



**World Nomads**



## **Passport and Plate**

Recipes from around the world

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Winning recipes ★

# 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, and places we've only ever dreamed of. Through our Passport & Plate program, 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. In 2015, it was Lindsay, Mahsa, and Suresh's turn to head to Sri Lanka. That tiny island paradise doesn't receive nearly the attention it deserves.

We saw some amazing scholarship entries. The recipes and 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 collected twenty four of our favorite recipes from the 2014 and 2015 Passport & Plate program. It's a fantastic collection. Our Nomads community brought us dishes from Myanmar, France, Bangladesh, and almost anywhere else you can think of. Best of all, each recipe is accompanied by gorgeous photography and incredible stories from around the world.



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



## Destination: Africa

The cradle of civilization, Africa's amazing diversity has influenced cooking the world over. None more so than the rich flavors and simple methods of North African cuisine and its signature dish – the tagine.

# Moroccan Flavors

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 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 realized 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 flavors have



depth, and the dish embodies the colors 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 harbor, passed the white-washed homes with blue shutters, through the souks, to the trawlers and dinghys 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

# Fragrant Fish Tagine with Saffron & Olives

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## 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 coriander, roughly chopped | 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. salt            |
| 1 tsp. ginger, finely chopped            | 4 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil                      | 1 lemon (juice only)   |
|  |   | 1 tsp. saffron strands |

### To serve:

|                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Fresh coriander leaves | 1 green finger chili |
| 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 carrots 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 minutes.
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 chilies. 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.



## 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 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. As we settled in for the night and began to drift off to sleep, someone knocked the window next to my father. It was a farmer in his 40s, with a flashlight in one hand and a machete in the other. He offered 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 red walled house of a single space – was Cecilia, Carlos Zambrano's wife. We soon learned their names and met 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 some rough clay smoky pots in our hands. "What is this that smells so good?" asked my mother before even tasting the first spoonful. "It's a cazuela de pescado" said Cecilia. "We made it today for Jonás' birthday."



My parents have tried the cazuela – a dish originally from the countryside in the coast of Ecuador, but later became urban and popular – several times before, but they swore that Cecilia's was unique.

They immediately knew that its taste was due to cooking with firewood, and 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've 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.



Cazuela De Verde Con Pescado / Fish & Green Plantain Cazuela

# Cazuela De Verde Con Pescado / Fish & Green Plantain Cazuela

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**Recipe: Santiago Rosero**

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

## Ingredients

|                               |                          |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 green plantains             | 2 garlic cloves, chopped | 2 tbsp. finely minced cilantro |
| 200g dorada (or hake or tuna) | 50g peanuts              | 1 tsp. oregano                 |
| 1 medium red onion, chopped   | 3 tbsp. achiote          | Salt, pepper, and cumin        |
| 1 medium green pepper, diced  | (Annatto seed) oil       |                                |
| 1 small tomato, chopped       | 1l 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, peper, 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/ 350°F). 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 freshly chopped cilantro (can be eaten with white rice).

## 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 marketplace 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 – an 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 Virgen 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.





Mole Negro / Oaxacan Chocolate-Chili Sauce

# Mole Negro / Oaxacan Chocolate-Chili Sauce

## 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 tbsp. of cinnamon     |
| 6 dried pasilla chilies                           |   | 4 tbsp. of sesame seeds |
| 3 dried chipotle meco chilies                     | 1 tbsp. peanuts   | 10 Roma tomatoes        |
| 1 onion, sliced                                   | 1 tbsp. walnuts   | 5 tomatillos            |
| 1 head of garlic, peeled cloves separated         | 20 almonds  | 125g dark chocolate     |
| 5 tbsp. vegetable oil                             | 4 tbsp. of raisins  | 8 cups of chicken stock |
| 1 plátano macho (large banana), peeled and sliced | 1 tsp. of thyme   | 2 tbsp. sugar           |
|   | 2 tbsp. 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 chilies 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!

