



Cook

Armenian

in America

Recipes with love from
**The Robot Book
Club**

Cook Armenian in America

Authentic Recipes and Warm Traditions for the Modern Kitchen

The Robot Book Club

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Preface

This book, and The Robot Book Club, is an experiment large scale AI generation. Every page, from layout to images to copy, was generated with zero human review.

The authoring and publishing teams were implemented in the Kaya scripting language. They were given only the input: Armenian Home Cooking.

This is the only page authored by a human: Hello there!

— Ted Benson

Prologue

They arrived carrying live yogurt cultures smuggled in damp handkerchiefs. Stripped of their borders, the first generation turned the kitchen into the sole surviving map of Armenia, translating the ancient muscle memory of hand-rolled grape leaves to the electric stoves of Glendale. From the sun-baked villages of the old country to the cul-de-sacs of American suburbia, the diaspora painstakingly rebuilt their homeland across formica counters and unfamiliar appliances.

To adapt, they improvised, substituting flat-leaf parsley for wild mountain herbs and forming kebabs from a fifty-fifty mix of supermarket lamb and beef. Grandmothers no longer relied on whispered instinct, instead teaching their families to measure the water for pilaf using the first knuckle of an index finger. The *Spas* still warmed a winter morning, the *Losh Kebab* sizzled on backyard grills, and the aroma of *Choreg* still filled homes with the promise of Easter, even if the ingredients now came from a supermarket aisle.

The challenge was immediate: how to recreate those tastes, those profound sensory anchors, without the stone *tonir* or the sprawling garden? They met it with sheer ingenuity, baking lavash on an inverted modern wok and cranking a standard broiler to mimic a clay pit's intense heat. It's about leveraging what's accessible—a good butcher, a well-stocked pantry, a modern oven—to bring those cherished flavors, those authentic dishes, back to life.

No anglicized shortcuts, no culinary whitewashing; just the honest names, the true techniques, and the stories behind every dish. From the daily comforts of *Eech* to the communal joy of *Dolma* and *Khorovats*, these pages offer a direct line

to a heritage that feeds both body and spirit. The backyard grill may have replaced the village fire, and the meat might come wrapped in cellophane, but the living culture in the jar remains completely unbroken.



Zartnir (The Armenian Morning)

Hearty, deeply nostalgic breakfast foods designed to provide energy for the day, effortlessly adaptable to modern suburban mornings using basic pantry staples.

At 6:00 a.m. in the American suburbs, the kitchen remains dark, the Armenian morning designed to put fat and fire in the belly before the world starts demanding things, beginning with the smell of flour toasting in butter for havits, the sharp tang of sliced basturma sizzling hard against eggs in a cast-iron

skillet, and the sour chill of cold madzoon. Pulled directly from the heat, the spread is meant to be torn into with a piece of warm koulenje, eaten without hesitation, the quiet morning taking shape as the flour toasts in the pan, the coffee finishes brewing, and the house slowly wakes up.





Lolikov Dzvadzegh

lo-li-kov dzva-dzegh

This isn't your sad, dry American diner scramble. It's a rich, velvety stew where eggs are gently poached in an intensely concentrated tomato jam. The grandmother's secret lies entirely in patience: cooking the tomatoes down in butter until their water completely evaporates. We skip the tedious boiling and peeling of the old country and grate the tomatoes instead—a fast, ruthless hack that leaves the skins in your hand and shaves fifteen minutes off your morning.

INGREDIENTS

4 large Roma tomatoes
halved horizontally

3 tbsp unsalted butter

1/2 med yellow onion
finely diced

1 small green bell pepper
finely diced

1 small garlic
clove *minced*

1/2 tsp kosher salt

1/4 tsp sugar

5 large eggs
lightly beaten

1/4 tsp black pepper
freshly ground

1/4 cup fresh cilantro
roughly chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Grate the tomatoes.

Place a box grater in a large bowl. Rub the cut side of each tomato half against the large holes. The pulp falls into the bowl; the tough skin stays in your palm.

Discard the skins and stir the salt and sugar into the pulp.

2. Sauté the aromatics.

Melt the butter in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and green pepper, sautéing until deeply golden and caramelized, about 5 to 7 minutes.

Stir in the garlic and cook for 30 seconds until fragrant.

3. Reduce the tomatoes.

Pour the grated tomato pulp into the skillet. Let it bubble aggressively over medium-high heat to boil off the water. Stir occasionally until it transforms into a dark red, thick paste that clings to the butter, about 10 to 15 minutes. Don't rush this—the concentration of flavor here is everything.

4. Introduce the eggs.

Lower the heat to medium-low. Pour the beaten eggs evenly over the rich tomato base and let them sit untouched for 15 seconds so the bottom begins to set.

5. Fold gently and serve.

Using a spatula, gently push and fold the mixture from the outside in to create large, soft ribbons of egg. Turn off the heat while they still look slightly wet. The residual pan heat will finish cooking them perfectly. Garnish with cilantro and serve immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Purist Route.**

If you want the strictly traditional 'city' version of this dish, omit the onion, pepper, and garlic. Just fry the grated tomatoes directly in the butter until reduced, letting the pure tomato flavor carry the dish.



Havits

kha-vits

If you ask any first-generation Armenian what childhood smelled like on a cold morning, they'll describe the scent of butter melting into toasting flour. Havits is an ancient, restorative porridge born in the Armenian Highlands, historically meant to replenish new mothers and fuel growing kids. Somewhere along the line, immigrants swapped the traditional technique for boxed cream of wheat to save a few minutes, but true comfort doesn't come from a cardboard box. The secret here isn't an obscure spice; it's the patience to brown standard wheat flour in a pan before whisking in boiling water. It yields a deep, caramelized nuttiness that takes exactly fifteen minutes and tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

4 tbsp	unsalted butter	2 1/2 cup	water <i>brought to a boil and kept hot</i>
1/2 cup	unbleached all-purpose flour	1/4 tsp	ground cinnamon
3 tbsp	granulated sugar	2 tbsp	walnuts <i>crushed</i>
1/8 tsp	kosher salt		

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Melt the butter over medium-low heat.**

Set a medium, heavy-bottomed skillet or saucepan on the stove. If you have ghee, use it—clarified butter allows you to toast the flour darker without burning the milk solids.

2. **Add the flour and stir continuously until sandy and golden-brown.**

This is where the magic happens. The flour will form a pale paste at first, but keep stirring gently for about five to eight minutes until the raw smell gives way to a rich, toasted aroma. Do not walk away; it will burn in seconds.

3. **Lower the heat, add the sugar and salt, and vigorously whisk in two cups of the hot water.**

The water must be boiling hot to prevent the toasted flour from seizing into impossible lumps. The mixture will bubble and steam aggressively, which is exactly what you want.

4. **Simmer and whisk until the porridge achieves a luxurious, custard-like consistency.**

As the starches rapidly hydrate, the mixture will thicken into a warm, spoonable pudding. If it seems too stiff or paste-like, whisk in the remaining half cup of hot water.

5. **Spoon into warm bowls and garnish.**

Dust lightly with ground cinnamon and scatter a few crushed walnuts over the top before eating immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The secret is in the water temperature.**

If you pour cold water into hot toasted flour, it will seize into irreversible lumps. Keep your water simmering in a kettle or separate pot nearby, and whisk vigorously as you pour it in.

- **Upgrade to clarified butter.**

While standard unsalted butter works beautifully, the most authentic, old-world flavor comes from haladz yugh (clarified butter). If you have a jar of ghee in your pantry, use it to get an even richer, nuttier flavor profile.



Koulenje

koo-LEN-jeh

Sunday mornings in an Armenian-American household might smell like the hours-long anticipation of elaborate, yeast-risen choereg, but weekday mornings belong to Koulenje. Hailing from the central Anatolian region of Gesaria, this quickbread is the unsung, working-class hero of the diaspora. It bypasses yeast entirely in favor of baking powder, meaning you can go from mixing bowl to a warm, butter-slathered slice of the homeland in under forty-five minutes. The secret here isn't some convoluted culinary flex. It's the intoxicating aroma of ground cherry pits and the sharp, earthy bite of nigella seeds toasted into a lacquered crust. It's real, unpretentious, and built to survive the reality of a busy week.

INGREDIENTS

6 1/2 cup	unbleached all purpose flour	2 tbsp	nigella seeds <i>divided</i>
2 tbsp	double acting baking powder	7 large	eggs <i>room temperature, divided</i>
1 cup	granulated sugar	1 cup	unsalted butter <i>melted and slightly cooled</i>
1 tbsp	kosher salt	1 cup	whole milk <i>room temperature</i>
1 tbsp	ground mahleb		

PREPARATION

- **Grind the mahleb fresh if possible.**

The intoxicating bitter-almond and cherry notes of mahleb dissipate quickly when pre-ground. If you can source whole kernels at your local Middle Eastern market, grind them yourself in a mortar or spice grinder.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the dry ingredients together in a massive mixing bowl.**

Combine the flour, baking powder, sugar, salt, ground mahleb, and one tablespoon of the nigella seeds. Sifting the flour and baking powder together prevents dense pockets in the final bake.

- 2. Emulsify the wet ingredients in a separate bowl.**

Vigorously beat six of the eggs until homogenous, then slowly stream in the melted butter and milk while whisking constantly. Ensure the butter isn't piping hot so you don't accidentally scramble the eggs.

- 3. Make a wide well in the center of your dry ingredients.**

Pour the wet mixture into the hole all at once. Using your hands or a wooden spoon, pull the flour from the inner walls into the liquid with firm, minimal strokes until a shaggy dough forms.

1. Turn the dough out and knead it gently.

Move the mass to a lightly floured board and knead just a few times until cohesive and smooth. Treat this like a biscuit, not a bread; you want to preserve a tender crumb, so do not overwork it.

2. Roll the dough and cut it into diamonds.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit and line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Roll the dough out to exactly a half-inch thick, cut it into simple diamond shapes using a bench scraper, and transfer to the sheets leaving room for expansion.

3. Prick each piece with a fork and apply the signature glaze.

Pricking the dough prevents the baking powder from creating large, uneven air bubbles. Beat the remaining egg with the final tablespoon of nigella seeds, and generously brush this over each piece for an iconic, lacquered crust.

4. Bake until the tops are beautifully golden brown.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer immediately to a wire rack to cool.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Store and reheat leftovers like a local.**

Koulenje was historically built to last. Store pieces in an airtight container at room temperature. Wrap a leftover diamond in foil and warm it briefly in the oven to resurrect that fresh-baked aroma.

● **Use genuine nigella seeds.**

Do not substitute black sesame seeds. Nigella seeds have a distinct, slightly peppery, onion-like bite that cuts through the rich dough. Black sesame will completely alter the traditional flavor profile.



Panrakhash

pahn-ruh-KHASH

If you grew up Armenian, the smell of onions slowly turning golden in a pool of butter is the ultimate trigger of culinary nostalgia. Panrakhash is essentially an inside-out grilled cheese, born out of necessity in the freezing winters of Gyumri. Forget the modern restaurant casseroles; true panrakhash is a communal, table-side ritual requiring no baking at all. You just tear up dry lavash and string cheese, drown it in buttery onions, and hit it with boiling water from the kettle to create a rich, gooey masterpiece.

INGREDIENTS

4 large thin Armenian lavash
separated and left to dry out until slightly brittle

8 oz Armenian Chechil or low-moisture string cheese
pulled lengthwise into very fine threads

1 large yellow onion
finely diced

5 tbsp unsalted butter or ghee

1 1/2 cup boiling water
kept hot in a kettle

1 pinch black pepper
freshly cracked

PREPARATION

- **Dry out your lavash.**

Fresh, pliant bread will disintegrate into mush when the water hits it. Leaving store-bought lavash out on the counter for a few hours, or baking it at 200°F for 5 minutes, is the most important step in this dish.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Prepare the sokharats.**

In a medium skillet over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the diced onion and sauté slowly for 8 to 10 minutes until soft, fragrant, and a rich golden brown.

- 2. Tear the bread.**

Tear your dried lavash into rough, bite-sized squares. The bread must be brittle, otherwise it will dissolve into a paste later.

- 3. Build the layers.**

Set out two deep, heat-proof soup bowls. Alternate handfuls of the dry lavash and shredded cheese three or four times, ensuring the top layer is a generous mound of cheese.

- 4. Execute the pour.**

Bring your kettle to a rolling boil. Spoon half of the golden, buttery onions over each stacked bowl, then immediately pour about 3/4 cup of boiling water into each, just below the top layer.

1. Steep to melt.

Instantly cover each bowl with a snug-fitting plate to trap the steam. Let them sit undisturbed on the table for exactly 3 minutes.

2. Uncover and eat.

Remove the plates, gently drain any excessive liquid if you prefer, and top with black pepper. Eat immediately while pulling massive, glorious strings of cheese.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Recreating authentic Chechil.**

If you can't find Armenian braided string cheese at a Middle Eastern market, pull apart standard low-moisture mozzarella string cheese and toss it with 2 tablespoons of crumbled feta for that authentic salty funk.



Basturma yev Dzu

bas-tur-ma-yov dzoa-dzegh

There is no alarm clock quite like the smell of garlic and fenugreek blooming in hot butter on a Saturday morning. This is arguably the most canonical Armenian breakfast in existence—a three-ingredient masterpiece born of ancient preservation techniques and morning utility. The secret lies entirely in the execution: never salt the eggs, respect the lean cure of the meat, and let the pungent chaman spice paste bleed its brilliant red hue into the fat. It is a flawless, five-minute tribute to the homeland that demands absolutely no modernization.

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp unsalted butter or ghee

3 oz basturma
sliced paper-thin and torn into bite-sized pieces

5 large large eggs
beaten well

1/4 tsp black pepper
freshly cracked

1 tbsp fresh cilantro or parsley
roughly chopped

1 med lavash or pita bread
warmed

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the eggs thoroughly with the black pepper.**
Do not add salt to the eggs; the basturma is a heavily cured product and will release more than enough salinity to season the entire dish.
- 2. Melt the fat in a skillet over medium-low heat.**
Let it melt completely until it just begins to foam. Ghee is preferred here as its higher smoke point mirrors traditional clarified butter and resists burning.
- 3. Briefly fry the basturma to bloom the spices.**
Add the torn meat to the pan in a single layer and cook for just 20 to 30 seconds per side. The butter will turn a brilliant, aromatic reddish-orange as the chaman paste releases its oils. Do not walk away, as overcooking the basturma will make the incredibly lean beef tough and rubbery.
- 4. Pour the beaten eggs directly over the meat and the infused red butter.**
Let the eggs sit undisturbed for a few seconds until the edges just begin to set.
- 5. Gently fold the eggs to form soft curds.**
Using a silicone spatula, push the eggs from the edges toward the center. Remove the pan from the heat while the top is still slightly wet and glossy, allowing the residual heat to carry them to a perfect, soft finish.
- 6. Garnish and serve immediately.**
Slide the eggs onto a warm plate, top with fresh cilantro, and use the warm lavash to scoop them up.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Source high-quality basturma from a Middle Eastern or Armenian grocer.**

Ask the deli counter to slice it paper-thin. Thick slices will be unpleasantly chewy.

- **Serve with the traditional Armenian morning spread.**

Cut the profound richness of the eggs by serving them alongside sliced fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, and a tangle of Armenian string cheese (chechil).



Bishi

bee-shee

If you ask ten Armenian grandmothers for their bishi recipe, you get ten different answers. But walk into a working-class kitchen in Lori or Gyumri on a busy weekday morning, and you'll find the real secret to everyday fried dough: matzoon. This is the master recipe for the diaspora—a brilliant, yeast-free hack utilizing the chemical reaction between fermented yogurt and baking soda. In under thirty minutes, you get gorgeous, golden disks that shatter on the outside and steam on the inside, tasting exactly like the homeland.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup	plain whole milk yogurt or kefir <i>unstrained</i>	1 tsp	granulated sugar
1 tsp	baking soda	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 large	large egg	2 3/4 cup	unbleached all-purpose flour
2 tbsp	neutral oil	4 cup	neutral oil <i>for frying</i>
		1/4 cup	powdered sugar <i>for dusting</i>

PREPARATION

- **The dough rest is flexible.**

While a 15-minute rest is standard and necessary for relaxing the gluten, the dough can safely sit covered at room temperature for up to an hour while you prepare the rest of your breakfast table.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Activate the dough.**

In a large mixing bowl, combine the yogurt and baking soda. Stir well and let it sit for exactly 60 seconds until the mixture begins to bubble and foam.

- 2. Build the dough.**

Whisk the egg, 2 tablespoons of oil, sugar, and salt into the foaming yogurt. Stir in the flour 1 cup at a time with a wooden spoon until too stiff to mix, then turn out onto a clean surface and knead for a few minutes until exceedingly soft and slightly tacky.

- 3. Rest and divide.**

Cover the dough with a damp towel and let rest for 15 minutes to relax the gluten. Lightly oil your hands and work surface—do not use raw flour, which will burn in the fryer—and divide the dough into ten to twelve smooth balls.

1. Heat the frying oil.

Pour 1 1/2 to 2 inches of neutral frying oil into a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat until it reaches 375°F. If you lack a thermometer, dip the handle of a wooden spoon into the oil; steady, rapid bubbles mean it is ready.

2. Shape and fry.

Flatten a dough ball into a 1/4-inch thick, 4-inch wide disk. Slip it carefully into the hot oil, frying 90 seconds to 2 minutes on the first side until deeply golden, then flip and fry for another minute or two. Do not crowd the pan.

