cm, keeping edges straight.
 3. Fold dough like a letter in an envelope: top third to center & bottom third up over it. Turn dough 90 degrees & roll to triple the length. Fold again & chill for 30 mins.

Wild Fig Jam:

1. Chop figs. Simmer in large pot until mushy. Stir in sugar. After 45 mins, test jam by placing a blob in the fridge. If it wrinkles when prodded, it's ready.

Blackberry Balsamic:

1. Place 1/4 blackberries aside, then combine all ingredients in pot. Simmer until it thickens, stirring gently. Strain & add remaining berries.

Homemade Puff Pastry:

1. Sift flour & salt in bowl. Add butter, gently mixing until crumbs form. Make a well in centre & add iced water. Mix until sticky dough ball forms.



Paola's Malfatti Spinach and Ricotta Dumplings
Photo Credits: Giulia Scarpaleggia

Plump hands and a warm heart and kitchen

By Bianca Gignac in Italy

The first time I ate malfatti I was nervous. Each bite I took, eyes bounced in my direction. Each time I sank my fork into the dumplings, those eyes followed me. The eyes belonged to Paola, the mamma of my Italian boyfriend. This was our first meeting.

I'd met her son on a starlit July evening in the harbour of a Cinque Terre village. Since our meeting we hadn't left each other's side - I even cancelled my flight home for him. He took that move as a particularly strong sign of summer love, and brought me home to meet his mother. He still lived with her; she ironed his clothes, made his bed and cooked his meals. And they were the best of friends.

Paola made malfatti on our first meeting. Before that night, I'd never eaten a home cooked meal in Italy (I was a tourist and so I ate in restaurants).

The hot dumplings melted in my mouth. They were boiled, like gnocchi, so the mellow flavours of warm dough and ricotta were the perfect vehicle for the pungent sage butter that doused them. The earthy spinach gave an "al dente" substance to each bite. I didn't know it at the time, but that meal in Paola's kitchen was the first of many.

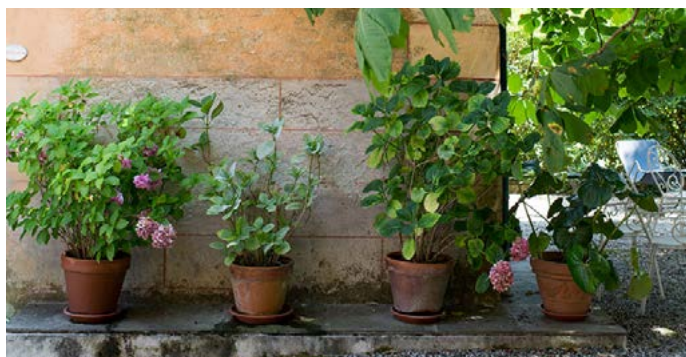
I married her son and lived in her home for a year. She became a dear friend and my favourite shoulder to cry on. I eventually moved back to Canada and took her son



with me. We have a daughter now, and we make her Paola's malfatti often.

Paola passed away suddenly last year, and I didn't get a chance to say goodbye. If I travel to Italy with you, I'll dedicate my week to researching, documenting and sharing the regional, home cooked food of working class Italians that I first tasted in Paola's kitchen.

I'll dedicate my journey to connecting with local people -- mamas like Paola, who, with plump hands and warm hearts, feed anyone who comes through their kitchens. These families, through bad times and good times, in poor times and rich times, through sickness and in health -- preserve local food traditions that I'm passionate about sharing.