## 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 favorite 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 colonized Jamaica, bringing with them their working men's food of Cornish Pasties. As slavery ended, Indian indentured slaves arrived, introducing flavorful 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, laborers, school children... we all would grab our food, packaged in small paper bags, and 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



# Jamaican-Style Pork & Apple Patties

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## 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 chili, 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 tbsp. whole coriander seeds  
2 tbsp. whole cumin seeds  
2 tbsp. mustard seeds  
3 star anise  
1 tbsp. fenugreek seeds

1 tbsp. allspice (Pimento) berries  
3 tbsp. 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 chili. Stir in the curry powder and thyme and cook for 2 minutes. Add approx. 100ml of water, and a good pinch of salt and pepper to the pan, cover and simmer for 5 minutes.
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 180°C (350°F).
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 parchment-lined baking 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 color 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.

# 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 I refused to like our new residence.

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.



I Dolcetti Al Limone / Meyer Lemon Bundt Cake

# I Dolcetti Al Limone / Meyer Lemon Bundt Cake

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**Recipe: Elena Valeriotte**

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

## Ingredients

### Cake batter:

|  |                                |                                    |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ½ cup unsalted butter, room temperature, plus more for Bundt pan | 2 tsp. baking powder           | Juice of 1 lemon (approx. 2 tbsp.) |
| 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for Bundt pan              | ½ tsp. salt                    | 1 cup granulated sugar             |
|  | ½ cup buttermilk               | 2 large eggs                       |
|  | 1 tsp. vanilla extract         |                                    |
|  | Zest of 1 lemon, finely grated |                                    |

### Glaze:

2 tbsp. lemon juice  
1 ½ cups confectioners' sugar

## Method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F). 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 (about 20-25 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 for 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.

# 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 favorite 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 chili 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

# Chairman Mao's Red-Braised Pork

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## 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 (½ cup) moist shredded coconut |
| 2cm knob ginger, peeled and sliced          | 125ml (½ cup) sherry        | ½ red onion                         |
| 1 large red chili, cut lengthways           | 8 cloves garlic             | Coriander                           |
| 3 cinnamon quills                           | 1 tsp. 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 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, chili, 2 peeled garlic cloves. Allow to simmer for a few minutes. You can add another chili, depending on 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 chili.
9. Add the remaining sugar, turn heat to high and allow to caramelize. 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.



# 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 / Chicken Satay with Base Gede

# Sate Lilit Ayam / Chicken Satay with Base Gede

**Recipe: Jessica Rigg**

**Serves:** 4 | **Cooking time:** 30 mins | **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 peppercorns  
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 chilies, 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:

### 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.

### 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.

### For Peanut Satay Sauce:

1. Heat coconut oil in a wok over medium heat. Add peanuts, garlic, chilies, 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 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.

# 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. As 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 / Japanese-Style Beef and Potatoes Bowl

# Nikujaga / Japanese-Style Beef and Potatoes Bowl

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## Recipe: Ludie Minaya

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

## Ingredients

315g thinly-sliced beef (sliced into 1 ½ inch pieces)  
5 medium potatoes, peeled and quartered  
1 medium-sized carrot, peeled and cut into half moons  
1 large onion, peeled and cut into 6 wedges  
1 ball of ito konnyaku (devil's tongue in thread form, cut into

1-inch pieces (check in asian markets)  
1 ½ tbsp. of canola oil  
2 cups of dashi or water + 2 tsp. of powdered dashi (check in asian markets. If you can't find dashi, substitute with low-sodium beef stock.)  
4 tbsp. of sugar  
4 tbsp. of sake

4 tbsp. of mirin  
3 tbsp. of soy sauce  
100g of snap peas, trimmed and sliced in half on the diagonal  
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 in a pot and bring to 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.

# 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 devouts of Bago’s holy python.





Holy-Snake-Approved Roasted Eggplant Salad



# Holy-Snake-Approved Roasted Eggplant Salad

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**Recipe: Andre Ferreira**

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

## Ingredients

2 large eggplants  
1 medium red onion  
250g (6oz) toasted peanuts  
2 tbsp. of peanut oil  
2 tbsp. of sesame seeds  
Salt

Wood charcoal (not briquettes and without igniting fluids)

## 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.

## 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? 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

# 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 tbsp. 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 (1 ½ cups) pork blood |                                      |
|   | 825ml (3 ½ 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 5 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 20-30 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.