3. Drain and serve.

Move the fried bishi to a wire rack set over paper towels to drain. Dust aggressively with powdered sugar while still piping hot.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Build a traditional table.**

To eat bishi the authentic way, balance the rich fried dough with a spread of salty feta or Lori cheese, thin slices of cured basturma, fresh Persian cucumbers, and small glasses of strong black tea.

● **Watch the oil temperature.**

Frying below 350°F forces the dough to absorb grease, yielding a heavy, cloying bread. Wait 30 seconds between batches so the oil can recover its heat.

● **Source the right dairy.**

True Armenian matzoon is tart and pourable. Standard American Greek yogurt is too dry; seek out unstrained whole-milk yogurt or plain kefir for the proper hydration and authentic homeland tang.



Aravotyan Madzoon Bowl

ah-rah-voat-yahn mah-dzoon

In Armenian homes, the morning doesn't truly begin until someone uncovers the madzoon. Long before commercial yogurt filled American supermarket aisles, grandmothers were quietly boiling milk, cooling it by the window, and wrapping it in layers of thick towels to culture overnight. The secret to this bowl isn't a fancy gadget—it's patience, a splash of heavy cream to mimic the richness of highland dairy, and the legendary 'pinky test' passed down through generations. Master your own family starter, and you'll never buy commercial yogurt again.

INGREDIENTS

1 qt	whole milk <i>avoid ultra-pasteurized varieties</i>	1/2 cup	walnuts <i>roughly chopped</i>
1/2 cup	heavy cream	4 tbsp	raw wildflower honey
3 tbsp	plain full-fat yogurt <i>with live active cultures</i>	1 cup	fresh apricots <i>pitted and sliced</i>
		1 pinch	ground cinnamon

PREPARATION

- **Gather your incubation tools.**

You will need a heavy-bottomed saucepan, a glass or ceramic storage bowl, and thick, clean kitchen towels or a small woolen blanket for wrapping the incubating milk.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Concentrate the milk.**

Pour the whole milk and heavy cream into a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat. Stir continuously to prevent scorching, bringing it just to a gentle boil, then let it simmer for 5 minutes to evaporate excess water.

- 2. Cool the milk and perform the pinky test.**

Transfer the hot milk to a glass or ceramic bowl and let it sit at room temperature for 30 to 45 minutes. Wash your hands, dip a clean pinky finger into the center of the milk, and count to ten; if it feels hot but you can comfortably keep your finger in it for the full ten seconds, the temperature is perfect.

- 3. Temper the starter culture.**

Place the yogurt in a small bowl and ladle about half a cup of the warm milk over it. Whisk vigorously with a fork until the mixture is completely smooth and lump-free.

1. Inoculate the batch.

Gently pour the diluted yogurt mixture back into the large bowl of warm milk, stirring gently but thoroughly to ensure the active cultures are evenly distributed.

2. Incubate the madzoon overnight.

Cover the bowl securely with a lid or plate, then wrap the entire vessel tightly in two or three thick kitchen towels. Place it in a draft-free, warm spot—like a turned-off oven—and leave it completely undisturbed for 6 to 8 hours.

3. Chill the set madzoon.

In the morning, unwrap the bowl to reveal the firm, set madzoon, then transfer it immediately to the refrigerator for at least 2 hours to halt the fermentation process.

4. Toast the walnuts.

Place the chopped walnuts in a dry skillet over medium heat, toasting for 5 to 6 minutes until deeply golden and fragrant.

5. Assemble the bowl.

Spoon a generous mound of the chilled madzoon into a serving bowl, arranging the fresh apricots and toasted walnuts on top. Drizzle heavily with raw honey, finish with a dusting of cinnamon, and serve immediately alongside strong Armenian coffee.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The Busy Weeknight Shortcut**

If you lack the bandwidth to boil and incubate milk overnight, place a high-quality plain full-fat store-bought yogurt in a fine-mesh sieve lined with cheesecloth over a bowl in the fridge for 2 hours. This strains out excess whey and mimics the density of traditional kamats madzoon.

● **Cultivating a Lineage**

Always save the last 3 tablespoons of your freshly made madzoon to use as the starter for your next batch. This biological continuity is exactly how Armenian grandmothers keep their specific strain of yogurt alive for decades.

- **Seasonal Flexibility**

The toppings of this bowl should rotate based on what you find at your local farmers' market. Summer demands fresh apricots, cherries, and figs, while winter allows for dried fruits plumped in warm water alongside walnuts and honey.



Sujukh yev Tarm Gananchi

soo-jook-hov dzvah-dzagh yev tarm gah-nah-chee

A weekend morning in an Armenian household doesn't smell of maple syrup; it hits you with the heavy, intoxicating perfume of toasted cumin, garlic, and frying beef fat. This unapologetic spread is built on the magic contrast between rich, dry-cured sujuk and mountains of crisp, raw herbs. It's the ultimate first-generation nostalgia meal—fast enough for a Tuesday, but generous enough to make a modest kitchen feel like the homeland.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 lb	Armenian or Turkish sujuk	1/4 tsp	Aleppo pepper
4 large	pasture-raised eggs	1 bunch	fresh cilantro <i>kept on the stem</i>

1 bunch fresh purple basil

kept on the stem

1 bunch fresh tarragon

kept on the stem

1 bunch flat-leaf parsley

kept on the stem

1 bunch scallions

roots trimmed

1 bunch red radishes

washed and left whole

8 oz Bulgarian feta or Lori cheese

left in a whole block

1 lavash bread

package *warmed slightly*

PREPARATION

- **Shock and dry the herbs.**

Plunge the cilantro, basil, tarragon, and parsley into an ice bath to revive their crispness, then aggressively spin them dry so they don't water down the lavash.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Prep the sujuk casing.**

Sujuk has a tough outer casing that clings stubbornly to the meat. Throw the sausage in the freezer for 15 to 20 minutes to firm up, then score it lengthwise with a paring knife so the casing snaps off in one clean strip.

- 2. Slice the sujuk.**

Cut the peeled sausage into thin, 1/4-inch discs.

- 3. Fry the sausage in a dry pan.**

Place the slices into a cold, dry skillet over medium-low heat. Do not add oil; the meat is beautifully fatty and will soon render a pool of fragrant, bright red, deeply spiced oil.

- 4. Cook the eggs in the rendered fat.**

Once the sujuk crisps up slightly after a minute or two, push the slices apart and crack the eggs directly into the spiced oil. Cover and cook for a few minutes until the whites are set but the yolks remain runny, then finish with a dusting of Aleppo pepper.

1. Assemble the herb platter and serve.

Arrange the whole, dried herbs on a platter alongside the scallions, radishes, and feta. Bring the skillet to the table and eat by tearing off pieces of warm lavash, loading them with spicy meat, rich egg, a generous handful of raw herbs, and a crumble of salty cheese.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Respect the dry pan.**

Resist the urge to add butter or olive oil when frying the sujuk. The natural beef fat holds all the cumin and garlic flavor you need to season the eggs perfectly.

● **The freezer trick saves the sausage.**

Trying to peel room-temperature dry-cured sausage will tear the meat to shreds. A quick chill makes the fat solid and the casing brittle, ensuring perfect slices every time.



The Mezze Fridge (Weeknight Spreads & Snacks)

Cold salads, spreads, and pickled vegetables perfect for weekend meal-prep, giving the busy suburbanite immediate, healthy, and authentic food upon returning home.

A stack of quart deli containers sits next to the supermarket milk, waiting to salvage a Wednesday commute. The modern weeknight is a brutal thing. Tupperwares stacked like sandbags against the workweek: a glass container of glowing red each stained with tomato paste, cold vospov kofte packed tight, and foil-wrapped yalanchi dripping with good olive oil and lemon.

This isn't banquet food. These are purely practical provisions, cooked on Sunday to outlast the workweek. It is the sharp, garlicky snap of pickled Armenian cucumbers and the smoky depth of muhammara ready the second the door shuts. No heat required. Just a torn piece of pita. Here is the Sunday prep, the tight roll, and the brine.





Eech

If you grew up in an Armenian household, this was the required sidekick at every barbecue and the undisputed anchor of the Lenten table. Affectionately known as 'mock kheyma,' it flips the script on tabbouleh, putting the bulgur front and center in a rich, deeply caramelized tomato and red pepper broth. The secret here isn't a fancy restaurant technique, it's grandmotherly restraint: aggressively fry out your tomato paste in plenty of olive oil to build umami, and whatever you do, do not boil the bulgur. You kill the heat, fold the fine grains into the hot broth, and let residual temperature do the heavy lifting. It's cheap, foolproof, and infinitely better the next day, scooped up with a crisp romaine leaf directly from the fridge.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup	extra-virgin olive oil	1/2 tsp	ground cumin
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper
1 med	red bell pepper <i>finely diced</i>	1 1/2 cup	fine bulgur wheat
3 large	garlic cloves <i>minced</i>	1/3 cup	lemon juice
2 tbsp	tomato paste	1 tbsp	pomegranate molasses
1 tbsp	mild red pepper paste	1 cup	flat-leaf parsley <i>finely chopped</i>
15 oz	canned crushed tomatoes	1/2 cup	green onions <i>thinly sliced</i>
1 cup	water	1/4 cup	fresh mint <i>finely chopped</i>
1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt	1 large	romaine lettuce leaves <i>separated and washed</i>
1 tsp	Aleppo pepper		

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Sweat the aromatics in plenty of olive oil.

Place a large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat and warm the oil. Add the onion and bell pepper, sautéing gently for about 10 minutes until they are perfectly translucent and sweet, taking care not to brown them, then stir in the garlic for one final minute.

2. Bloom the pastes to build the flavor base.

Push the vegetables to the edges of the pot and drop the tomato and red pepper pastes into the center. Let them fry in the hot oil for about two minutes, stirring constantly until they darken slightly and smell deeply caramelized, then mix them into the onions.

1. Simmer the red broth.

Pour in the crushed tomatoes, water, salt, Aleppo pepper, cumin, and black pepper. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil, then lower the heat and simmer for 10 minutes to cook out the raw tomato flavor and reduce it slightly.

2. Kill the heat and passively hydrate the bulgur.

Turn the heat off entirely. Pour in the extra-fine bulgur, stirring vigorously to ensure every grain is coated in the hot broth. Cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid and walk away for 20 to 30 minutes so the residual heat can plump the grains.

3. Fluff and finish with fresh acid and herbs.

Remove the lid and fluff the tender bulgur with a fork, letting it cool for 10 minutes so the herbs don't instantly oxidize. Pour in the lemon juice and pomegranate molasses, then gently fold in the chopped parsley, green onions, and mint.

4. Chill, adjust, and serve.

Taste for seasoning—it should be tangy, savory, and rich. While you can eat it warm, it belongs in the mezze fridge to chill and let the flavors deepen overnight. Serve scooped directly into crisp romaine leaves.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing the right bulgur.**

You absolutely must use #1 extra-fine bulgur wheat for the passive hydration method to work. Medium or coarse grinds are meant for pilafs and will stay unpleasantly crunchy here.

● **Faking the red pepper paste.**

If you cannot find mild red pepper paste (biber salçası) at a local Middle Eastern market, substitute an extra tablespoon of tomato paste, a teaspoon of smoked paprika, and a generous pinch of cayenne to mimic that deep, smoky sweetness.



Vospov Kofte

vohs-bov kof-teh

This is peasant ingenuity engineered to absolute perfection. Red lentils and fine bulgur, pulled together by a slick of caramelized onion oil and a heavy hit of red pepper paste. No meat, no fuss, just a powerhouse of a mezze staple that tastes exactly like an Armenian grandmother's kitchen. The secret isn't in obscure ingredients; it's the sokharats—frying those savory pastes in sweet, slow-cooked onion fat to wake up every ounce of flavor before kneading it all by bare hand.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup red split lentils
picked over for stones and thoroughly rinsed until the water runs clear

3 cup water

1 cup Grade #1 fine bulgur

1 1/2 tsp kosher salt

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 large yellow onion
finely diced

1 tbsp tomato paste

1 tbsp mild red pepper paste

1 1/2 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp Aleppo pepper

1/4 tsp ground black pepper

1 bunch scallions
finely chopped, white and green parts

1/2 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley
finely chopped

1 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice

PREPARATION

- **Rinse the lentils aggressively.**

Wash the red lentils in cold water until it runs clear to strip away excess starch; otherwise, the pot will boil over and leave you with a gummy final texture.

- **Make it ahead of time.**

The flavors actually deepen and the starches firm up overnight. Keep the unshaped dough sealed in the fridge and form the kofte fresh on a weeknight.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil the lentils into a thick, golden mush.**

In a heavy-bottomed pot, combine the rinsed lentils and water. Bring to a rolling boil over high heat, skimming off any white foam. Reduce the heat to medium-low, partially cover, and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the lentils have completely disintegrated into a wet puree.

- 2. Stir in the bulgur, cover, and walk away.**

Remove the pot from the heat, immediately pour in the fine bulgur and salt, and stir vigorously. Slap a tight-fitting lid on the pot and let it sit undisturbed for 20 to 30 minutes so the residual moisture can plump the grains.

- 3. Build the sokharats by caramelizing the onions.**

While the bulgur rests, heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the diced onion and sauté slowly for 10 to 12 minutes until deeply golden, sweet, and caramelized on the edges.

1. Bloom the pastes and spices in the hot onion oil.

Reduce the heat to low. Stir in the tomato paste, red pepper paste, cumin, Aleppo pepper, and black pepper. Cook, stirring continuously, for 1 to 2 minutes until the pastes darken and the oil tints a rich, highly fragrant red. Remove from heat.

2. Knead the spiced oil into the lentil base.

Scrape the rested lentil-bulgur mixture into a wide mixing bowl. Pour the hot, spiced onion oil directly over the top. Using clean hands (once it's cool enough to touch), knead the dough thoroughly until the oil is uniformly incorporated and the mixture looks vibrantly orange.

3. Fold in the fresh herbs once the dough cools.

Let the dough reach room temperature so the residual heat doesn't wilt the herbs into a dull gray, then aggressively knead in the scallions, parsley, and lemon juice. Taste and adjust salt or Aleppo pepper if needed.

4. Shape the mixture into thumb-indented ovals.

Keep a small bowl of cold water nearby and wet your hands slightly to prevent sticking. Scoop a golf-ball-sized portion, squeeze it firmly in your palm to compress the grains, and gently indent it with your fingers. Arrange on a platter.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Do not compromise on the grade of bulgur.**

Standard American supermarkets often sell coarse bulgur meant for pilafs. If you can't find Grade #1 Fine Bulgur, run coarse bulgur through a food processor for 30 seconds until it resembles coarse cornmeal. Anything larger will break your teeth because it never actually boils.

● **Fake the red pepper paste if necessary.**

Biber salçası is a staple at Middle Eastern markets. If you can't source it, substitute an extra tablespoon of tomato paste mixed with a teaspoon of sweet smoked paprika and a pinch of cayenne to mimic that deep, earthy profile.

- **Serve it right with acid and crunch.**

This dish is dense and earthy; it begs for contrast. Serve it alongside a sharply acidic salad of diced cucumbers, tomatoes, and bell peppers dressed heavily in lemon juice, olive oil, and sumac.



Arag Tourshi

ah-rahg toor-shee

A proper mezze spread without tourshi is a tragedy. Traditionally, an Armenian grandmother would spend late autumn fermenting massive crocks of cabbage in a cellar to survive the winter. But you live in Ohio, and you want that sharp, garlicky crunch on a Tuesday. The secret to this twenty-four-hour weeknight version is the thermal shock. By pouring a boiling, highly spiced vinegar brine directly over raw, tightly packed vegetables, you instantly soften their cell walls. They drink in the garlic and dill immediately, bypassing weeks of fermentation while preserving a loud, satisfying snap. No crocks, no waiting. Just the exact taste of home by tomorrow's dinner.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 small	green cabbage <i>cored and cut into 1 1/2-inch chunks</i>	2 med	jalapeño peppers <i>sliced in half lengthwise</i>
1 small	cauliflower <i>broken into bite-sized florets</i>	4 small	dried bay leaves
3 large	carrots <i>peeled and sliced into thick coins</i>	1/2 cup	fresh dill sprigs
3 med	celery stalks <i>cut into 1-inch pieces, leafy tops reserved</i>	1 tsp	whole black peppercorns
1 small	red beet <i>peeled and cut into two thick slices</i>	2 cup	filtered water
6 large	garlic cloves <i>peeled and gently smashed</i>	2 cup	distilled white vinegar
		3 tbsp	kosher salt
		1 tbsp	granulated sugar

PREPARATION

- **Wash two one-quart wide-mouth glass jars and their lids in very hot, soapy water.**
- **Divide the garlic, jalapeños, bay leaves, dill, peppercorns, and beet slices evenly between the bottom of the two jars.**
- **Pack the cabbage, cauliflower, carrots, and celery into the jars as tightly as humanly possible, leaving half an inch of space at the very top.**
Use your thumbs to press them down hard; the tighter they are packed, the better they will pickle, as they will shrink slightly when the hot liquid hits them.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the water, white vinegar, kosher salt, and sugar in a medium saucepan and bring to a rolling boil over medium-high heat.**
Stir well to ensure every grain of salt and sugar has completely dissolved.

- 1. Carefully pour the boiling liquid directly over the raw vegetables in the jars until they are completely submerged.**

You might hear slight popping or cracking sounds—this is the thermal shock breaking down the rigid exterior of the vegetables so the acid can instantly rush in.