Paola's Malfatti Spinach and Ricotta Dumplings

Recipe: Bianca Gignac

Serves: 4 | **Cooking time:** 30mins | **Preparation time:** 45 mins

Ingredients

Malfatti:

300g (9.5oz) spinach,
previously boiled and drained
300g (9.5oz) fresh ricotta
cheese, drain excess water
3 tbsp Parmesan cheese
(plus extra for garnishing)
1 egg

2 tbsp breadcrumbs
a pinch of salt
a pinch of pepper
a pinch of nutmeg
white flour (to coat
the dumplings)

For the sauce:

4 tablespoons butter
10 fresh sage leaves

Method

1. Wash 300 grams of fresh spinach (frozen will work too). Boil the spinach, drain it, and press out the excess liquid. Saute the spinach in a pan with some olive oil for a few minutes and let it cool. When it's cool, chop it finely with a knife and drain off any remaining water.
2. Put the spinach in a bowl and add the ricotta (equal parts ricotta and spinach is a good rule). Add 3 tablespoons of grated Parmesan cheese and 2 tablespoons of breadcrumbs. Season with a pinch of salt, pepper and nutmeg. Beat one egg and add it into the mixture, stirring thoroughly to combine all the ingredients.
3. Sprinkle your work surface generously with flour. Form the mixture into walnut size balls and roll them lightly in flour. You want the flour to coat the entire outside of each dumpling, as this will protect them from opening in the boiling water. Do this until you've used all the mixture.
4. Add the malfatti, 5 at a time, to a pot of salted boiling water. Wait until they rise to the surface, about 1-3 minutes, and remove them with a slotted spoon.
5. To make the sauce, heat the butter and sage leaves in a small saucepan until the butter is melted. Drizzle the sage butter over the malfatti and sprinkle liberally with Parmesan cheese.
6. Serve the dumplings on individual plates, sit down, smile and chat about the day with the ones you love. Buon appetito!



Destination: Middle East

Is there a more exotic cuisine than this with its promise of forbidden delights to keep your taste buds enthralled for 1001 nights? Delicate flavours, spice and oasis fruits combined in a way that is meant to be shared with friends.



Fesenjoon (Pomegranate & Walnut Chicken Stew)

A truly special land

By Mahsa Fratantoni in Iran

I've just landed at Tehran airport, at 8pm on a warm September night. I'm hot and sticky, and nervous about meeting relatives for the first time. The sweat dripping from my hairline alerts passers that I'm a foreigner who's tied her hijab too tight.

I should've listened to Mum when she was teaching me how to wear a headscarf; instead, I'd learnt how to tie a noose.

I look across at my brother with his free-flowing hair, and I curse at him under my breath, merely for being a boy. I'm hungry and sleepy, and I start daydreaming about Mum's Persian cooking. I wonder if Nan's Persian food tastes the same.

Later, when we arrive at my grandparents' home, I'm amazed to see the 30 metre Persian rug in the hallway, lined with plates, spoons (the proper utensil for eating Persian rice), and hundreds of Coca Cola drinks in mini glass bottles. Along the middle, there are pots of Persian khoroshts (stews), bowls of aromatic rice, and platters of mouth-watering salads.

Suddenly, I feel overwhelmed. The rest of the night becomes a blur of emphatic hugs and kisses from oversized women and hairy-armed men. I try reaching for familiar foods but before I can say, "Which relative are you, again?" one of the women pours fesenjoon stew onto my plate.



I can't tell what's in it, but fearing that any hesitation will be interpreted as just plain rude, I quickly take my first bite. I taste a delicate balance of sweet and sour flavours, and experience a surprising texture across my tongue.

The woman tells me the dish, made up of creamy chicken, which has been slow-cooked in a broth of pomegranate molasses, and perfectly balanced by the crunch of hidden walnut pieces, is reserved only for the most special occasions.

Suddenly my senses awaken - the intense flavours don't just merely satisfy, but sate my foodie appetite. In that moment, I realize I may not be home, but I'm somewhere truly special.