# 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 has lived abroad for 5 years. Through my journey, I've met a lot of people from the flip side of the world who always ask me: "What is Filipino cuisine?".

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

Christmas 2012, I was invited by my foreign friends to spend the holiday in a cold town in Vietnam named Da Lat. The light bulb in my head suddenly sparked, and I decided to bring something for the Christmas Eve dinner. This was my chance to let them know about Filipino cuisine!

Filipinos have a sweet tooth in general, and I am no exception. 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 delicate gourmet balls.

Yema may be the meekest of all desserts invented in humanity, but because of its delicate characteristics, I decided 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 into a surprisingly truffle-like dessert, and suddenly looked intimidating.

My foreign friends were deceived, thinking it looked like truffles, but were 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 Filipino cuisine is, but I am pretty sure I gave them a good teaser of what they should look forward to – in this cuisine that has been underrated globally.



Beyond the story of my dessert, this also tells of 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

# Yema Balls

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## Recipe: Joan Manalang

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

## Ingredients

### Yema balls

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

### Coating

Cocoa powder  
Matcha powder  
Pistachios, 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 let it 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 use a different coating that varies from chocolate powder, matcha powder, pistachios, or almonds.
10. Serve as a dessert snack for the sweet tooth.

# 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. It 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 were those 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 gatherings 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

# Bak Kwa / Chinese Pork Jerky

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## Recipe: Vanessa Ip

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

## Ingredients

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 500g (1lb) minced pork (the fattier, 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 coloring (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 flavor (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°C (460°F).
6. Cut the meat into smaller pieces, roughly 2x2" 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.

# 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, thinly 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 neighbor.



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 and 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

# Steamed Turbot with Som Tam

**Recipe: Gemma Chilton**

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

## Ingredients

### 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 tbsp. fish sauce

1 tbsp. palm sugar, grated

Handful of green beans

1 large ripe tomato, pulp removed, sliced

### 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

2 red chillies, finely chopped

2 tbsp. peanut oil

1 tsp. sesame oil

4 tbsp. oyster sauce

2 tsp. soy sauce

1 tsp. salt

## 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 minutes, 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, chili, 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 minutes).
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!

# 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”.

Every February, 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.





Dokmai / Crepe-Fried Flowers

# Dokmai / Crepe-Fried Flowers

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## Recipe: Asia Nichols

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

## Ingredients

### Tempura Batter

1 cup flour  
1 tbsp. cornstarch  
1 ½ cups water  
½ tsp. cayenne pepper  
½ tsp. paprika  
Salt and Pepper  
Vegetable oil for frying

### Organic Flowers

Roses  
Hibiscus  
Banana flowers  
Frangipanis

## 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.
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 5 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.



# Just Don't Eat the Chair

By Tri Phan in Vietnam

There was a time when I was a picky eater – contrary to who I am today of course. No existing force in the universe could ever make me truly enjoy that one ingredient: FISH.

Yes, I used to hate fish! What I hated most about it was the way I had to remove the bones to get to the meat, or risk suffering from a bad case of choking. Sadly, fish fillet is virtually unheard of in traditional Vietnamese



cuisine. Fortunately, there was whitebait: A “boneless”, fuss-free fish! What could be better?

Well, that brings us to the day my mom brought home tons of whitebait from her trip to the Mekong Delta.

When she started to tell stories about her journey, I got lost in this fantastic world of vast plains and mighty rivers. Schools of fish swarm the rivers alongside other inhabitants; humble bushes of herbs grow wildly along the paddy fields, giving off an enticing aroma; rows of trees, filled with fruits, wave in the wind.

That’s what sparked the idea of this dish. Utilizing ingredients abundant in Southern Vietnam, I came up with a recipe that had the ability to transport me to this countryside of wonder. Crunchy fish is coated with mom’s not-so-secret-anymore savory caramel sauce (I asked for her approval), which I adapted and introduced aromatic spices to.



Sweetness, savory, and acidity harmonize beautifully in this “one-pot wonder”.