- 2. Tap the jars gently on the counter to dislodge any hidden air bubbles, top off with more hot brine if the liquid level drops, and tightly screw on the lids.**

- 3. Leave the sealed jars sitting on your kitchen counter until they cool completely to room temperature, then transfer them to the refrigerator.**

As they cool, the lids will pop down, creating a tight vacuum seal that pulls the garlic and dill flavors deep into the cabbage and carrots. They will be phenomenally crunchy and sour in exactly twenty-four hours, and will keep perfectly in the fridge for up to six weeks.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not use iodized table salt.**

It contains anti-caking agents that will turn your brine cloudy and give the vegetables a metallic, chemical taste; stick to pure kosher or pickling salt.

- **The beetroot trick.**

Slipping a couple of slices of raw red beet into the jars before packing them is an old grandmother's trick to turn the cauliflower and cabbage a beautiful, vibrant pink as it pickles.



Jajukh

jah-jook

If there's a dish that transports an Armenian-American kid straight back to a sweltering July afternoon in the Midwest, it's Jajukh. Often misunderstood as a thick dip by outsiders, the real deal is a fluid, frost-cold hybrid of mezze and soup, heavy on the dried mint. The secret every grandmother knew is the ice cube. Dropping whole cubes directly into the whipped yogurt right before serving chills the dish to the bone, slowly melting to thin the bowl to a perfect, spoonable consistency. It takes five minutes, requires zero heat, and tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	plain whole-milk yogurt	1 tbsp	dried mint
4 small	Persian cucumbers <i>unpeeled, cut into 1/4-inch dice</i>	6 large	ice cubes
1 med clove	garlic <i>minced</i>	1 small handful	fresh mint leaves <i>roughly torn</i>
1/2 tsp	kosher salt	1 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil <i>for drizzling</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Melt the garlic into a paste.

Sprinkle the salt directly over the minced garlic on your cutting board, then use the flat of your knife to repeatedly drag and mash them together until a smooth paste forms. This eliminates any harsh, raw bite from the garlic.

2. Whip the yogurt until entirely smooth.

In a large serving bowl, vigorously whisk the yogurt by itself for thirty seconds. Do this before adding any other ingredients to ensure it doesn't turn lumpy.

3. Fold in the cucumbers, garlic paste, and dried mint.

Stir everything into the whipped yogurt to combine, then taste for seasoning. Add a small pinch of extra salt if the yogurt needs it to pop.

4. Drop the ice cubes directly into the bowl.

Do this just before serving. Give the bowl a gentle stir and let it sit for a minute; the melting ice will simultaneously chill the dish to the bone and thin it to the perfect, drinkable consistency.

5. Garnish and serve immediately.

Hit the top with fresh mint leaves and a light drizzle of olive oil, and serve alongside warm pita or grilled meats.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The yogurt rule.**

Traditional Armenian madzoon is slightly tart and naturally fluid. Plain whole-milk yogurt is the closest match in an American supermarket. If you only have thick Greek yogurt, whisk in a quarter cup of ice water before adding the ice cubes.

- **The cucumber choice.**

Persian cucumbers are the perfect weeknight stand-in for traditional Armenian heirloom melons. Leave the skins on, and whatever you do, don't grate them—this dish relies entirely on their crisp snap.



Muhammara

moo-hahm-mah-rah

Though Muhammara was born in the ancient city of Aleppo, it is the undeniable anchor of the Armenian-American mezze spread. It is the taste of a grandmother's kitchen, reverse-engineered for a busy weeknight in Ohio. The secret to its soul isn't hours of laborious fire-roasting; it's the strategic layering of toasted walnuts, sweet-tart pomegranate molasses, and aggressively dried jarred peppers. It's practical, deeply rooted, and when pulsed into a rustic paste, tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

16 oz roasted red bell peppers
drained and patted completely dry

1 1/2 cup walnut halves

2/3 cup	plain unseasoned breadcrumbs	1 tbsp	tomato paste
2 clove	garlic <i>peeled</i>	1 tbsp	Aleppo pepper
2 tbsp	pomegranate molasses	1 tsp	ground cumin
		1/2 tsp	kosher salt
		1/3 cup	extra virgin olive oil

PREPARATION

- **Extract all excess moisture from the jarred peppers.**

Water is the enemy of a rich Muhammara. Thoroughly rinse the jarred peppers, lay them out on a bed of paper towels, and pat them aggressively dry before you begin.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Toast the walnuts and breadcrumbs to build the flavor foundation.**

Heat a dry skillet over medium heat. Add the walnuts and stir continuously until fragrant and slightly darkened, about 3 to 5 minutes. Remove the walnuts, then add the breadcrumbs to the same skillet and toast until golden.

- 2. Combine the core ingredients in a food processor.**

Add the dried peppers, toasted walnuts, toasted breadcrumbs, garlic, pomegranate molasses, tomato paste, Aleppo pepper, cumin, and salt to the bowl of the food processor.

- 3. Pulse the machine to achieve a coarse, rustic texture.**

Pulse the mixture 10 to 15 times. You are looking for a slightly chunky paste—do not simply turn the machine on and walk away, or you will end up with baby food.

- 4. Emulsify the olive oil at the very end.**

While continuing to pulse carefully, drizzle in the olive oil until just combined. Over-processing olive oil can make it bitter, so restraint is key.

1. Rest the dip in the refrigerator before serving.

Transfer the Muhammara to a container and let it sit in the fridge for at least an hour, or overnight, allowing the breadcrumbs to hydrate and the harshness of the spices to mellow. Serve at room temperature.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **On sourcing and substituting pomegranate molasses.**

This sweet-tart syrup is the absolute soul of the dish. If you cannot find it at a local Middle Eastern market or upscale grocery, substitute 1 tablespoon of fresh lemon juice mixed with 1 tablespoon of honey.

● **The tomato paste shortcut.**

Traditional recipes rely on dense Middle Eastern pepper pastes (biber salçası). Using deeply dried jarred peppers combined with a tablespoon of tomato paste mimics this rich umami depth perfectly for a weeknight.



Sempoug Aghtsan

sem-POOG aht-SAHN

To an Armenian kid, the smell of eggplants and peppers blistering over an open flame is the absolute, undisputed trigger for summer nostalgia. Traditionally called Khorovats salad—born on the grill right alongside skewers of meat—this is the reigning champion of the mezze fridge. It is smoky, bright, deeply savory, and entirely vegetable-forward. You don't need a backyard grill to pull this off on a Tuesday night; a screaming hot broiler and a makeshift steam tent will give you that unmistakable charred aroma and silken texture without the fuss.

INGREDIENTS

2 med

Italian eggplants
pierced 3 to 4 times with a fork

2 large

red bell peppers

1 large	green bell pepper	1/4 cup	cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>
2 large	ripe beefsteak tomatoes	3 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 med	red onion <i>finely diced</i>	2 tbsp	lemon juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>
3 med	garlic cloves <i>minced or grated into a paste</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
1/3 cup	flat-leaf parsley <i>finely chopped</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly cracked</i>
		1/2 tsp	Aleppo pepper

PREPARATION

- **Preheat the broiler.**

Set your oven broiler to high and line a heavy-duty baking sheet with aluminum foil to catch the inevitable vegetable juices.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Char the vegetables under the broiler.**

Place the whole eggplants, peppers, and tomatoes onto the foil-lined baking sheet about 4 to 6 inches from the heat. Turn them with tongs every 5 to 7 minutes until the skins blister and turn entirely black. The tomatoes will finish first in about 15 minutes, followed by the peppers in 20 minutes, and the eggplants in about 30 minutes once completely collapsed.

- 2. Trap the steam to loosen the skins.**

Immediately transfer the hot peppers and eggplants into a large glass bowl and cover tightly with plastic wrap, or place them in a sealed paper grocery bag. Let them sit undisturbed for 15 minutes to pull the burnt skin away from the delicate flesh.

- 3. Peel away the blackened skin.**

Once cool enough to handle, use your fingers to slip the charred skins off the vegetables. Keep a bowl of water nearby to dip your hands, but never rinse the vegetables under running water, which washes away the smoky flavor.

1. Chop the vegetables and capture their juices.

Discard the pepper stems and seeds, then roughly chop the peeled eggplants, peppers, and tomatoes into half-inch chunks. Transfer them along with any glorious juices left on the cutting board into a large serving bowl.

2. Macerate with aromatics and dressing.

Add the diced onion, minced garlic, parsley, and cilantro to the bowl, then toss gently with the olive oil, lemon juice, salt, black pepper, and Aleppo pepper.

3. Let it rest before serving.

Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes, or ideally overnight, allowing the garlic and herbs to steep into the roasted vegetables before serving at room temperature with warm pita or lavash.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Embrace the char.**

A few specks of black char left behind on the eggplant flesh aren't a mistake—they are the signature of a true Armenian cook and carry the essential smoky flavor.

● **Eggplant substitutions.**

If you can't find firm Italian or Chinese eggplants and must use a standard American Globe eggplant, use just one large one. They are spongier and carry more water, so be sure to drain any excessive liquid before dressing.



Lupia Aghtsan

loo-bee-yah aghh-tsahn

For first-generation kids growing up in the Midwest, the sharp, mingling scent of vinegar, raw garlic, and fresh cilantro is the universal smell of a grandmother's kitchen. This is a workhorse of the mezze fridge, born of necessity during the strict, dairy-free fasting days of Lent. The brilliance here is the emulsion—using the natural fats of crushed walnuts and the abrasive bite of mashed garlic to create a deeply rich, creamy dressing without a drop of cream. The real secret is dressing those green beans while they're still hot, forcing them to drink up every last bit of the vinaigrette.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	green beans <i>ends trimmed, or use frozen French-cut</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
3/4 cup	raw walnuts <i>finely chopped or crushed</i>	3 tbsp	red wine vinegar
3 large	garlic cloves <i>peeled</i>	4 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 tsp	kosher salt <i>plus more for boiling</i>	1/2 med	red onion <i>sliced paper-thin</i>
		1 cup	mixed fresh cilantro and flat-leaf parsley <i>packed and finely chopped</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Blanch the green beans in heavily salted water.**
Boil them until tender but still snappy, about 5 to 7 minutes for fresh or 3 minutes for frozen, then drain well but do not shock them in ice.
- 2. Mash the garlic into a fine paste.**
Place the cloves and a half-teaspoon of kosher salt on a cutting board, using the flat side of your knife to drag and smash them together until smooth, releasing the enzymes that make the emulsion work.
- 3. Emulsify the dressing.**
Transfer the garlic paste to a small bowl and vigorously whisk in the red wine vinegar, black pepper, and extra-virgin olive oil until opaque and combined.
- 4. Dress the beans while they are still hot.**
Pour the dressing over the warm beans, add the walnuts, red onions, and fresh herbs, then toss thoroughly so every bean is coated.
- 5. Let the salad rest before serving.**
Allow it to sit at room temperature for at least 20 minutes, or ideally stash it in the fridge overnight in an airtight container to let the flavors truly marry.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Swap for red kidney beans on a busy Tuesday.**

For Karmir Lupia Aghtsan, swap the green beans for two 15-ounce cans of rinsed and drained red kidney beans. Add a teaspoon of Khmeli-Suneli (or equal parts ground coriander and dried fenugreek) and a handful of fresh pomegranate seeds for the true taste of Yerevan with zero cooking required.



Dandouri Aghtsan

dan-doo-ree agh-tsan

Purslane is a wildly resilient succulent that American lawns curse as an invasive weed and the Armenian kitchen elevates to the pinnacle of summer meze. For the diaspora kid scouring a suburban Mexican grocery store for verdolagas, this simple salad bridges the gap between the new world and the old. The grandmother's secret lies not in complex spices, but in a precise, brief blanch and ice shock that tames the plant's natural mucilage while preserving a satisfying crunch. Dressed with a sharp, garlicky vinegar brine, it becomes a bright, earthy staple that actually tastes better after a few days in the fridge.

INGREDIENTS

10 oz	fresh purslane <i>thick bottom stems discarded</i>	3 tbsp	mild olive oil
2 small	garlic <i>minced or pressed</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
2 tbsp	red wine vinegar	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>

PREPARATION

- **Wash the purslane aggressively to remove low-lying grit.**

Submerge the entire bunch in a large bowl of cold water, swish vigorously, let the dirt settle, and repeat until the water is perfectly clear.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a rolling boil and prepare a bowl of ice water.**

Set the ice bath directly next to the stove so you can transfer the greens quickly.

- 2. Submerge the purslane in the boiling water for exactly two to three minutes.**

Do not walk away; the goal is to tenderize the stems and neutralize the mucilage without turning the teardrop leaves to mush.

- 3. Immediately transfer the wilted purslane to the ice water to halt the cooking and lock in the vibrant green color.**

Let it sit for a minute or two, then drain thoroughly in a colander, gently pressing out excess water.

- 4. Whisk together the garlic, vinegar, oil, salt, and black pepper in your serving bowl or a glass storage container.**

- 5. Add the drained purslane to the dressing, tossing thoroughly to coat every leaf and stem.**

While it can be eaten immediately, the salad vastly improves if covered and chilled for at least thirty minutes to let the hollow stems absorb the brine.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **If you cannot find purslane at a local farmers market, look for it at any Mexican grocery store under the name verdolagas.**
- **To make a creamy meze dip, swap the vinaigrette for strained yogurt.**
Fold the wilted, dried purslane into one cup of plain, full-fat Greek yogurt or labneh mixed with the pressed garlic, salt, and black pepper, then serve with a drizzle of olive oil.



Healing Bowls: Soups of Survival & Comfort

Profound comfort foods relying on the restorative properties of yogurt, grains, and slow-simmered broths.

She stirs the spas. A wooden spoon scrapes the aluminum pot, pulling up plumped grains of pearled wheat before the warm yogurt breaks. These are quiet bowls—tart with tahn and fragrant with dried mint crushed between palms, or heavy with collagen and crushed garlic—that pull us through winter.

You don't order Khash on a casual Tuesday; you wake up before dawn on a frozen weekend, gather the people you actually give a damn about, and earn it. Windows fog from boiling beef broth at 3 a.m., sealing the damp heat inside. From the lactic tang of Spas to the slow-braised comfort of Bozbash, these soups knit the bones back together, demanding nothing but a spoon, a stack of dry lavash, and a little time. Crush the raw garlic, drop in the bread, and eat it while it burns.





Spas / Tahnabour

spahs

This is the ultimate survival soup, born in the freezing peaks of the Caucasus and engineered to heal. It's what first-generation kids remember simmering on the stove the minute they caught a winter cold—a tart, buttery, hypnotic brew. The secret to preventing this fermented dairy from turning into a curdled, grainy tragedy is absolute devotion: whisk the emulsion cold, stir continuously in one direction over the heat, and never salt the pot until the fire is dead. Do it right, and it tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup pearl barley
rinsed

3 cup water

4 cup whole milk plain yogurt

1/2 cup full-fat sour cream

1 large egg

1 1/2 tbsp all-purpose flour

4 cup cold water

4 tbsp unsalted butter

1 med yellow onion
finely diced

1/2 cup fresh cilantro
finely chopped

2 tbsp dried mint
crushed (optional, if substituting for cilantro)

1 tsp kosher salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Simmer the pearl barley until tender.**

In a small saucepan, bring the rinsed pearl barley and 3 cups of water to a boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 30 to 40 minutes before draining any excess liquid.

2. **Caramelize the onions in butter.**

While the barley cooks, melt the butter in a small skillet over medium heat and gently sauté the finely diced onion until it is deeply golden, soft, and sweet.

3. **Build the cold emulsion.**

In a large, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven—entirely off the heat—vigorously whisk the egg and flour into a smooth paste, whisk in the yogurt and sour cream until seamless, then stir in the 4 cups of cold water.

4. **Stir continuously in one direction.**

Place the pot over medium heat and immediately begin stirring with a wooden spoon; do not stop, walk away, or change direction until the soup reaches a rolling boil, otherwise the dairy will break into curds.

5. **Simmer and combine.**

The moment the soup hits a boil, the emulsion is stabilized; reduce the heat to a gentle simmer, fold in the cooked barley and buttery onions, and cook for 5 to 10 minutes more.

1. Season only off the heat.

Turn off the stove entirely, stir in the cilantro or dried mint, and only now add the salt to taste, as salting boiling yogurt is a guaranteed way to ruin the soup.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Choose your herbs based on your roots.**

Armenians from the Republic traditionally finish this soup with copious amounts of fresh cilantro, while the Western diaspora heavily relies on dried crushed mint—both are authentic, so choose the one that speaks to your own nostalgia.

● **A note on the dairy.**

Do not attempt this with non-fat yogurt. If you must use thick Greek yogurt instead of standard plain yogurt, cut 3 cups of it with 1 cup of water so it closely mirrors the consistency of traditional matsun.