Fesenjoon (Pomegranate & Walnut Chicken Stew)

Recipe: Mahsa Fratantoni

Serves: 4 | **Cooking time:** 30mins | **Preparation time:** 45 mins

Ingredients

280g (1½ cup) walnuts	1 tsp cinnamon
2 tbs olive oil	½ tsp salt
1 medium brown onion, diced	½ tsp pepper
2 chicken breasts, diced into small pieces	2 tbs sugar
150ml (5oz) pomegranate molasses or syrup (available from specialty stores; don't use juice)	

Method

1. Crush the walnuts using a meat mallet or pulse 1-2 times in a food processor. You should end up with very tiny chunks rather than a fine meal.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large saucepan and add the chicken pieces. Cook on medium heat until golden brown.
3. Add onion to the saucepan and stir until it softens. Reduce to low heat.
4. Add walnuts, cinnamon, salt and pepper to the pan. Stir for 1-2 minutes.
5. Pour 2 cups of water to the mixture and bring to boil. Reduce heat to low, place lid and cook for 30 minutes.
6. Pour pomegranate syrup and sugar into the stew, mix well and replace lid. Continue cooking for another 25-30 min. The sauce should gradually thicken and turn a dark brown. The ideal flavour is a perfect blend of sweet and sour. If you find it's too tangy, adjust the flavour with a little more sugar.
7. Serve over Persian rice.



Khoresht Bademjan with Tahdig

My eyes are opened to Iranian food

By Deborah Melo in Iran

What can be more exciting than a feast to praise food? The biggest apartment I've ever seen, with a dining table that would impress kings and queens. The whole family, which in Persian means around 40 people. This was the scenario, and that is where my story with this plate begins.

Almost four years ago, with only two Indian muslim dresses in my backpack, I arrived in Tehran: the hottest place I've ever been. It was high summer; it was the second day of Ramadan; and I was a foreigner girl arriving in a Shia country and carrying 50 pages of Farsi sentences written by one of my professors back in Brazil.

The language was an issue for sure, and to explore the city by myself was a problem, too. So many years of political reclusion made Iran a country unprepared for tourism.

My first thought was "let's go for the food", but that was the biggest problem. We were in Ramadan, the muslim month of fasting.

After almost a month of fruit and bread (don't get me wrong, it was just too hot to eat anything else) I got the chance to eat homemade typical Iranian food.

Breaking the fast on the last Friday of Ramadan is very special in Iran, and that was the day I meet Milad's family (my first very Iranian friend).



And there was food, food enough to serve a feast as I said. And it was good! So many different plates: lots of fruits, lamb, meat, soups, and rice. I honestly never saw so many ways to prepare rice. And then there was khoresht bademjan. This eggplant stew was so good I had to eat it three times. Of course my friend and his family had to mock me about my fascination for it. At least I earned the right to ask for the recipe and that is the recipe I still try to replicate, Milad's mom's khoresht bademjan.

Back home I like to make it with tahdig, the rice with potatoes, just because it is the most beautiful way to serve rice in my opinion. But this recipe has a whole other story. What happens is that those recipes remind me so much of those hot days in Tehran.



Khoresht Bademjan with Tahdig

Recipe: Deborah Melo

Serves: 4 | **Cooking time:** 1.5 hr | **Preparation time:** 20 mins

Ingredients

khoresht bademjan:

400g of meat (beef or lamb), cubed
4 medium size eggplants, peeled
2 tomatoes
1 large onion, diced
2 cloves of garlic, minced

3 tablespoons of olive oil for
2 bay leaves
3-4 cups of water
Salt and pepper

Tahdig:

3-4 medium size potatoes
2 tps of butter
1 cup of rice
2 cups of cold water
salt to taste

Method

1. Season the meat with salt and pepper. Pour the oil into a large saucepan over high heat and chuck in the beef. Brown the meat well on all sides before removing to a plate for a moment.
2. Throw the onion and garlic into the same pan. Wait until the onion gets soft and add the eggplant.
3. Cover the pan and set the heat to low. Cook for 30 min or until the water is reduced to half. Then grate in the tomatoes, cover and let it cook for more 15min or until the sauce is thick.
4. Peel the potatoes and slice them about 1cm thick. In a non stick pan add the butter and let it melt over low heat.
5. Add the potatoes in only one level and fry both sides. Pour the rice and gently add the water with salt. Do not stir. Let it boil for 20 min or until the rice has softened. Pour 2 cups of water to the mixture and bring to boil. Reduce heat to low, place lid and cook for 30 minutes.
6. After turning off the heat you can flip it over a plate to show off the golden potatoes.