It got a huge “yes” from mom and dad, and my parents are the strictest critics. Enjoying the dish together somehow makes up for the family meals we missed back in the hard days, when my parents were buried deep in their work.

It’s been years since I was the little kid who avoided fish at all cost. I realized now that it wasn’t the ingredient, but the feeling of abandonment that made me hate it as a child: fish was ever-present in meals that involved the act of sharing.

As time passed, happier memories and family-bonding times has helped me learn to love fish. And such simple dishes – made with love – has brought my family closer than ever before.



Cá Cơm Kho Khô / Sticky Clay Pot Whitebait

# Cá Cơm Kho Khô / Sticky Clay Pot Whitebait

## Recipe: Tri Phan

Serves: 4 | Cooking time: 20 mins | Preparation time: 10 mins

## Ingredients

### Whitebait

300g whitebait (if not available, opt for any white, firm-flesh fish and cut into bite-sized pieces)  
4 tbsp. plain flour  
1 tbsp. cornstarch  
¼ cup caster sugar  
1 tsp. shallot, chopped  
3 bird's eye chilies: 2 green,


1 red (or to the desired amount of heat), lightly crushed with the blade of a knife (milder), or chopped (spicier)  
1 tsp. oyster sauce  
1 ½ tbsp. fish sauce (or to taste)  
1 tsp. cracked black pepper  
A handful of fresh Vietnamese mint leaves, roughly chopped  
Oil for deep-frying

### To Serve

Ambarella (or green mango), shredded  
Steamed rice, or plain congee  
Lettuce leaves  
Rau sống (mixture of different Vietnamese herbs such as Thai basil, mint, shiso, fishwort, etc.)

## Method

1. Rinse the whitebait well under cold running water and pat dry with paper towels. Dust the fish liberally with flour and cornstarch, and shake off any excess.
2. In a large wok, heat the oil to about 160°C (350°F). Drop the fish into the hot oil in small batches and fry for about 3-4 minutes. It should look dry, but still slightly soft, and not yet take on any color. Set aside, keeping the oil in the wok.
3. Put the sugar into a clay pot (or a small saucepan that can accommodate all the whitebait) with 2 tablespoons of water to form wet sand. Melt the sugar over medium heat until it turns dark brown. Immediately add in ¼ cup hot water and reduce the heat to low. Gently simmer until the sugar blends into the water and the mixture looks syrupy.
4. Add shallots, chili, oyster sauce, fish sauce, and pepper to the syrup and stir well.
5. Turn off the heat and set aside.
5. Heat the oil in the wok back up to 180°C (350°F). Add in the whitebait and fry until crispy and golden. Meanwhile, heat the sauce up to boiling point.
6. Once the whitebait is ready, put them in the clay pot with the sticky sauce. Immediately turn off the heat and stir well until every single fish is well-coated with the amber, glossy, sticky sauce. Add in half of the Vietnamese mint leaves, and give it a good toss. Cover with the lid and keep warm.
7. To serve, sprinkle the remaining mint leaves on top. Serve with steamed rice or plain congee, shredded ambarellas (or green mangoes), and "rau sống". I, personally, like to eat this dish the way Koreans do, using lettuce leaves to wrap everything and pop it in your mouth in one bite.



## Destination: Asian Subcontinent

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

## 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 a 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 looked 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. I could 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

# Surul Poli & Badham Kheer

## Recipe: Abi Ramanan

Serves: 4 | Cooking time: 30 mins | 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 tbsp. 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. Tie a bow. Warm up the leftover sweet milk and drizzle over the pooris. Garnish with rose petals.

#### Badam kheer:

1. Soak almonds for 6-8 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-flavored South Indian sweet treat!

## 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 favorite 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 Laddu / Indian Chickpea Flour Fudge

# "Tuscan" Besan Laddu / Indian Chickpea Flour Fudge

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**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" 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!

# 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 for ever).

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) – 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 flavors 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

# 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)

5 whole, dried red chilies (substitute: red chili flakes or 1 tsp. of red chili powder)

6 red button onions, or 2 tbsp. chopped red onion

1 tbsp. Maldive fish

1 tsp. salt

Juice of 1 lime

### Method

1. Throw the chilies and salt into a mortar and pestle (or grinding stone) and grind till it turns into a fine paste (there should be no visible chili 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 chili 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 chili powder, add all the ingredients (except the lime juice) and give it a good mix.