Kololik

ko-lo-leek

If you grew up in an Armenian household, the smell of simmering tomato broth and fresh tarragon is the smell of a Tuesday night. Our grandmothers took humble ingredients—ground meat, a handful of rice, some potatoes—and stretched them into a deeply comforting survival soup. The trick to capturing the true homeland flavor is twofold: aggressively kneading the meat so the meatballs stay light and springy, and an absolute, non-negotiable reliance on fresh tarragon. There's no complex stuffing here, just an honest, life-affirming bowl of comfort you can pull off on a weeknight in Ohio.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	ground beef or a 50/50 mix of ground beef and ground lamb	1 tbsp	semolina flour
1 med	yellow onion <i>grated on the large holes of a box grater, juices retained</i>	2 tbsp	unsalted butter or olive oil
1/4 cup	short or medium-grain white rice <i>rinsed</i>	1 med	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>
1 large	egg	3 tbsp	tomato paste
1/4 cup	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>	1 tbsp	mild red pepper paste
1 tbsp	fresh tarragon <i>finely chopped</i>	8 cup	beef broth or water
1 tsp	kosher salt	3 med	russet or Yukon gold potatoes <i>peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes</i>
1/2 tsp	black pepper	1/4 cup	short or medium-grain white rice
		1 med	bay leaf
		1/4 cup	mixed fresh tarragon, dill, and cilantro <i>roughly chopped, for garnish</i>

PREPARATION

- **Grate the onion for the meatballs before you begin assembling anything else.** Do not drain the juices. The raw onion juices tenderize the meat via enzymatic action and ensure the meatballs do not crack during boiling, which large chunks of diced onion would cause.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the ground meat, grated onion and its juices, rinsed rice, egg, chopped cilantro, tarragon, salt, pepper, and semolina in a large bowl.** Aggressively mix and knead the meat with your hands for 2 to 3 minutes until it becomes sticky, uniform, and pulls away from the sides. This protein development is the secret to a tender meatball that holds its shape. Roll the mixture into smooth, uniform balls about the size of a whole walnut and set aside.

- 1. Heat the butter in a large heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, then sauté the diced onion until translucent and soft.**

Add the tomato paste and red pepper paste, stirring constantly for 2 minutes to cook out the raw tomato flavor and deepen the color.

- 2. Pour in the beef broth, add the bay leaf, and bring the liquid to a rolling high boil.**

Carefully drop the raw meatballs into the boiling broth one by one. Do not stir immediately, or you risk breaking them. Let them boil undisturbed for 3 to 4 minutes so the exteriors seal.

- 3. Once the meatballs begin to float to the surface, add the cubed potatoes and the remaining uncooked rice to the pot.**

Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover with a lid slightly ajar, and let the soup simmer for 20 to 25 minutes. It is ready when the potatoes are fork-tender and the rice inside the meatballs is fully cooked and fluffy.

- 4. Discard the bay leaf, taste for seasoning, and ladle the hot soup into deep bowls.**

Finish each bowl with a generous scattering of fresh tarragon, dill, and cilantro, serving immediately with warm crusty bread or lavash.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Fresh tarragon is entirely non-negotiable for the authentic flavor profile.**

If you cannot find fresh tarragon, do not substitute the dried version—it tastes like dusty licorice. Instead, use a mix of fresh dill and fresh sweet basil to maintain a bright aromatic lift.

- **Meatballs can be prepped ahead of time to save weeknight stress.**

Roll them up to 24 hours in advance and keep them in the fridge. Alternatively, freeze them on a sheet pan, bag them, and drop them directly into the boiling soup from frozen, simply adding 5 to 7 minutes to the simmer time.



Krchik

kuhr-CHEEK

In the snow-choked villages of Northern Armenia, winter survival meant relying entirely on the cellar. Krchik is the masterpiece born of that necessity—a deeply savory, Lenten comfort soup built from fermented cabbage, dried summer herbs, and hearty grains. For the modern American kitchen, swapping out hours-long boiling of whole wheat berries for coarse bulgur, and using high-quality refrigerated sauerkraut gets you that identical, soul-warming tang in under an hour. The real grandmother’s secret here is a handful of dried prunes, melting into the broth to cut the lactic bite with a perfect, earthy sweetness.

INGREDIENTS

3 tbsp	olive oil	6 cup	boiling water
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/2 cup	coarse bulgur wheat
1 tbsp	tomato paste	6 med	pitted prunes
1 tbsp	mild red pepper paste	1 tsp	dried summer savory
2 cup	refrigerated sauerkraut <i>drained and roughly chopped</i>	1 tsp	dried basil
2 med	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
		1 pinch	salt

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sauté the onions until sweet and translucent.**
Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, cooking the onions for 5 to 7 minutes without letting them brown.
- 2. Bloom the tomato and red pepper pastes.**
Add both pastes to the onions and stir constantly for 1 to 2 minutes until they darken to a brick-red color, which caramelizes their natural sugars and eliminates the raw tinny flavor.
- 3. Toast the sauerkraut.**
Stir the chopped cabbage into the vibrant red onion mixture and cook for 5 minutes, allowing the fats to mellow the harsh edges of the lactic acid.
- 4. Simmer the starches and fruit.**
Add the potatoes, bulgur, dried prunes, and boiling water to the pot, bringing it to a gentle boil before reducing the heat to medium-low.
- 5. Cook until the potatoes are completely tender and the bulgur is plump.**
Partially cover the pot with a lid and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally as bulgur has a tendency to stick to the bottom.

1. Infuse the winter herbs.

In the last two minutes of cooking, stir in the savory, basil, and black pepper, adding them at the end to preserve their volatile aromatic oils without turning the broth bitter.

2. Rest the soup to build body and flavor.

Turn off the heat, adjust salt if needed, cover securely, and let the soup sit undisturbed for 15 minutes to allow the starches to thicken the broth and the prunes to bleed their earthy sweetness into the liquid.



Vospapour

vohs-pah-POOR

Vospapour is the ultimate Armenian comfort food—a humble, fragrant bowl that carried generations through harsh winters and long fasting seasons. It’s peasant food in the best sense of the word: resourceful, unpretentious, and deeply satisfying. Since authentic wild mountain sorrel is impossible to forage in an American suburb, we use fresh spinach and a heavy hit of lemon juice to replicate that bracing, earthy tartness. Dried apricots melt into the broth to balance the toasted cumin, and a grandmother's trick of crushing dried mint by hand releases a medicinal warmth that makes this completely vegan stew smell exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cup	red lentils <i>sorted and rinsed clean</i>	1/4 tsp	ground coriander
6 cup	vegetable stock	1 tbsp	tomato paste
1/2 cup	coarse bulgur	1/2 cup	dried apricots <i>roughly chopped</i>
3 tbsp	olive oil	1 tbsp	dried mint
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely chopped</i>	5 oz	baby spinach
3 med	garlic clove <i>minced</i>	1 large	lemon <i>juiced</i>
1 tsp	ground cumin	1 pinch	kosher salt and black pepper <i>to taste</i>
1 tsp	sweet paprika		

PREPARATION

- **Sort the legumes.**

Dried lentils often hide small stones or debris; give them a good look and a thorough rinse before they hit the pot.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Execute the digestive boil.**

Place the rinsed lentils in a pot, cover with 3 inches of water, and boil for 10 minutes, skimming off any white foam, then drain and discard the starchy water.

- 2. Caramelize the onions.**

Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat, add the onion, and sauté for 8 to 10 minutes until deeply golden brown.

- 3. Bloom the spices.**

Lower the heat to medium, add the garlic, cumin, paprika, coriander, and tomato paste, and let them dry-roast untouched in the hot oil for 30 seconds before stirring continuously for a minute.

1. Simmer the soup.

Add the drained lentils, apricots, bulgur, and stock to the pot, scrape up any browned bits from the bottom, bring to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover partially, and simmer for 25 to 30 minutes.

2. Crush the mint and wilt the greens.

Once the lentils have completely broken down, remove the lid, rub the dried mint vigorously between your palms directly over the pot to release its essential oils, and stir in the spinach until wilted.

3. Brighten and rest the soup.

Remove the pot from the heat, stir in the fresh lemon juice, season generously with salt and pepper, and let the soup sit for 10 minutes before ladling into bowls.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The first boil isn't strictly mandatory, but it matters.**

If you're rushing on a weeknight, you can skip the 10-minute boil of the lentils, but doing it ensures a highly digestible, cleaner-tasting broth free of the compounds that cause bloating.

● **Dried mint is non-negotiable.**

Fresh mint won't give you the same concentrated, almost medicinal warmth that defines authentic Armenian cooking, and the friction from crushing it by hand is what wakes the dormant oils up.



Kyalagyosh

kyah-lah-gyosh

Originating in the historical province of Van, Kyalagyosh is a testament to the ingenious survival cooking of the Armenian highlands. Traditionally built on sun-dried buttermilk meant to withstand freezing mountain winters, this modern adaptation relies on a stabilized mixture of rich yogurt, sour cream, and an egg to recreate that sharply tangy, un-curdled broth. It is less a standard soup and more an interactive ritual: diners layer brittle, toasted lavash with earthy lentils, drown it in piping-hot broth, and finish it with caramelized onions bloomed in dried savory. It is practical, unapologetically fast for a weeknight, and fiercely authentic.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup	brown lentils <i>rinsed and picked over</i>	1 1/2 tbsp	all-purpose flour
3 cup	water	3 cup	low-sodium chicken broth
1 tsp	kosher salt	3 tbsp	unsalted butter
2 large	lavash bread <i>torn into bite-sized pieces</i>	1 tbsp	olive oil
1 1/2 cup	plain whole-milk Greek yogurt	1 large	yellow onion <i>halved and thinly sliced into half- moons</i>
1 cup	sour cream	1 tbsp	dried summer savory
1 large	egg	1/2 tsp	red pepper flakes

PREPARATION

- **Preheat the oven to 350°F.**

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Simmer the lentils until tender.**

In a medium saucepan, combine the lentils, water, and kosher salt, bringing to a boil before reducing to a simmer for 20 to 25 minutes until they hold their shape, then drain and set aside.

2. **Toast the lavash until brittle.**

Spread the torn lavash pieces on a baking sheet and bake for 5 to 7 minutes until completely dried out and golden, ensuring the bread acts as a sponge rather than turning to mush.

3. **Caramelize the onions and bloom the herbs.**

Heat the butter and olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat, slowly cooking the onions for about 15 minutes until deeply golden, then stirring in the savory and red pepper flakes in the final minute to release their essential oils.

1. Whisk and gently heat the yogurt broth.

Off the heat in a large pot, vigorously whisk the yogurt, sour cream, egg, and flour until completely smooth, slowly pour in the chicken broth, then stir constantly over medium-low heat for 8 to 10 minutes until hot and slightly thickened without bringing to a boil.

2. Assemble the bowls in layers.

Place a handful of crispy lavash shards at the bottom of each wide bowl, spoon the warm lentils over the bread, drown the mixture in the hot yogurt broth, and top immediately with the caramelized onions.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Do not skip the dried savory.**

If you absolutely cannot find dried summer savory, you can substitute an equal mix of dried thyme and dried mint to replicate the earthy, piney aroma of Armenian tsitron.

● **Never let the yogurt mixture come to a hard boil.**

Even with the flour and egg acting as stabilizers, a rolling boil can cause the dairy proteins to tighten and curdle, ruining the silky texture of the broth.



Shortcut Khash

Khash is a prehistoric soup of survival, a frugal peasant dish born to ensure no part of the slaughtered animal went to waste. Traditionally, making it is an agonizing labor of love—families hovering over a simmering pot of cow hooves for twenty-four sleepless hours to extract a milky, deeply restorative broth served at dawn. We do not do watered-down versions of homeland classics here, but we do use physics. By deploying a pressure cooker, you can brutally extract every ounce of rich, sticky gelatin from the bones in just ninety minutes. The golden rule is absolute: no salt, spices, or vegetables go into the pot. You build the flavor at the table, aggressively customizing your bowl with raw garlic, massive pinches of kosher salt, and fistfuls of shattered flatbread.

INGREDIENTS

3 1/2 lb	cow feet <i>sawed into 2-inch thick cross-sections</i>	4 large	lavash flatbread <i>dried until brittle</i>
8 cup	cold water	4 large	lavash flatbread <i>kept fresh and warm</i>
2 med	garlic heads <i>peeled and finely crushed into a paste</i>	8 oz	radishes <i>sliced</i>
1/4 cup	kosher salt <i>set aside for serving at the table</i>	1 pt	quality vodka <i>chilled</i>

PREPARATION

- **Dry the flatbread ahead of time.**

The architectural integrity of the dried bread is vital for soaking up the broth without disintegrating completely. Lay half of your lavash out on a wire rack overnight to stale, or crisp it in a low oven for 10 to 15 minutes until it becomes brittle.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Execute a violent parboil to purge the bones of impurities.**

Place the pre-cut cow feet into a large pot on the stove, cover entirely with cold water, and bring to a rolling boil over high heat. Let them boil violently for 15 minutes to force out the gray, foamy scum, then dump the entire contents of the pot into a colander in the sink. Discard the dirty water and rinse the cow feet thoroughly under cold running water.

- 2. Extract the collagen under high pressure.**

Transfer your freshly rinsed cow feet into the insert of your electric pressure cooker and pour in enough fresh cold water to cover the bones entirely, taking care not to exceed the maximum fill line. Do not add salt or any aromatics. Secure the lid, ensure the valve is set to seal, and cook on high pressure for 90 minutes.

1. Allow the pressure to release naturally.

When the 90 minutes are up, let the pressure release on its own for 20 to 30 minutes to prevent the highly gelatinous broth from sputtering out of the valve. Once the pin drops, open the lid to reveal perfectly translucent, tender meat and a milky, collagen-rich broth.

2. Temper the raw garlic with hot broth.

Place all the finely crushed garlic into a small serving bowl. Ladle about a half cup of the hot broth into the garlic bowl and stir, slightly mellowing the aggressive bite of the raw allium before serving.

3. Assemble the bowls and build the final flavor at the table.

Using tongs, pull the chunks of meat and bone out of the pot, divide them among deep soup bowls, and generously ladle the hot, sticky broth over top. Bring the bowls to the table alongside the garlic water, kosher salt, dried and fresh lavash, sliced radishes, and chilled vodka, allowing each guest to aggressively season their own broth and crush in the brittle flatbread until the soup becomes a hearty, spongy stew.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Do not substitute standard pita or naan for the lavash.**

Thick breads will dissolve into a sludgy mess. If authentic Armenian lavash is unavailable, find the thinnest flour tortillas you can and bake them at 250°F until they shatter like glass.

● **Omit the traditional tripe entirely.**

While old-school iterations of khash sometimes include beef stomach, omitting it is culturally accurate, strictly canonical, and spares you an agonizing, deeply unpleasant cleaning process on a weeknight.



Kufta Bozbash

kyoof-tah boh-z-bahsh

For the Armenian diaspora, the aroma of simmering Kufta Bozbash is a direct line to childhood. This isn't just a meatball soup; it's a testament to the old ways, adapted for the modern kitchen. The secret lies in violently kneading ground lamb with ice water until perfectly bouncy, then hiding a single tart dried fruit in the center to cut the heavy, savory broth. It's the ultimate grandmother's trick—a restorative, complex bowl that pulls no punches and tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb ground lamb

1/2 med yellow onion
grated with juices retained

1/4 cup short-grain white rice

1 tsp kosher salt

1/2 tsp black pepper
1 tsp dried mint
6 small pitted prunes
2 tbsp unsalted butter
1/2 med yellow onion
finely diced
1 tbsp tomato paste

6 cup beef stock
15 oz chickpeas
canned, rinsed and drained thoroughly
3 med Yukon gold potatoes
peeled and cut into 2-inch chunks
1 tsp kosher salt
1/2 tsp turmeric
1 tbsp dried mint

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Beat the meat with ice water until a sticky, bouncy emulsion forms.

In a large bowl, combine the lamb, grated onion, rice, the first measure of salt, pepper, and the first measure of dried mint. Dip your hands in ice water and vigorously knead, squeeze, and slam the meat against the bowl for about four minutes. The ice water keeps the fat from melting while binding the proteins so the meatballs won't disintegrate.

2. Stuff and seal the meatballs with a tart dried fruit.

Divide the meat into six equal portions. Flatten a portion into your palm, place a prune dead in the center, and firmly roll the meat around it into a seamless ball. Repeat with the remaining meat.

3. Caramelize the tomato paste to build the broth's foundation.

Melt the butter in a heavy pot over medium heat. Sauté the diced onion until soft, then stir in the tomato paste. Cook constantly for 30 seconds to kill the raw, tinny edge and turn the butter a fiery red.

4. Simmer the meatballs and meticulously skim the broth.

Pour in the beef stock and bring to a gentle boil. Carefully drop in the meatballs without stirring. Let them cook undisturbed for 10 minutes, using a slotted spoon to skim off any gray foam that rises to the surface.

1. Add the vegetables and simmer until tender.

Once the broth is clear and the meatballs are set, gently stir in the potatoes, chickpeas, turmeric, and remaining salt. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes until the potatoes are tender and the rice grains peek through the cooked meatballs.

2. Crush dried mint directly into the bowls before serving.

Taste the broth and adjust the seasoning if your stock demands it. Ladle a massive meatball, potatoes, and chickpeas into wide bowls, heavily crushing the remaining dried mint between your fingers over the hot broth to release its essential oils.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Skip the overnight bean soak to save your weeknight.**

While grandmothers meticulously soaked and peeled dried chickpeas by hand, thoroughly rinsing a can of high-quality garbanzo beans preserves your sanity without sacrificing the earthy bite this soup requires.

● **This is a stew that begs to be made ahead.**

Like any self-respecting peasant dish, Kufra Bozbash tastes exponentially better on the second day after the potatoes have fully absorbed the rich broth.