Shorbat Adas

Family in a bowl

By Kathleen Shaughnessy in UAE

As a Canadian expat living in Dubai for the past seven years, it seems only fitting that I would share a recipe that reflects the charm of my home away from home. With this in mind, I am offering my version of a dish that is a staple of nearly every home in the region: shorbat adas.

Prepared in kitchens across the Middle East for hundreds of years, shorbat adas is a traditional lentil soup that combines some of the most humble ingredients – lentils, onions, stock and spices – and transforms them not only into something memorable, but truly magical.

I call this dish 'Family in a Bowl', because this is the dish that inevitably makes an appearance at all of my expat dinner parties and unites everyone together, regardless of who they are or where they are from.

I first ate shorbat adas a few weeks after I moved to Abu Dhabi in 2007, and it was love at first bite. I have to admit, the complex flavours left me thinking it would be impossibly difficult to make for myself, and I decided it was best left to the experts. I satisfied my cravings by negotiating invites to as many Abu Dhabi family dinners as I could arrange, where shorbat adas was sure to be served.



Fast forward one year to Petra, to a tiny cooking school built into the side of a mountain on a cold November evening; this was the first time I cooked shorbat adas. In a cozy little room full of fruits, veggies, and a lot of delicious Jordanian wine, a crew of strangers had come together to do one of the most comforting human activities – cook dinner.

Although we cooked lots of delicious treats that evening, the one that always stands out is the shorbat addas. A steaming pot of bright yellow soup is how 12 strangers began their meal. Ladled into bowls and passed down the table, the shorbat adas brought us together as a family that evening in Petra. It was comfort food at its best, and an experience I remember fondly whenever I eat this dish. Family in a bowl. As they say in Arabic: sahtein!

Shorbat Adas

Recipe: Kathleen Shaughnessy

Serves: 6 | **Cooking time:** 45 mins | **Preparation time:** 30 mins

Ingredients

Soup

3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil	350g (1¾ cups) split red lentils, thoroughly rinsed	Juice of 1 fresh lemon
1 medium brown onion, chopped	2L (8 cups) chicken or vegetable stock	¼ cup chopped parsley
½ leek, thoroughly washed and sliced – white part only	1 tbsp ground coriander	Fresh lemon wedges
2 carrots, peeled and chopped	1 tbsp ground cumin	Salt and pepper to taste

Cauliflower Crumb


½ head fresh cauliflower	Zest of ½ lemon	½ tsp pepper
60ml (¼ cup) extra olive oil	Salt and pepper to taste	2 tbs sugar
1 small clove of garlic, minced	½ tsp salt	

Tahini Drizzle

50g (¼ cup) tahini	2 tbsp water
Juice of 1 fresh lemon	Salt and pepper to taste

Method

1. Heat oil over medium heat. Add onions and leeks, stirring until softened. Add carrots, and continue cooking until onions are translucent. Add spices, and stir to coat.
2. Add lentils and stock, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a gentle simmer, stirring until lentils have begun to disintegrate.
3. Mix the tahini with the lemon juice and stir. Slowly add water and stir until a loose, smooth paste forms. Add salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.
4. Using a box grater, shred cauliflower into a bowl, until it resembles grains of rice. Set aside.
5. Heat oil in sauté pan over medium heat. Add garlic, and cook 1-2 minutes, or until fragrant. Do not brown.
6. Add cauliflower and lemon zest, and stir through. Cook over medium heat until golden brown and crispy, about 10-15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.
7. Remove soup from heat, and add lemon juice. Cool slightly, and puree until very smooth.
8. To assemble, ladle into bowls and drizzle with a spoonful of tahini mixture. Add 1 heaped tablespoon of cauliflower crumble to centre of bowl, and sprinkle parsley. Serve with lemon wedges.



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