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 chili paste.

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.

#### 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.

# Memories of Colombo

**By Suresh Doss in Sri Lanka**

This long-standing family recipe has many meanings for me. As much as it is a super-delicious curry, it's also about life and journey.

I was born in Colombo, Sri Lanka. My parents – two scholars and food lovers – took me around the world a few times while I was still very young, but I spent most of the first 13 years of my life on the pear-shaped island.

Some of the memories are still very vivid: I remember riding on the back of a motorbike on hot summer nights, seeing streets filled with music and peanut vendors; Accompanying my parents on walks along Galle Face, feeling the cold ocean breeze against my face and hearing its morning roar... I also spent a lot of time in the kitchen, watching my mother and nana (grandma) prepare

family feasts. I used to dream of a solid granite mortar and pestle that occupied a corner of the kitchen space, commanded daily by nana. It was used daily to do everything from grinding spices to making dosa batter.

In 1990, after being frustrated with the economic and political situation in the country, my parents decided to move to Canada. We were tired, depressed, and we needed to feel safe. It was difficult at first to adapt, and food quickly became the conduit to memories of life back home.

Through the family meal, we shared memories. We cried, but we also laughed a lot. My



mom cherished all the recipes and cooking techniques she brought with her.

This crab curry is a very special dish. My great grandmother came up with it based on her memories of the seafood town of Chilaw and passed the recipe down to my mother. She would cook it often, whenever we missed home. As a family, we would spend hours digging through each crab leg for meat and sharing stories. Eventually, after years of nagging, she finally shared the recipe with me.

My mom's kitchen quickly became a portal, whisking me away from sub-zero temperatures to a tropical place I missed dearly, filled with sun and crab curry. This is the dish I cook when I miss Sri Lanka.





Spicy Crab Curry

# Spicy Crab Curry

## Recipe: Suresh Doss

Cooking time: 45 mins | Preparation time: 15 mins

### Ingredients

#### Masala:

1 tbsp. coriander seeds  
½ tbsp. cumin seeds  
1 tbsp. fenugreek  
1 small stick cinnamon  
5 red dried chilies  
½ tsp. cardamom powder  
4 cloves  
1 tsp. white rice (raw)

#### Crab Curry:

2 boxes of blue (or brown) crabs  
2 medium-sized red onions  
3 medium-sized tomatoes  
5 cloves garlic  
1 thumb peeled ginger  
4 green chilies  
1 stick cinnamon  
4 cardamom pods

10 curry leaves  
½ tsp. tumeric powder  
1 ½ tsp. chili powder  
1 lime  
1 pack moringa leaves (also known as drumstick leaves)  
3 tbsp. olive oil  
Salt to taste  
1 can coconut milk

### Method

#### Masala:

1. Heat a small pan over medium heat. Except for the rice, add all the masala ingredients to the pan. Swirl the pan a few times to get an even coat of heat throughout.
2. When the mixture shows signs of browning, add rice. Once the rice is in, cook for 2 minutes while slowly swirling the pan.
3. Empty the pan into a bowl and let cool for a few minutes.
4. Use a grinder (or mortar and pestle) and grind the masala into a fine powder. Set aside.

#### Crab Curry :

1. Chop the onions, garlic, ginger, and tomatoes into small pieces and set aside.
2. Set a large pot (20l) over medium heat. After a minute, pour the olive oil and follow with cardamom, cloves, and cinnamon. Add the chopped red onions.

3. Stir the ingredients with a wooden spoon. When the onions start to brown, add the garlic and ginger. Follow with two sprinkles of salt. Toss in the tomatoes and curry leaves and stir for a few minutes.
4. Add the turmeric and chili powder. Let it cook for 5 minutes while occasionally stirring. Add the crabs to the mixture. Cover the pot and let it cook for 5 minutes.
5. Add the coconut milk to thicken the curry. Stir the pot. Cook for 5 minutes, and then add the moringa leaves. Cover the pot and let it cook. Every few minutes, open and toss the crabs, stir the pot. Repeat for 10 minutes.
6. Shut off the heat and add the masala mixture into the pot. Using a big pair of tongs, toss the crabs until the masala is evenly coated.
7. Let it sit for a few minutes. Add the juice from a lime and toss again. Serve with cooked basmati rice and enjoy.