Mantapour

ah-kahn-jah-poor

Before there was chicken noodle soup, there was Mantapour. Affectionately known as 'ear soup' for the shape of its tiny pinched dumplings, this tart, velvety yogurt broth is the ultimate Armenian maternal comfort food. While rolling dough by hand was once an all-day affair for village matriarchs, the modern diaspora secret is utilizing store-bought wonton wrappers—preserving the exact soul and aroma of the old country for a busy American weeknight, completely uncompromising on flavor. The trick is stabilizing the yogurt with an egg and flour so it never curdles, and finishing it with a searing sizzle of dried mint and butter.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 lb	ground beef or lamb	1 large	egg
1/2 med	yellow onion <i>grated, all juices reserved</i>	2 tbsp	all-purpose flour
2 tbsp	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>finely minced</i>	4 cup	low-sodium chicken broth <i>divided</i>
1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>	1/3 cup	short-grain white rice or pearled barley <i>rinsed</i>
1/4 tsp	black pepper	2 tbsp	unsalted butter
1/4 tsp	ground allspice	1 tbsp	dried mint
40	square wonton wrappers	1/2 tsp	Aleppo pepper or red chili flakes
3 cup	plain whole-milk yogurt <i>do not use vanilla</i>		

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix the meat filling until cohesive and slightly tacky.**
Combine the ground beef, grated onion with all its extracted juices, minced parsley, 1/2 teaspoon of salt, black pepper, and allspice in a medium bowl. The grated onion juice acts as a natural tenderizer.
- 2. Fill and pinch the wonton wrappers into small boat shapes.**
Place a scant 1/2 teaspoon of the meat mixture in the center of a wrapper. Wet the edges with a wet finger, fold into a triangle to seal, then pinch the two bottom corners together to form a little 'ear'. Keep unused wrappers covered with a damp towel so they don't dry out.
- 3. Simmer the rice in half of the chicken broth.**
In a large, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven, bring 2 cups of the chicken broth to a boil. Add the rinsed rice, reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes until mostly tender.

- 1. Vigorously whisk the cold yogurt, egg, and flour together to create an emulsion.**
This is the grandmother's secret to preventing a grainy soup. The egg and flour coat the proteins in the yogurt, stabilizing it so it won't curdle when subjected to the heat of the stove.
- 2. Temper the yogurt mixture with hot broth.**
Turn the heat under the rice to its lowest setting. Slowly ladle hot broth from the pot into the cold yogurt mixture while whisking vigorously with your other hand. Repeat with two more ladles to gently raise the yogurt's temperature.
- 3. Bring the soup together over medium-low heat.**
Pour the warmed yogurt mixture and the remaining 2 cups of chicken broth back into the pot. Stir constantly until it reaches a gentle simmer. Do not let it come to a hard boil.
- 4. Boil the manti directly in the yogurt broth.**
Gently drop the pinched dumplings into the simmering soup. Cook for 6 to 8 minutes until they float to the top and the wonton wrappers look translucent. Turn off the heat.
- 5. Bloom the dried mint in sizzling butter.**
Just before serving, melt the butter in a small skillet over medium heat until it foams. Remove entirely from the heat and immediately stir in the dried mint and Aleppo pepper. Drizzle this instantly aromatic, sizzling butter directly over the bowls of hot soup.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Greek Yogurt Substitution**

Traditional Armenian matzoon is distinctively tart and slightly thinner than American Greek yogurt. If you only have thick Greek yogurt, you must thin it with equal parts water before using, or your soup will turn into a heavy porridge.

- **The Freezer Hack**

If pinching wontons is simply too much for your weeknight, bypass it entirely by dropping frozen miniature pelmeni or manti from an Eastern European specialty market straight into the simmering broth.



Arganak

ar-gah-nahk

In Armenian kitchens, arganak literally translates to broth, but that doesn't do justice to the alchemy happening in the pot. Historically a luxurious marriage of clear poultry stock and wild game, it survives in the diaspora as a golden, restorative soup studded with tender beef dumplings and finished with a velvety, dairy-free emulsion of egg yolks and lemon. It's an undisputed classic. We're skipping the two-hour whole chicken boil for a high-quality store-bought bone broth, saving you time on a weeknight without sacrificing an ounce of the homeland's soul.

INGREDIENTS

6 cup	chicken bone broth <i>low sodium</i>	2 tbsp	unsalted butter
1 small	yellow onion <i>peeled and halved</i>	1/4 cup	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>
1 med	carrot <i>peeled and halved</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 large	bay leaf	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
3/4 lb	ground beef <i>85% lean</i>	2 large	egg yolks
2 tbsp	short-grain white rice	2 tbsp	lemon juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>
1 med	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/4 cup	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>finely chopped</i>

PREPARATION

- **Parboil the rice.**

Drop the rice into a small pot of boiling water for exactly eight to ten minutes, then drain and rinse under cold water. Adding raw rice to the meat mixture leaves you with crunchy dumplings; fully cooked rice turns to mush.

- **Sauté the aromatics.**

Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat and sweat the diced onions until they are sweet and completely translucent, about 5 to 7 minutes. Let them cool slightly. Raw onions have no place inside these meatballs.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix and roll the meatballs.**

In a bowl, gently mix the ground beef, the parboiled rice, the buttery sautéed onions, cilantro, salt, and pepper. Wet your hands with a little cold water and roll the mixture into walnut-sized spheres.

1. Infuse the broth.

Pour the chicken broth into a heavy pot or Dutch oven. Toss in the halved onion, carrot, and bay leaf. Let it come to a gentle boil and simmer for ten minutes to wake up the flavors, then fish out and discard the vegetables.

2. Poach the dumplings.

Keep the clear broth at a gentle simmer. Drop the meatballs into the pot one by one and let them poach undisturbed for ten to twelve minutes, until they float to the surface and are cooked completely through.

3. Temper the liaison.

In a small bowl, aggressively whisk the egg yolks and lemon juice until pale.

While whisking continuously, slowly drizzle in a ladleful of the hot chicken broth. This gently raises the temperature of the eggs so they don't scramble when they hit the soup.

4. Finish off the heat.

Pull the pot completely off the stove. Slowly stir the tempered egg mixture into the broth. It will instantly transform into a cloudy, velvet elixir. Taste for salt, ladle into warm bowls, and hit it with a handful of fresh parsley.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The golden rule of the emulsion.**

Once those egg yolks hit the broth, do not let the pot boil again. A rolling boil will instantly curdle the eggs and break the soup's velvety texture.

● **Respect the cilantro.**

Even if you usually prefer parsley, cilantro belongs in the meatballs. The brief poaching mellows its bite perfectly and provides the authentic, old-world flavor profile this dish demands.



The Suburban Kebab (Quick Weeknight Dinners)

High-flavor, protein-centric meals bridging the traditional Armenian hearth and the American backyard grill, designed for busy weeknights.

You pull the ground lamb from the fridge at 5:45 PM and work the chopped onions in with bare hands, transforming the backyard gas grill and the trusty stovetop into engines for fast, garlic-laced comfort. The grate hisses, and soon you plate a blistered Losh Kebab snatched hot off the grates, a steaming bowl of Fasulia simmered until the broth thickens and the meat yields, and the buttery

Sunday Pilaf summoned miraculously on a Wednesday with a rapid boil of boxed stock. A hot meal hits the table ten minutes after you walk in. No clay oven required.





Losh Kebab

losh ke-bab

If you grew up Armenian in America, you know the smell. It drifted over church picnic grounds from Massachusetts to Ohio—an intoxicating, smoky perfume of fat and spice. Pragmatic grandmothers didn't waste hours molding meat around swords; they took the glory of lamb, beef, cumin, and parsley and shaped it into a foolproof patty. It's the ultimate diaspora hamburger. No special skewers required. The secret? Work the meat hard, and let it rest.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb ground lamb

1 lb ground beef

1/2 med yellow onion
very finely minced

1/2 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley
very finely chopped

2 small clove garlic
grated or minced into a paste

1 tbsp tomato paste

1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

1 large egg
lightly beaten

1/4 cup plain dry breadcrumbs

1 tbsp ground cumin

1 tsp ground coriander

1/2 tsp ground allspice

1/2 tsp Aleppo pepper

1 1/2 tsp kosher salt

1/2 tsp black pepper
freshly ground

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prepare the aromatics.

In a small bowl, combine the minced onion, chopped parsley, and garlic. If your onions are particularly watery, give them a gentle squeeze over the sink to remove excess moisture so the patties don't steam from the inside out.

2. Build the flavor paste.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the beaten egg, tomato paste, olive oil, breadcrumbs, cumin, coriander, allspice, Aleppo pepper, salt, and black pepper. Mixing the spices into the wet ingredients ensures they distribute evenly.

3. Knead the meat aggressively.

Place the ground lamb and beef into a large mixing bowl and add the aromatics and flavor paste. Wet your hands slightly with cold water, dig in, and knead the mixture for 2 to 3 minutes until it feels tacky and homogeneous. Unlike a delicate American hamburger, you want to work this meat hard.

4. Rest the mixture in the refrigerator.

Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and chill for at least 1 hour, or up to 24 hours. This sets the fat and gives the spices time to deeply penetrate the meat.

5. Shape the kebabs.

Divide the chilled mixture into 6 to 8 equal portions. Form them into oval or round patties about 1/2-inch to 3/4-inch thick, and press a shallow dimple into the center of each with your thumb so they don't puff up into balls while cooking.

1. Grill or pan-sear the patties.

Preheat a grill or a large cast-iron skillet to medium-high. Cook for 4 to 5 minutes per side, flipping only once, until deeply charred and cooked to medium or medium-well.

2. Rest the meat and serve.

Remove from the heat and let the patties rest for 3 to 5 minutes so the juices redistribute.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Red pepper paste makes a superior substitute.**

Traditional Armenian recipes rely on biber salcasi (red pepper paste). Standard American tomato paste is an excellent, accessible weeknight substitute that provides the necessary umami, but seek out the pepper paste at a Middle Eastern market if you can.

● **Serve with an onion-parsley salad.**

Toss thinly sliced onion with roughly chopped parsley, lemon juice, and sumac. This acidic, crunchy garnish is non-negotiable—it cuts right through the rich animal fat of the lamb.



The Sunday Pilaf

a-reesh-ta-yov plav

If there is one dish that defines the Armenian-American culinary experience, it is this canvas of unapologetic butter, toasted vermicelli, and parboiled rice. When grandmothers arrived in America, they traded handmade arishta for broken fideo and discovered that converted rice flawlessly mimicked the texture of traditional grains without the labor. It is a masterpiece of immigrant ingenuity and elemental technique, requiring only twenty minutes, a heavy pot, and one immutable law: never, ever peek under the lid while it cooks.

INGREDIENTS

6 tbsp unsalted butter

1/2 cup fine vermicelli noodles
crushed into 1-inch pieces

1 cup	long-grain parboiled white rice	1/2 tsp	kosher salt
2 1/4 cup	low-sodium chicken broth	1/4 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Melt the butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium-low heat.**
Use a 2- or 3-quart pot with a tight-fitting lid. Once the butter is melted and slightly foaming, add the crushed vermicelli noodles.
- 2. Toast the noodles continuously until they achieve a deep, reddish-brown color.**
Stand over the pot and stir constantly with a wooden spoon for 3 to 5 minutes. Watch it like a hawk, as the pasta transitions from perfectly nutty to burned in seconds.
- 3. Pour in the dry rice and stir vigorously for one to two minutes.**
Every single grain of rice needs to be coated in the browned butter. This creates a lipid barrier that prevents the starches from cross-linking and ensures the grains remain flawlessly separate.
- 4. Carefully pour in the chicken broth, salt, and pepper, then bring to a rapid boil.**
Stand back, as the hot fat will sputter violently when the liquid hits it. Stir briefly to ensure nothing is sticking to the bottom of the pot.
- 5. Reduce the heat to the absolute lowest setting, cover tightly, and do not touch it for exactly twenty minutes.**
This is the golden rule of the Armenian grandmother: do not lift the lid to check on it, and do not stir it. Lifting the lid ruins the steam pressure, and stirring wet rice guarantees a mushy disaster.
- 6. Turn off the heat, quickly swap the lid for a clean paper towel, and clamp the lid back down.**
Let the pot sit undisturbed on the warm stove for 5 to 10 minutes. The towel absorbs all the excess steam condensation that would otherwise drip back down, leaving you with dry, fluffy pilaf.

1. **Remove the lid, discard the towel, and fluff gently with a fork before serving.**

CHEF'S NOTES

- **For a rustic, earthy village-style mix, substitute coarse bulgur for half of the rice.**
Use #3 coarse bulgur. The cooking process remains exactly the same, but the result is denser and higher in fiber, honoring pre-commercial homeland traditions.
- **Elevate the dish for a Sunday dinner by garnishing with toasted nuts.**
Sauté a quarter cup of slivered almonds or pine nuts in a little butter until golden, then scatter them over the fluffed pilaf just before serving.



Fasulia

fah-SOOL-yah

Walk into the home of any first-generation Armenian-American in the Midwest on a Tuesday night, and this is what you will smell. Fasulia is the ultimate expression of how immigrant grandmothers adapted the slow, methodical cooking of the homeland to the realities of American suburban life. By swapping long-simmered lamb neck bones for aggressively browned ground meat, and leaning heavily on caramelized tomato paste and warm allspice, they engineered a weeknight masterpiece. Forget everything you know about keeping green beans crisp; here, they must be braised until meltingly soft and olive green, drinking up every drop of the spiced, savory broth.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	ground lamb or ground beef (80/20 blend)	3 tbsp	tomato paste
2 tbsp	olive oil	14.5 oz	canned diced tomatoes <i>undrained</i>
1 large	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1 1/2 cup	chicken broth or water
4 cloves	garlic <i>minced</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1 1/2 lb	fresh Romano beans or green beans <i>ends trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces</i>	1 tsp	ground allspice
		1/2 tsp	ground black pepper
		1 tsp	granulated sugar
		1/2 tsp	Aleppo pepper

PREPARATION

- **Frozen French-cut green beans make an excellent weeknight substitute.**

If you are short on time, swap the fresh Romano beans for two 14-ounce bags of frozen French-cut green beans. Because they are sliced lengthwise, they absorb the tomato sauce rapidly and require zero trimming or prep.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Brown the meat aggressively to build a deeply savory foundation.**

Heat a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat, add the ground meat, and press it into an even layer. Let it sit undisturbed for a few minutes to develop a dark crust, then break it apart, cook until no longer pink, and remove the meat with a slotted spoon while leaving the rendered fat in the pot. If your meat was exceptionally lean, add the olive oil now.

- 2. Sauté the aromatics in the rendered animal fat.**

Lower the heat to medium, add the diced onion, and cook for about 8 minutes until deeply softened and translucent. Add the minced garlic and cook for one minute more.

1. Bloom the tomato paste and spices to fake a long braise.

Clear a small space in the center of the pot and drop in the tomato paste, allspice, black pepper, and Aleppo pepper. Stir the paste into the hot fat and onions, cooking for a few minutes until it darkens to a brick-red color and smells incredibly aromatic.

2. Blister the green beans in the spiced base.

Return the browned meat to the pot, add the prepared green beans, and toss everything thoroughly to coat. Let the beans blister slightly in the heat for about 3 minutes.

3. Simmer the stew until the beans achieve total textural surrender.

Pour in the diced tomatoes with their juices, chicken broth, kosher salt, and sugar. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover tightly, and simmer for 35 to 45 minutes until the beans have lost their bright green hue and are meltingly tender.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Serve over a starch to soak up the broth.**

Fasulia is best ladled generously over a bed of buttery vermicelli rice pilaf or coarse bulgur, with a wedge of crusty bread nearby. It tastes remarkably better the next day.

- **The traditional weekend method uses bone-in lamb.**

If you have a few hours on a Sunday, swap the ground meat for a pound and a half of bone-in lamb neck or shoulder chops. Sear the chops, build the sauce exactly as directed, and simmer for two hours before adding the green beans for a final 45 minutes.

- **A vegetarian version is equally authentic.**

As a traditional Orthodox fasting food, a meatless version is perfectly normal. Omit the meat, increase the olive oil to a quarter cup, and add a pinch of cumin and coriander to compensate for the lost umami.



Sini Kebab

see-nee ke-bab

For immigrant parents working full-time in the American suburbs, firing up a charcoal grill on a Tuesday night wasn't happening. Enter Sini Kebab: the ultimate weeknight dinner hack. It delivers the deeply spiced, garlic-and-parsley-laced soul of a proper lule kebab, but it's simply kneaded, pressed into a baking pan, and crowned with vegetables. The secret is scoring the meat like a pizza and drowning it in a rich tomato broth, creating a self-basting confit effect that yields tender meat and perfectly roasted potatoes in under an hour.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb ground beef
80 percent lean

1/2 lb ground lamb

1 large	yellow onion <i>grated, juices reserved</i>	1/2 tsp	ground allspice
4 med	garlic <i>minced to a paste</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1/2 cup	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>finely chopped</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1 tbsp	Middle Eastern red pepper paste	2 med	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled and sliced into 1/4-inch thick rounds</i>
3 tbsp	tomato paste <i>divided</i>	2 med	tomatoes <i>sliced into rounds</i>
1 tbsp	Aleppo pepper	3 med	mild green peppers <i>halved lengthwise</i>
1 tsp	ground cumin	1 cup	warm water

PREPARATION

- **Chop and measure all vegetables and aromatics before handling the raw meat.** Keeping your station clean and prepped will make the vigorous hand-kneading process much smoother and keep your kitchen sanitary.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Preheat the oven and prepare the baking dish.**
Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Smear the bottom of a 10-inch round baking dish or cast-iron skillet with 1 tablespoon of tomato paste to anchor the flavors and prevent the meat from sticking.
- 2. Knead the meat mixture until sticky and cohesive.**
In a large bowl, combine the ground beef, lamb, grated onion with its juices, garlic, parsley, red pepper paste, 1 tablespoon of tomato paste, Aleppo pepper, cumin, allspice, salt, and black pepper. Use your hands to knead vigorously for 2 to 3 minutes until the meat binds together into a tacky paste, ensuring it won't crumble after baking.

1. Press the meat into the pan and score it into wedges.

Transfer the meat to the prepared dish and press it out evenly to the edges with wet hands. Using a knife, cut the meat deeply into 8 wedges, exactly like a pizza.

2. Crown the meat with the prepared vegetables.

Layer the potato slices evenly over the meat, followed by the tomato slices. Arrange the halved green peppers on top in a decorative star pattern.

3. Mix the tomato broth and pour it over the dish.

Whisk the warm water, the remaining 1 tablespoon of tomato paste, and a pinch of salt together until smooth. Pour this broth gently over the vegetables and meat.

4. Bake uncovered until the potatoes are fork-tender and the sauce thickens.

Bake for 40 to 45 minutes. The meat will shrink slightly, allowing the rendered beef fat and tomato broth to bubble up through the scored cuts, effectively poaching the potatoes in savory juices.

5. Rest the kebab and serve directly from the pan.

Let the dish rest for 10 minutes to allow the juices to settle. Serve the wedges alongside warm pita, lavash, or a simple rice pilaf.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Lean meat will ruin the dish.**

Do not use 90 percent lean beef. The rendering fat from an 80/20 mix is absolutely essential to fry the edges of the meat and adequately roast the vegetables on top.

- **Substitute for Middle Eastern red pepper paste.**

If you cannot source biber salçası, simply substitute 1 additional tablespoon of standard tomato paste mixed with 1/2 teaspoon of smoked paprika to replicate the umami depth.



Madzoonov Hav

mah-dzoo-nov hahv

Long before yogurt was a staple of the American breakfast aisle, it was the secret weapon of the Armenian kitchen. Brought over by immigrants who peddled horse-drawn wagons of madzoon through New England, this fermented dairy is the ultimate meat tenderizer. We're skipping the heavy stews here and going straight for the backyard grill. The lactic acid gently breaks down the chicken thighs, while the milk solids char beautifully over an open flame, giving you the authentic taste of a Caucasian khorovats on a random Tuesday night. The real grandma trick is a hit of dried tsitron, or summer savory. It smells exactly like the old country and separates a generic chicken skewer from a true taste of home.

INGREDIENTS

2 lb	boneless skinless chicken thighs <i>cut into 1.5-inch pieces</i>	1 tbsp	sweet paprika
1 cup	whole milk plain yogurt <i>thinned with 2 tablespoons water if using Greek style</i>	1 tbsp	dried summer savory
4 med clove	garlic <i>finely grated to a paste</i>	1 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1/2 med	yellow onion <i>grated on a box grater, juices reserved</i>	1/2 tsp	Aleppo pepper
		1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
		2 tbsp	olive oil
		1 tbsp	lemon juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>

PREPARATION

- **Soak your skewers.**

If using bamboo skewers instead of metal, be sure to submerge them in water for 20 minutes before grilling so they do not catch fire.

- **Marinate in the morning.**

This is the ultimate prep-ahead meal. Assembling the marinade in the morning before work lets the yogurt work its magic all day, making weeknight assembly effortless.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Mix the yogurt marinade.**

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the yogurt, grated garlic, grated onion and its juices, olive oil, lemon juice, paprika, summer savory, black pepper, Aleppo pepper, and salt until it forms a smooth, pastel-orange paste.

- 2. Coat the chicken.**

Add the cubed chicken thighs to the bowl and use your hands to massage the yogurt mixture deeply into the meat.

1. Let it marinate.

Cover the bowl with plastic wrap or transfer everything to a large zip-top bag and refrigerate. It needs at least 3 hours, but 8 to 12 hours is where the magic happens.

2. Thread the skewers.

Thirty minutes before cooking, remove the chicken from the fridge to take the chill off. Thread the pieces snugly onto your skewers. Do not wipe off the excess yogurt marinade; you want it clinging to the meat.

3. Grill over high heat.

Preheat your grill to medium-high and oil the grates well. Grill the skewers for 5 to 7 minutes per side. You are looking for distinct, dark char marks where the yogurt solids have caramelized.

4. Rest and serve.

Pull the chicken off the heat and let it rest for 3 minutes before serving immediately alongside rice pilaf and fresh lavash.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Finding summer savory.**

If you absolutely cannot find summer savory (tsitron) in the spice aisle or a local Middle Eastern market, substitute 2 teaspoons of dried thyme mixed with a half teaspoon of dried mint.

● **Oven-broiling alternative.**

If you don't have a grill, line a baking sheet with foil and place a wire rack on top. Arrange the skewers on the rack and broil about 6 inches from the heat source for 6 to 8 minutes per side, watching carefully until beautifully charred.



Khazani Khorovats

ghah-zah-nee kho-ro-vahts

Growing up, the smell of khorovats meant an all-day affair around an outdoor grill. But what happens on a rainy Tuesday in an Ohio suburb when you're craving those exact smoky, tart flavors? Enter Khazani Khorovats—literally "barbecue in a pot." By aggressively searing meat in a heavy Dutch oven and creating a quick, sticky glaze from onions and pomegranate juice, you get the depth of traditional khorovats without stepping foot outside. No skewers, no overnight marinades. Just pure, unadulterated homeland flavor that comes together in under forty-five minutes.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb	boneless beef sirloin or pork shoulder <i>cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes</i>	1 tsp	dried basil
1 tsp	kosher salt	1/2 tsp	dried thyme
1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	1 cup	100% pure pomegranate juice
2 tbsps	ghee	1/2 cup	fresh pomegranate seeds
2 large	yellow onions <i>halved and thinly sliced into half-moons</i>	1/4 cup	fresh cilantro and flat-leaf parsley <i>roughly chopped</i>
		1 large	lavash <i>warmed, for serving</i>

PREPARATION

- **Pat the meat cubes completely dry with paper towels.**

Moisture is the enemy of a good sear. Season the dried meat evenly with the kosher salt and black pepper before you begin cooking.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Heat the ghee in a large, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat.**
Once the fat is shimmering and nearly smoking, add the meat in a single, uncrowded layer. Do this in two batches if your pot isn't big enough.
- 2. Sear the meat undisturbed for 3 to 4 minutes until a deep, dark golden-brown crust forms.**
Flip and sear the other sides. Once browned all over, use a slotted spoon to temporarily transfer the meat to a plate.
- 3. Reduce the heat to medium and add the sliced onions to the hot pot.**
Use a wooden spoon to scrape up all the browned bits (the fond) from the bottom. Cook, stirring frequently, until the onions are deeply softened and beginning to turn golden, about 7 to 10 minutes.

- 1. Return the meat and any accumulated juices to the pot.**
Sprinkle in the dried basil and thyme, then pour in the pomegranate juice. Bring the liquid to a rapid simmer.
- 2. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover tightly, and braise for 15 to 20 minutes.**
Cook until the meat is fork-tender. The natural acids in the pomegranate juice will rapidly break down the connective tissues.
- 3. Remove the lid and let the sauce bubble uncovered for 3 to 5 minutes.**
If the sauce is still thin, increase the heat slightly so the liquid reduces into a thick, sticky glaze that coats the meat.
- 4. Transfer to a serving platter and scatter with fresh pomegranate seeds and chopped herbs.**
Serve immediately, using pieces of fresh lavash to pinch the meat and scoop up the jammy, tart onions.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Avoid boiling your meat.**
If your pan is crowded, the temperature drops and the meat begins to steam in its own juices, resulting in a gray, flavorless exterior. Sear in smaller batches to ensure a proper crust.
- **Adjust the acid if necessary.**
If your pomegranate juice is exceptionally tart, a small pinch of sugar will balance it out. The two full onions are crucial, as their natural sugars caramelize to counteract the acidity.



Tass Kebab

If you grew up Armenian-American in the suburban Midwest, you know 'kebab' doesn't just mean meat on a stick. Tass Kebab, literally 'bowl kebab,' is an ingenious feat of domestic engineering where meat and grated onions are packed into a glass bowl, inverted in a pot, and weighted down. It creates a localized pressure chamber that forces the sweet, intoxicating vapor of allspice and cinnamon deep into the beef. Fifteen minutes of active prep, and then you walk away. When you finally lift that heavy bowl at the table, the fragrant cloud of steam that escapes is pure, unadulterated home.

INGREDIENTS

2 lb	beef chuck roast <i>trimmed of hard fat and cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
2 large	yellow onions <i>grated on the large holes of a box grater</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
3 tbsp	tomato paste	1/2 tsp	ground allspice
2 tbsp	unsalted butter <i>cut into small cubes</i>	1/4 tsp	ground cinnamon
		1 large	bay leaf
		1 cup	hot water or beef broth

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the meat and aromatics in a large mixing bowl.**
Aggressively mix the cubed beef, grated onions, tomato paste, salt, pepper, allspice, and cinnamon with your hands until every piece of meat is heavily coated.
- 2. Pack the bowl tightly.**
Transfer the entire meat mixture into a heat-safe glass or metal bowl, packing it down firmly. Top the packed meat with the bay leaf and small cubes of butter.
- 3. Invert the bowl into a heavy pot.**
Place a wide Dutch oven upside down over the bowl. Holding them tightly together, swiftly flip the whole apparatus over so the bowl sits upside down in the middle of the empty pot.
- 4. Weight the bowl and add liquid.**
Place a heavy object, like a stone mortar, on top of the inverted bowl to prevent it from floating. Pour the hot water into the pot, surrounding the outside of the bowl.
- 5. Simmer undisturbed and walk away.**
Bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat, then immediately drop to the lowest possible setting. Cover the pot and let it simmer for 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

1. Reveal at the table.

Turn off the heat and carefully remove the heavy weight. Bring the whole pot to the dining table, then use two forks or a towel to lift the hot bowl straight up, releasing the fragrant steam and rich gravy.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The weeknight pressure cooker cheat.**

If two hours of simmering isn't possible today, ditch the glass bowl. Sauté the meat and onions in an electric pressure cooker for five minutes, add the remaining ingredients, and cook on high pressure for 35 minutes with a 15-minute natural release.

● **Grate, don't chop, the onions.**

Grating the onions is a crucial textural secret. They melt entirely into the sauce during the long braise, acting as a natural thickener and providing a deep, sweet caramelized backbone.



Kadin Budu Kufta

kah-dihn boo-doo kyoof-tah

If you want to know what an Armenian diaspora kitchen actually smells like on a Tuesday night, this is it. These plump, golden 'lady's thigh' meatballs discard the mid-century shortcuts of bouillon and breadcrumbs for the brilliant, thrifty technique of the homeland: browning half the meat to build deep, savory flavor, then binding it with the remaining raw half. Studded with leftover rice and laced with the warming nostalgia of allspice, they are dipped in egg and pan-fried to a spectacular golden crust. It's an ingenious way to turn simple staples into a meal that tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	lean ground beef <i>divided into two 8-oz portions</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1 tbsp	olive oil	1 tsp	ground allspice
1 large	yellow onion <i>very finely diced</i>	1 tsp	freshly ground black pepper
3/4 cup	cooked white rice <i>cooled completely</i>	1/2 tsp	ground cumin
1 large	egg	1/2 cup	all-purpose flour
1/4 cup	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>finely chopped</i>	2 large	eggs <i>well beaten with a pinch of salt</i>
		3/4 cup	neutral oil

PREPARATION

- **Make the meat mixture ahead of time.**

You can knead the meat mixture together the night before or on a Sunday, leaving it covered in the fridge for up to 24 hours. On a busy weeknight, simply shape, dip, and fry.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sauté half the ground beef with the onion.**

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium. Add the onion, sautéing until translucent. Add exactly half of the ground beef, breaking it down into fine crumbles until completely browned. Transfer to a large bowl and let it cool completely to room temperature.

- 2. Build the meatball matrix.**

Once the cooked meat is cool, add the remaining raw beef, cooked rice, the single egg, parsley, salt, allspice, pepper, and cumin. Knead vigorously with your hands for a few minutes until the raw proteins bind everything into a sticky, cohesive dough.

1. Rest the mixture to set.

Cover the bowl and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. This solidifies the warmed fats and ensures your meatballs won't disintegrate in the pan.

2. Shape the ovals.

Scoop a handful of the mixture and use wet hands to shape it into a plump, slightly flattened oval. Place on parchment paper and repeat with the remaining meat.

3. Set up the breading station.

Place the flour in one shallow bowl and the two beaten eggs in another. Dredge each oval lightly in flour, tapping off the excess, then dip it into the egg to coat completely.

4. Shallow fry to a golden crust.

Heat a half-inch of neutral oil in a heavy skillet over medium-high. Fry the kuftas in batches for 3 to 4 minutes per side. Because half the meat and the rice are already cooked, they finish quickly, puffing into a spectacular golden-yellow crust. Drain on paper towels and serve warm.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Use leftover rice.**

This dish is the ultimate vehicle for leftover takeout rice. If cooking fresh, ensure it is boiled until just tender and cooled completely so it doesn't turn to mush.

- **Temperature control is critical.**

Do not skip cooling the cooked meat before combining. Hot beef will melt the fat in the raw meat and scramble your binding egg, ruining the structure.

- **Skip the breadcrumbs.**

A traditional kadin budu relies exclusively on flour and egg to create a silken, oil-resistant golden barrier.



Grandmothers' Hands (Sunday Suppers & Weekend Projects)

Tactile, labor-intensive dishes meant for weekends, honoring the communal traditions and recipes passed down through generations.

Armenian cooking lives in the hands. Kneading dough, pinching manti, hollowing out eggplants until the knuckles ache. These are the Sunday afternoons at the dining room table imported from Yerevan and fiercely guarded in modern suburbs. It's the work that requires an army of aunts, a few bottles of homemade wine, and an entire afternoon to kill.

These are the dishes you start three days before a nameday, the heavy hitters you pull out when you need to remind your kids exactly who they are. Cutting one-inch squares of dough, scraping the pumpkin with a metal spoon, pinching spiced lamb into tiny boats. From the communal, fat-dripping smoke of backyard khorovats to the slow, stubborn simmer of stuffed dolma, these recipes demand patience. The hands at the table belong to a new generation, but the finished tray always looks exactly the same.





Manti

see-NEE mahn-TEE

Manti is not just a meal; it is an event. For generations of Armenian women, the ritual of pinching hundreds of tiny, meat-filled boats was the definitive weekend project. We are chasing that exact, unadulterated textural symphony: the deep crunch of toasted dough, caramelized beef, and the shock of cold garlic yogurt cutting through hot, savory broth. But we live in the real world, and Tuesday night comes for us all. Enter the modern diaspora's best-kept secret: the wonton wrapper. It perfectly mimics the delicate chew of handmade dough, saving you hours of labor while sacrificing absolutely none of the soul.

INGREDIENTS

1 package	square wonton wrappers <i>cut evenly into four smaller squares</i>	4 tbsp	unsalted butter <i>melted</i>
1 lb	ground beef <i>none</i>	3 cup	low-sodium chicken broth <i>none</i>
1 small	yellow onion <i>grated or pureed to a paste</i>	1 tbsp	tomato paste <i>none</i>
1/4 cup	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>very finely chopped</i>	2 cup	plain full-fat yogurt <i>none</i>
1 1/2 tsp	sweet paprika <i>none</i>	3 clove	garlic <i>crushed into a paste</i>
1/2 tsp	ground allspice <i>none</i>	1 tsp	sumac <i>none</i>
2 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>	1/2 tsp	Aleppo pepper <i>none</i>
1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>	1/2 tsp	dried mint <i>none</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Thoroughly mix the ground beef, grated onion, parsley, paprika, allspice, one and a half teaspoons of salt, and the black pepper in a bowl until unified.**

The onion must be virtually a paste; if the pieces are too chunky, they will tear the delicate wrappers and ruin the architecture of your tiny dumplings.

- 2. Brush a large rimmed baking dish generously with some of the melted butter.**
- 3. Place a scant half-teaspoon of the meat filling in the center of each wonton square, wet your fingers, and pinch the opposite ends together to form a tiny, open-faced boat.**

Keep the wrappers under a slightly damp paper towel while you work so they do not dry out. Pack the assembled dumplings tightly into the buttered pan in neat rows.

- 1. Brush the tops of the tightly packed manti with the remaining melted butter and bake at 400°F for 35 to 45 minutes.**

You want them baked totally dry first. They must sound like they are toasting in the pan, turning a deep golden brown with the exposed meat fully caramelized and crisp.

- 2. Warm the chicken broth and tomato paste together in a saucepan, then ladle the simmering liquid directly over the freshly baked manti.**

The pan will hiss and sizzle spectacularly. Pour until the broth comes halfway up the sides of the dumplings, then return the pan to the oven for exactly 10 minutes so the bottoms plump up while the tops remain audibly crunchy.

- 3. Whisk together the cold plain yogurt, crushed garlic, and remaining half-teaspoon of salt in a small bowl.**

Do not mix this into the hot pan. The magic of this dish relies entirely on the stark temperature contrast between the sizzling broth and the cold, garlicky yogurt at the table.

- 4. Ladle the hot manti and broth into wide, shallow bowls and generously spoon the cold garlic yogurt over the top.**

Finish with a heavy dusting of bright, tart sumac, a pinch of Aleppo pepper, and a sprinkle of dried mint.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The Canonical Hand-Rolled Dough**

If you have a Sunday to kill and want the full grandmother experience, skip the wonton wrappers. Whisk 2 large eggs, 3/4 cup room-temperature water, 1 tablespoon olive oil, and 1 teaspoon kosher salt. Slowly incorporate 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour until a firm dough forms. Knead for 5 minutes, let it rest under a damp towel for 30, and roll it out with a pasta machine to exactly 1/16-inch thick before cutting into 1.5-inch squares.