## Destination: Europe

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

# The Little Provençal Kitchen

By Sofia Levin in France

“Fetch the fig jam from the attic, clear?” asks my grandma at the farmhouse, a Napoleonic mas in Salernes, Provence, that’s been in the family since mom 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 17,000km 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 mom 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 mom chased her teasing uncle around the basin with a kitchen knife; the wild boars that sent us sprinting into the house; the gypsy neighbor 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 & Chèvre Tart with Blackberry Balsamic

# Farmhouse Fig & Chèvre Tart with Blackberry Balsamic

**Recipe: Sofia Levin**

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

## Ingredients

300g (1 ¼ 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 chili, seeds removed  
1 clove crushed garlic

## Method

### Farmhouse Tart:

1. Preheat oven to 220°C (425°F). 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 minutes.
  3. Remove from oven. Spread jam & goat's cheese over base. Scatter ½ lemon zest, pepper & rosemary. Bake for 10-15 minutes 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 minutes. 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 minutes.

### Wild Fig Jam:

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

### Homemade Puff Pastry:

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

### Blackberry Balsamic:

1. Place ¼ blackberries aside, then combine all ingredients in pot. Simmer until it thickens, stirring gently. Strain & add remaining berries.

# 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 harbor 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 flavors 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 favorite shoulder to cry on. I eventually moved back to Canada and took her son



with me. We have a daughter now, and we make 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  
**Photo Credits:** Giulia Scarpaleggia

# Paola's Malfatti / Spinach and Ricotta Dumplings

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## Recipe: Bianca Gignac

Serves: 4 | Cooking time: 30 mins | 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 tbsp. butter  
10 fresh sage leaves

## Method

1. Boil the spinach, drain it, and press out the excess liquid. Sauté 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-sized 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

With its promise of forbidden delights, is there a more exotic cuisine than this to keep your tastes buds enthralled for 1,001 nights? Delicate flavors, spice, and oasis fruits combine in a way that is meant to be shared with friends.



# 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 mom 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 mom'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 meter 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 flavors, and experience a surprising texture across my tongue.

The woman tells me the dish – made up of creamy chicken, 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 flavors 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

# Fesenjoon / Pomegranate & Walnut Chicken Stew

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## Recipe: Mahsa Fratantoni

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

## Ingredients

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 280g (1 ½ cup) walnuts  | 1 tsp. cinnamon |
| 2 tbsp. olive oil   | ½ tsp. salt     |
| 1 medium brown onion, diced   | ½ tsp. pepper   |
| 2 chicken breasts, diced into small pieces  | 2 tsp. sugar    |
| 150ml (5oz) pomegranate molasses or syrup<br>(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 minutes. The sauce should gradually thicken and turn a dark brown. The ideal flavor is a perfect blend of sweet and sour. If you find it's too tangy, adjust the flavor with a little more sugar.
7. Serve over Persian rice.

# 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 foreign 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 / Persian Eggplant Stew with Beef

# Khoresht Bademjan with Tahdig / Persian Eggplant Stew with Beef

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## 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-sized eggplants, peeled  
2 tomatoes  
1 large onion, diced  
2 cloves of garlic, minced

3 tbsp. of olive oil  
2 bay leaves  
3-4 cups of water  
Salt and pepper

### Tahdig:

3-4 medium-sized potatoes  
2 tsp. 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 minutes or until the water is reduced to half. Then, grate in the tomatoes, cover, and let it cook for 15 minutes more, 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 minutes 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.

# 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. It 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 flavors 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 / Middle Eastern Red Lentil Soup



# Shorbat Adas / Middle Eastern Red Lentil Soup

**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 tsp. 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 center of bowl, and sprinkle parsley. Serve with lemon wedges.



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