Sini Kufta

see-nee kyoof-tah

Making individual stuffed kuftas is a labor of love that will easily eat up an entire afternoon. Sini Kufta is the brilliant, weeknight-friendly workaround. You take the exact same ingredients—a crispy, spiced bulgur shell and a rich, buttery walnut and meat filling—and layer them in a baking dish. The result is a stunning, diamond-scored savory pie that tastes exactly like the ones served in the homeland. The real grandmother secrets here? Keep a bowl of ice water nearby so your hands don't melt the fat in the dough, and use parchment paper to effortlessly roll out the top layer. Simple, smart, and profoundly good.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cup	fine bulgur	2 tbsp	olive oil
1 cup	boiling water	2 large	yellow onions <i>finely diced</i>
1 lb	lean ground beef	1/2 cup	walnuts <i>finely chopped</i>
1 small	yellow onion <i>grated into a mush</i>	1 tsp	ground allspice
2 tbsp	red pepper paste	1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon
1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt	1/2 tsp	black pepper
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 med bowl	ice water	1/4 cup	fresh flat leaf parsley <i>finely minced</i>
1 lb	ground beef or lamb	1/4 cup	unsalted butter <i>melted</i>

PREPARATION

- **Prepare the filling up to two days in advance.**

Sauté the diced onions in olive oil until deeply softened, brown the ground beef or lamb, then stir in the walnuts, allspice, cinnamon, pepper, and salt before letting it cool completely.

- **Hydrate the bulgur.**

Pour the boiling water over the fine bulgur in a large bowl, cover tightly, and let sit for 15 to 20 minutes until tender.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Process the meat for the shell into a tight paste.**

Throw the lean ground beef, grated onion, red pepper paste, cumin, and salt into a food processor and pulse until it transforms from loose meat into a smooth, sticky paste.

1. Knead the dough using the ice water secret.

Combine the meat paste with the hydrated bulgur and, repeatedly dipping your hands into the bowl of ice water, knead for 5 minutes to keep the emulsion tight and prevent the fat from melting.

2. Build the bottom layer of the pie.

Press half of the dough evenly across the bottom of a greased 9x13-inch baking dish, smoothing it with ice-water-dipped fingers, then spread the cooled filling evenly over the top.

3. Roll out the top layer between parchment paper.

Place the remaining dough between two sheets of parchment paper, roll it into a rectangle the size of your pan, invert it directly over the filling, and peel off the backing paper.

4. Score the surface and baste with butter.

Using a knife repeatedly dipped in cold water, score the pie into a diamond pattern all the way through to the filling, then pour the melted butter evenly over the top so it seeps into the cuts.

5. Bake until deeply golden and crisp.

Bake at 375°F for 35 to 45 minutes until the edges pull away from the pan, then let it rest for 15 minutes before serving with a bright salad and plain yogurt.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing the right bulgur is non-negotiable.**

You must use number 1 fine bulgur for the shell to absorb moisture properly within the short window; coarser grinds will leave you with a crumbly, dry mess that falls apart.

● **Keep the filling completely cool before assembly.**

A warm filling will melt the fat in the raw meat dough during assembly, ruining the texture of your top layer.



Harissa / Keshkeg

hah-ree-sah

The smell of chicken and wheat simmering on the stove all Sunday afternoon meant one thing: Grandma was making Harissa. A deeply savory, profoundly comforting porridge, it is the undisputed soul food of Armenia. Traditionally, it demands hours of stovetop babysitting and arm-aching stirring to achieve its signature whipped texture. But this isn't a museum piece; it's a living tradition. For the modern first-generation cook juggling the demands of a Tuesday, a slow cooker beautifully mimics the gentle heat of the ancient clay tonir, while an immersion blender does the heavy lifting of the wooden spoon. The result is a bowl of warm, buttery, cumin-scented resilience you can actually pull off on a weeknight.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	peeled whole wheat or pearl barley <i>rinsed well</i>	2 tsp	kosher salt
2 lb	bone-in skinless chicken thighs	4 tbsp	unsalted butter
8 cup	chicken broth	1 tbsp	ground cumin
		1 tsp	Aleppo pepper

PREPARATION

- **Soak the grains overnight.**

Place the rinsed wheat or barley in a large bowl, cover with cold water, and let it soak overnight to soften the starches. Drain before using.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the grains, chicken, broth, and salt in a slow cooker.**

Set it to low for 8 hours. The ambient heat replicates the ancient underground tonir, gently melting the ingredients together over the course of the day without scorching the bottom of the pot.

- 2. Shred the chicken directly in the pot.**

Uncover the slow cooker and use two forks to pull the tender meat off the bones. Carefully remove and discard all the bones.

- 3. Whip the porridge into a creamy emulsion.**

Here is where you cheat time. Instead of beating it against the side of the pot for an hour with a wooden spoon, pulse an immersion blender in short bursts until it reaches a thick, homogenous, stretchy texture. Do not over-blend it into a soup.

- 4. Brown the butter.**

In a small skillet over medium heat, melt the butter until it foams, turns a nutty brown color, and smells heavenly.

1. Serve hot with spiced brown butter.

Ladle the hot Harissa into shallow bowls and create a small well in the center with the back of your spoon. Pour a generous spoonful of browned butter into the well, and instruct your guests to finish it with a heavy pinch of cumin and a dash of Aleppo pepper.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing the grains.**

Authentic Harissa is made with dzedzadz—skinless, hulled whole wheat. If you can't find it at a local Middle Eastern market, pearl barley is the absolute best supermarket substitute and will gelatinize identically under slow heat.



Amarayin Dolma

ah-mah-rah-yeen tol-mah

If there is a scent that summons the Armenian diaspora back to a childhood kitchen, it is this. Amarayin Dolma isn't the heavy, spice-laden approximation you find in strip mall restaurants; it is the pure, herbaceous taste of the summer harvest. The secret is unpretentious genius: utilizing the tomatoes' own juices to hydrate the fatty meat, and leaning on a non-negotiable herbal matrix of dried summer savory and purple basil. Simple, structurally sound, and exactly the way it is supposed to be.

INGREDIENTS

4 med	Roma tomatoes <i>tops sliced off and kept as lids, flesh scooped out and finely chopped</i>	2 tbsp	fresh dill <i>finely chopped</i>
4 small	Japanese eggplants <i>halved crosswise and hollowed out</i>	1 tbsp	dried summer savory
4 med	bell peppers <i>tops sliced off, cored and seeded</i>	1 tbsp	dried purple basil
1 1/2 lb	80/20 ground beef	2 tbsp	tomato paste
1/2 cup	short-grain rice <i>rinsed</i>	1 tbsp	Armenian Cognac
1 med	yellow onion <i>finely grated</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
2 clove	garlic <i>minced</i>	1 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1/4 cup	fresh parsley <i>finely chopped</i>	1 tsp	paprika
1/4 cup	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>	3 tbsp	tomato paste
		2 tbsp	unsalted butter <i>melted</i>
		2 cup	warm water
		1/2 tsp	kosher salt

PREPARATION

- **Prep the vegetable vessels.**

The goal is to maximize space for the filling while maintaining a structural wall. Hollow them out carefully, and ensure you save every drop of the tomato interior—it is the liquid gold that hydrates the meat.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Mix the stuffing until perfectly cohesive.

In a large bowl, combine the ground beef, rinsed rice, grated onion, garlic, parsley, cilantro, dill, dried savory, dried basil, 2 tablespoons of tomato paste, cognac, 1 tablespoon of salt, black pepper, paprika, and all the reserved chopped tomato pulp. Mix gently with your hands until the mixture is uniformly combined but not overworked.

2. Stuff the vegetables loosely.

Spoon the meat mixture into the hollowed tomatoes, eggplants, and bell peppers, filling them only three-quarters of the way to the top. The raw rice needs room to expand as it cooks. Cap the tomatoes with their reserved tops.

3. Pack the pot tightly to maintain structural integrity.

Arrange the stuffed vegetables standing upright in a wide, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven. They should be packed snugly against each other to prevent them from falling over or collapsing as they soften in the heat.

4. Whisk the braising broth and pour it into the pot.

In a small bowl, whisk together the remaining 3 tablespoons of tomato paste, warm water, melted butter, and the remaining 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Pour this liquid gently into the pot so it reaches about halfway up the sides of the vegetables. Do not submerge them entirely.

5. Apply an inverted plate and simmer.

Place a heavy, heat-safe plate upside-down directly on top of the vegetables to act as a press, keeping them submerged and tightly packed. Bring the pot to an aggressive simmer over medium-high heat, then immediately reduce to low. Cover and simmer gently for 45 to 55 minutes.

1. Rest the dolma before serving.

Turn off the heat and let the pot rest, covered, for at least 15 to 20 minutes. This mandatory pause allows the rice to absorb the final bits of broth and helps the vegetables firm up. Serve warm, spooning the rich tomato-herb broth from the bottom of the pot generously over the top.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Source the right herbs.**

The soul of this dish relies entirely on dried summer savory (tsitron) and dried purple basil (rehan). Do not substitute them with generic Italian herbs or warm baking spices.

● **The fat is non-negotiable.**

If you are forced to use lean ground beef (90/10), you must mix 3 tablespoons of melted butter directly into the raw meat stuffing to prevent a dry, dense filling.



Ghapama

gha-pa-ma

In Armenia, a hollowed-out pumpkin isn't a centerpiece—it's a working-class Dutch oven steeped in centuries of survival. For first-generation kids, the smell of toasting butter, melting honey, and cinnamon meant family was gathering. The grandmothers' secret is twofold: parboil the rice so it doesn't turn into wallpaper paste, and vigorously rub the naked interior of the gourd with honey and butter before stuffing it. It's a brilliant piece of culinary engineering that requires no Hollywood embellishments to taste exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

1 med sugar pumpkin
about 3 to 4 lbs, washed

1 1/2 cup basmati rice
rinsed well

8 tbsp	unsalted butter <i>divided</i>	1 med	Granny Smith apple <i>peeled, cored, and finely diced</i>
1/3 cup	honey <i>high-quality, divided</i>	3/4 cup	mixed nuts <i>roughly chopped walnuts and sliced almonds</i>
1 cup	mixed dried fruit <i>roughly chopped apricots and pitted prunes</i>	1 1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon <i>divided</i>
1/2 cup	raisins <i>golden or dark</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>
		1/4 cup	hot water

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Hollow out and prepare the pumpkin vessel.**
Cut a circular lid around the stem, angling your knife inward so it won't fall in later, and scrape away all the stringy pulp and seeds from the cavity.
- 2. Glaze the interior walls of the pumpkin.**
Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter with 1 tablespoon of the honey and generously coat the entire inside of the empty pumpkin, finishing with a dusting of 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon and a pinch of salt.
- 3. Parboil the rice to prevent a mushy filling.**
Boil the rinsed basmati in generously salted water for exactly 5 to 7 minutes until partially cooked but firm, then drain immediately and rinse with cool water.
- 4. Plump the fruits and toast the nuts.**
In a large skillet over medium-low heat, melt 4 tablespoons of butter and gently sauté the dried fruits, diced apple, and nuts for 4 to 5 minutes, then stir in the remaining honey, 1 teaspoon of cinnamon, and 1 teaspoon of kosher salt.
- 5. Combine the filling and stuff the pumpkin loosely.**
Toss the warm, buttery fruit and nut mixture with the parboiled rice, then spoon it into the hollowed-out pumpkin without packing it down so the rice has ample room to expand.

1. Add steam and bake until tender.

Pour the hot water directly over the rice, dot the top with the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter, and replace the lid before baking at 350°F for 1.5 to 2 hours.

2. Rest before slicing into wedges.

Let the pumpkin rest for 15 minutes, then bring it to the table and slice it vertically along its natural ribs so it falls open like a flower.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Weeknight Adaptation**

If you don't have two hours to roast a whole pumpkin, skip the gourd entirely and make the filling on the stovetop. In Armenia, this standalone dish is called Chamichov Plav and is beloved in its own right.



Yalanchi Sarma

yah-LAHN-chee SAR-mah

In Turkish, "yalanchi" translates to "liar"—a cheeky historical nod to the absence of meat in these Lenten fasting staples. But there is absolutely nothing fake about the flavor. For kids growing up in the Armenian-American diaspora, the smell of onions melting into copious amounts of olive oil, mingling with allspice, dried mint, and sharp lemon, is the exact smell of home. Making sarma is a labor of love for a Sunday afternoon. The secrets to getting it right are simple but non-negotiable: use Calrose rice for the perfect sticky bite, never brown your onions, and always let the cooked rolls cool completely in their pot so they don't oxidize and turn black.

INGREDIENTS

3/4 cup	extra-virgin olive oil	1 tsp	ground allspice
3 large	yellow onions <i>peeled and finely diced</i>	1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon
1 cup	Calrose rice <i>rinsed until water runs clear</i>	1 tsp	sugar
1/4 cup	pine nuts <i>lightly toasted</i>	1 1/2 tsp	Kosher salt
2 tbsp	tomato paste	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1/2 cup	hot water	16 oz	jarred grape leaves in brine
1/2 cup	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>finely minced</i>	3/4 cup	warm water
3 tbsp	fresh lemon juice	1/4 cup	fresh lemon juice
1 tbsp	dried mint <i>crushed</i>	2 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil
		1/2 tsp	Kosher salt

PREPARATION

- **Extract the harsh commercial brine from the grape leaves.**

Unroll the jarred leaves, place them in a large heat-proof bowl, and cover completely with boiling water for 10 minutes. Drain, rinse under cold water, and gently squeeze dry.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Melt the onions into the olive oil.**

Heat 3/4 cup of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add the diced onions and sauté gently for 15 to 20 minutes until completely translucent and sweet—do not let them brown.

1. Partially pre-cook the rice.

Stir in the rinsed Calrose rice, toasted pine nuts, and tomato paste, cooking for 2 minutes. Pour in 1/2 cup hot water and 1 1/2 teaspoons of salt, reduce the heat to the lowest setting, and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes until the water is absorbed but the rice is still hard in the center.

2. Build the flavor matrix and let it rest.

Remove the pan from the heat and fold in the minced parsley, 3 tablespoons lemon juice, dried mint, allspice, cinnamon, sugar, and black pepper. Allow the mixture to cool to room temperature so the rice continues to absorb the flavors without tearing the delicate leaves during rolling.

3. Armor the cooking pot.

Line the bottom of a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven with 6 to 8 of the largest, toughest, or torn grape leaves to create a sacrificial barrier against the heat.

4. Roll the sarma into tight cigar shapes.

Place a grape leaf flat with the dull, heavily-veined side facing up. Put a heaping teaspoon of the cooled rice mixture near the stem end, fold the bottom and sides inward to seal the edges, and roll tightly upward.

5. Pack the pot and apply the plate trick.

Arrange the rolled sarmas tightly, seam-side down, in concentric circles over the leaf lining. Cover with another layer of flat leaves, pour over the 1/4 cup lemon juice, 2 tablespoons olive oil, 3/4 cup warm water, and 1/2 teaspoon salt, then place an inverted, heat-proof plate directly on top of the rolls to weigh them down.

6. Simmer gently until tender.

Cover the pot with its lid and bring to a gentle boil over medium heat. Immediately reduce the heat to the absolute lowest setting and simmer for 45 to 60 minutes until the rice inside is fully tender.

7. Cool completely in the covered pot.

Remove the pot from the heat but do not remove the lid or the plate. Allow the Yalanchi to cool entirely in their own residual liquid; exposing hot grape leaves to the air will cause them to oxidize and turn an unappealing black.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Split the work across two days.**

Rolling 50 grape leaves is a weekend project, so cook the onion and rice filling up to three days in advance and keep it in the fridge until you're ready to roll.

- **Store them to improve the flavor.**

Fully cooked Yalanchi keeps exceptionally well in the refrigerator for up to a week, and the flavors actually deepen and improve after a day or two.

- **Substitute pine nuts if needed.**

If pine nuts are prohibitively expensive, finely chopped walnuts are a historically accurate and delicious substitution used by Western Armenian diaspora cooks.



Coffee Hour (Sweet Endings & Baking Traditions)

The baked goods and pastries that define Armenian hospitality, highlighting afternoon traditions and utilizing accessible suburban hacks for complex homeland desserts.

At four in the afternoon, the copper jazve sits on the back burner, the demitasse cups come out, and the coffee hour begins, usually at a kitchen table permanently dusted with flour. This is where the business of life is handled—the gossip, the grievances, and the endless arguments over how to shape the

dough—over plates of soft kurabia and a braided choreg. It's a daily habit built on butter, sugar, and the exact brand of flour they used back home, even if the zip code is strictly suburban.

Making these sweets used to demand days of labor, but survival requires adaptation. The matriarchs figured out long ago that a box of supermarket phyllo makes a fiercely good paklava, and a stand mixer won't compromise the gata. These are the lived-in recipes of the diaspora, smartly hacked for the modern kitchen. Pour a cup, wait for the grounds to settle, and drink.





Shortcut Gata

ah-RAHG gah-TAH

The old-school grandmothers of the Caucasus spent days fermenting dough and firing up underground clay tonirs to bake intricate, massive gatas. Beautiful, but let's be honest: your mom in the Ohio suburbs didn't have a tonir, and neither do you. What she had was a brilliant, pragmatic solution. By using high-quality, all-butter puff pastry, you skip the grueling lamination and focus all your love on the khoriz—the crumbly, buttery soul of the pastry. Made with ghee, sugar, and flour rubbed into sweet sand, this shortcut isn't some lazy Americanization; it's how modern Armenians actually cook. Pull these golden, vanilla-scented diamonds from the oven, and you're right back at the coffee table of your childhood.

INGREDIENTS

1 package	all-butter puff pastry <i>thawed but kept cold in the fridge</i>	1 cup	unbleached all-purpose flour
1 large	egg <i>separated into white and yolk</i>	3/4 cup	granulated sugar
1 tsp	milk	1/2 cup	ghee <i>softened to room temp</i>
		1 tsp	pure vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Preheat the oven to 375°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.**
- 2. Prepare the khoriz filling by mixing the flour, sugar, ghee, and vanilla into coarse sand.**

Use your hands. Rub the fat into the dry ingredients with your fingertips until the mixture clumps together when squeezed, but crumbles easily when poked.
- 3. Roll out the cold puff pastry onto a lightly floured surface.**

Gently roll it into a slightly larger, 1/8-inch thick rectangle. Lightly beat the egg white and brush a thin layer over the dough so your sandy filling won't spill out.
- 4. Spread the khoriz evenly across the pastry, leaving a half-inch border.**

Gently press the filling down to compact it into the dough.
- 5. Roll the pastry tightly into a log and place it seam-side down.**

Flatten it slightly with your hands so it forms an oval rather than a perfect cylinder.
- 6. Brush the log with an egg wash and score it with a fork.**

Mix the egg yolk with the milk and paint the top generously. Lightly drag the tines of a fork across the wash in a wavy or crisscross pattern—this is the signature look of an Armenian gata.

- 1. Slice the log on a bias into diamond shapes and bake for 25 to 30 minutes.**
Cut into 1 1/2-inch wide pieces and space them an inch apart on the baking sheet.
Bake until deeply golden and glossy, then let cool for at least 15 minutes before serving so the molten sugar can set.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Read the puff pastry label carefully.**
Standard supermarket puff pastry is often made with vegetable shortening or palm oil. Seek out an "all-butter" brand in the freezer aisle (like Trader Joe's or Dufour) for that authentic, rich dairy flavor that mimics the homeland.
- **Do not skip the ghee.**
While you can use standard unsalted butter, clarified butter (ghee) is the secret to a perfect khoriz. Removing the water and milk solids prevents the flour from developing gluten, ensuring the interior remains tender and sandy.



Kurabia

ghoo-rah-bee-yah

The secret to an authentic Armenian shortbread that actually melts on the tongue instead of sitting like a rock in your stomach isn't some rare, imported spice. It's chemistry and elbow grease. Standard American butter has too much water, which develops gluten and makes cookies tough. Strip the water out to make clarified butter, whip it with powdered sugar, and don't be afraid to knead the hell out of the dough. It's the old-world way to get exactly what it tastes like in Armenia, right in your own kitchen.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	unsalted butter <i>clarified to yield 2 cups yugh, chilled until solid but scoopable</i>	1 tsp	pure vanilla extract
1 1/2 cup	powdered sugar <i>sifted</i>	4 1/2 cup	all-purpose flour
		1/4 cup	blanched almonds <i>halved (optional)</i>

PREPARATION

- **Clarify the butter ahead of time.**

In a heavy saucepan, melt the 1 lb of butter over low heat without stirring. Skim the white foam off the top and discard. Slowly pour the clear, golden liquid into a measuring cup, leaving the white milk solids behind. You need exactly 2 cups. Chill for 45 to 60 minutes until solid but soft enough to beat.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whip the solidified clarified butter until it is exceptionally light, fluffy, and almost stark white.**

This takes about 3 to 4 minutes in a stand mixer at medium speed. Gradually add the sifted powdered sugar and the vanilla extract, beating for another 2 minutes until the mixture resembles marshmallow fluff.

- 2. Incorporate the flour and knead the dough exactly as you would knead bread.**

Stir in 3 1/2 cups of the flour with a wooden spoon, then switch to your hands. Add the remaining flour and knead vigorously right in the bowl for 3 to 4 minutes. Because you removed the water from the butter, you cannot overwork this dough; the warmth of your hands will bring it together into a smooth, cohesive ball.

- 1. Roll walnut-sized pieces of dough into short ropes and shape them as desired.**
Roll them on a clean surface into a 4-inch rope. You can gently curve them into an 'S', bring the ends together to form a ring with a halved almond pressed into the seam, or just roll the whole batch into a long log and slice diagonally for a weeknight shortcut. Place an inch apart on parchment-lined baking sheets.
- 2. Bake at 300°F for 17 to 20 minutes until the bottoms take on the faintest hint of a blush.**
Authentic Kurabia must remain extremely pale on top. Keep a close eye on them to prevent browning.
- 3. Let the fragile cookies cool entirely before touching them.**
They are incredibly delicate while hot. Once completely cool on the baking sheet, they will set into the perfect, crumbly texture.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Store-bought ghee works perfectly in a pinch.**
If you are pressed for time, substitute 2 cups of high-quality store-bought ghee for the homemade clarified butter. Just ensure it is chilled to a solid, scoopable state before whipping.
- **Do not add baking powder.**
Adding leavening agents introduces air pockets that make the cookie cakey. Omit it entirely to stay true to the dense, rich, melt-in-your-mouth shortbread of the homeland.



Choreg Cookies

cho-reg

For anyone who grew up in an Armenian household, the smell of baking Choreg is etched into their DNA. Traditionally an intricately braided, yeasted Easter bread demanding hours of labor, the grandmothers of the diaspora were entirely too practical to wait that long on a Tuesday. They distilled that intoxicating, centuries-old hit of crushed cherry pit and black cumin into these tender, melt-in-the-mouth cookies. This is weeknight baking that captures the exact, undeniable flavor of the old country—zero yeast, zero fuss, all the nostalgia.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup	unsalted butter <i>melted and cooled to lukewarm</i>	3 1/2 cup	all-purpose flour <i>sifted</i>
1/4 cup	neutral oil	2 tsp	baking powder
3/4 cup	granulated sugar	1 1/2 tsp	mahleb <i>ground</i>
1/4 cup	whole milk <i>warmed slightly</i>	1/2 tsp	kosher salt
2 large	eggs <i>1 whole, 1 separated for egg wash</i>	1 tbsp	nigella seeds
		1 tbsp	sesame seeds <i>for garnish</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bloom the ground mahleb in the warm butter mixture to extract its essential oils.

In a small saucepan over low heat, melt the butter, then remove from heat and whisk in the oil, warm milk, sugar, and ground mahleb. Let it sit until lukewarm so the fat can pull out that intoxicating cherry-almond aroma before it hits the flour.

2. Whisk the lukewarm butter mixture into the beaten egg.

In a large bowl, beat one whole egg until slightly frothy, then slowly pour in the wet ingredients while whisking constantly until well incorporated.

3. Sift in the dry ingredients and fold until a soft dough forms.

Sift three cups of the flour, the baking powder, and the salt directly over the wet ingredients. Fold gently with a spatula, adding the nigella seeds as the dough comes together. Knead briefly in the bowl until smooth; it should pull away cleanly and feel like soft playdough, adding the remaining half cup of flour only if it's too sticky.

4. Rest the dough in the refrigerator for thirty to forty-five minutes.

We aren't waiting for a yeast fermentation, but this brief chill allows the flour to fully hydrate and the butter to firm up, making the cookies much easier to shape.

1. Roll and twist the dough into traditional knotted shapes on a lined baking sheet.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Take a two-tablespoon piece of dough, roll it between your palms into a five-inch rope, and gently twist it or loop the ends together into a small knot, leaving an inch between each cookie.

2. Paint with egg wash and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Beat the remaining egg yolk with a splash of water and generously brush the top and sides of each cookie to guarantee that deep mahogany, shiny crust that visually defines true Choreg.

3. Bake for twenty to twenty-five minutes until rich and golden-brown.

Transfer to a wire rack to cool for at least ten minutes, allowing them to achieve that perfect crumbly, shortbread-like texture.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not skip the native aromatics.**

You can find ground St. Lucie cherry pits (mahleb) and black cumin (nigella seeds) at any Middle Eastern market. They are the defining, non-negotiable difference between a plain butter cookie and true Armenian nostalgia.



Weeknight Paklava

tnakan pakhlava

Forget the forty sheets of paper-thin phyllo and hours spent brushing clarified butter. When the grandmothers of Yerevan wanted paklava on a Tuesday, they made this rustic sour cream dough sandwiching a thick cloud of walnut meringue that won't crumble down your shirt. It smells of old-world cinnamon and toasted nuts, comes together in half an hour, and delivers exactly the hit of homeland nostalgia you need without the artisanal guilt.

INGREDIENTS

3 cup all-purpose flour

1 cup unsalted butter
cubed and chilled

1/4 tsp salt

1 cup full-fat sour cream

1 tsp	baking soda	1/4 tsp	ground cardamom
3 large	egg yolks	1 large	egg yolk
3 large	egg whites	1 tsp	milk
1 1/2 cup	granulated sugar	24 large	walnut halves
2 1/2 cup	walnuts <i>coarsely chopped</i>	1/4 cup	honey <i>gently warmed</i>
1 1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon		

PREPARATION

- **Leave the walnuts chunky.**

You want a rustic texture to contrast against the soft pastry, so chop them by hand rather than blitzing them to dust in a food processor.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Cut the cold butter into the dry ingredients.**

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour and salt. Toss in the cubed butter and use your fingers to rub it in until the mixture resembles coarse, pea-sized crumbs.

- 2. Activate the sour cream and mix the dough.**

Stir the baking soda into the sour cream so it bubbles slightly, then add it along with the three egg yolks to the flour mixture. Mix gently just until a cohesive dough forms, divide into three equal balls, wrap tightly in plastic, and chill in the fridge for 30 minutes.

- 3. Whip the walnut meringue filling.**

While the dough chills, preheat your oven to 350°F. Beat the egg whites until soft peaks form, gradually stream in the sugar to create a glossy meringue, and gently fold in the coarsely chopped walnuts, cinnamon, and cardamom.

1. Assemble the layers in a greased pan.

Lightly grease a 9x13-inch baking pan. Roll the first dough ball to fit the bottom, spread exactly half the filling over it, top with the second rolled dough ball, add the remaining filling, and cap with the final layer of dough.

2. Score into diamonds and brush with egg wash.

Whisk the remaining egg yolk with the milk and brush it over the top layer. Use a sharp knife to score the pastry into classic diamond shapes, cutting through the top dough but not quite breaching the bottom crust, and press a walnut half into the center of each diamond.

3. Bake until golden, then finish with honey.

Bake for 35 to 40 minutes until the pastry is puffed and deeply golden. Pull it out, generously drizzle the warm honey over the top and into the scored crevices, and return to the oven for 5 minutes so it bubbles and caramelizes.

4. Cool completely in the pan before serving.

Let the pakhlava rest until totally cool so the layers settle and the honey binds everything together.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Treat the dough gently.**

Over-kneading will activate the gluten and leave you with tough pastry layers instead of a tender crumb. Mix it just enough to hold together.

● **The meringue is the secret binder.**

Beating the egg whites suspends the chunky nuts, ensuring the filling remains airy and doesn't spill out onto your plate when you take a bite.



Shortcut Tahinov Hatz

tah-heen-ov hats

If you grew up in an Armenian household, the smell of Tahinov Hatz wafting from a white bakery bag on a Sunday morning is permanently etched into your brain. Traditionally, this Lenten sweet demands hours of resting and stretching yeasted dough until it's paper-thin. You probably don't have time for that on a Tuesday night. Swapping in a high-quality, all-butter puff pastry is a perfectly valid modern shortcut that hits the exact nostalgic nerve. It perfectly mimics those shatteringly crisp, caramelized layers of sesame and sugar, minus the all-day labor.

INGREDIENTS

14 oz	all-butter puff pastry <i>thawed overnight in the fridge</i>	1/4 cup	light brown sugar <i>packed</i>
1/2 cup	tahini <i>well-stirred</i>	1 tbsp	ground cinnamon
1/2 cup	granulated white sugar	1 large	egg <i>beaten with 1 tsp water</i>
		2 tbsp	toasted sesame seeds

PREPARATION

- **Fixing stiff tahini.**

American brands of tahini are notoriously inconsistent. If the oil has separated and left a cement-like block of sesame solids, empty the entire jar into a food processor and pulse until re-emulsified.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Preheat the oven to 400°F and line two baking sheets with parchment paper.**

In a small bowl, whisk together the white sugar, brown sugar, and ground cinnamon until no brown sugar clumps remain.

- 2. Roll out one sheet of thawed puff pastry on a lightly floured surface into a ten by twelve inch rectangle.**

Use a rolling pin just to smooth the seams and elongate the dough slightly.

- 3. Spread half of the tahini in an even layer across the dough, leaving a strict one-inch border.**

If your tahini is too thick to spread easily without tearing the dough, thin it with a drizzle of neutral olive oil. Leaving a clean border prevents the filling from oozing out and ruining the seal.

- 1. Sprinkle half of the cinnamon-sugar mixture evenly over the tahini, then roll the dough tightly into a log.**

Start from the long side like a jelly roll. Pinch the clean seam of dough against the roll to seal it tightly.

- 2. Cut the log into one and a half inch slices, place them cut-side down on the baking sheet, and smash them flat.**

Using the palm of your hand, press each spiral down until it is about a third of an inch thick. This heavy compression creates the dense, caramelized layers. Repeat the filling, rolling, and smashing process with the second pastry sheet.

- 3. Brush the tops with egg wash, sprinkle generously with sesame seeds, and bake for twenty to twenty-five minutes.**

Pull them when they are deeply golden brown and the sugar is bubbling at the edges. Let them cool on the sheet for five minutes to allow the molten sugar to harden into crispy layers before moving to a wire rack.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Expect some leakage.**

It is entirely normal for butter and tahini to leak out and bubble on the parchment paper. Those caramelized, slightly burnt sugar edges are the best part of the pastry.

- **Make it traditional and vegan.**

Tahinov Hatz is historically a Lenten food. To keep it entirely vegan, swap the all-butter pastry for a shortening-based commercial brand and replace the egg wash with a light brush of olive oil or almond milk.



Nazook

nah-ZOOK

In the Armenian kitchen, there is an eternal debate between the heavy, ceremonial gata and its delicate cousin, nazook. This is the pastry you want with a strong cup of dark coffee—a flaky, yeasted sour-cream dough rolled around a dense core of butter, crushed walnuts, and cardamom known as khoriz. To make it work on an American weeknight without compromising the soulful, slow-fermented flavor of the old world, we rely on cold retardation. Mix the dough in fifteen minutes, let it sleep in the fridge overnight, and roll it out fresh the next evening. The aroma alone will transport you straight back to your grandmother’s table.

INGREDIENTS

3 cup	All-purpose flour	1 1/2 cup	Granulated sugar
1 1/2 tsp	Instant yeast	3/4 cup	Unsalted butter <i>softened to room temp</i>
1/2 tsp	Kosher salt	1 cup	Walnuts <i>finely crushed</i>
1 cup	Unsalted butter <i>cold and cubed</i>	1 tsp	Vanilla extract
1 cup	Full-fat sour cream	1 tsp	Ground cardamom
1 large	Egg <i>room temperature</i>	1 large	Egg yolk
1 1/2 cup	All-purpose flour	1 tbsp	Milk

PREPARATION

- **Break the work across two days.**

Make the dough and the khoriz filling on day one, wrapping and refrigerating both. The slow fermentation develops deeper bakery-level flavors, and leaves you with a quick 30-minute assembly job the next evening.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the dry ingredients for the dough.**

In a large bowl or food processor, whisk together three cups of the flour, the instant yeast, and the kosher salt.

- 2. Cut the cold butter into the flour.**

Toss the cold butter cubes to coat them, then use your fingers or short pulses in a food processor to work the butter in until the mixture resembles coarse, pea-sized crumbs.

- 3. Bring the dough together with the wet ingredients.**

Whisk the sour cream and whole egg in a small bowl, pour it into the flour mixture, and gently knead just until a soft, slightly tacky dough forms.

1. Chill the dough overnight.

Divide the dough into three equal balls, flatten each into a disc, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or up to 36 hours.

2. Mix the khoriz filling.

In a medium bowl, combine the remaining flour, sugar, crushed walnuts, cardamom, vanilla, and softened butter. Rub the mixture together with your hands until it feels like damp sand and clumps when squeezed.

3. Roll out the chilled dough.

Preheat the oven to 350°F and line two baking sheets with parchment paper. On a lightly floured surface, roll one disc of dough into a 10x12-inch rectangle about 1/8-inch thick.

4. Press the filling into the dough.

Scatter one-third of the khoriz evenly over the dough, leaving a half-inch border bare at the top edge. To keep the filling from spilling when rolling, lay a piece of parchment paper over the scattered filling and gently run a rolling pin across the top to press it into the dough.

5. Roll the dough into a tight cylinder.

Starting from the long edge closest to you, roll the dough tightly like a jelly roll, pinching the bare edge to seal, then gently press down to flatten it slightly into an oval shape.

6. Glaze and cut the nazook.

Whisk the egg yolk with the milk, brush it generously over the log, and use a crinkle cutter or sharp knife to cut the log on a slight diagonal into pieces about two inches wide.

7. Bake until glossy and golden.

Transfer the pieces to the baking sheets an inch apart, prick the top of each once with a fork, and bake for 25 to 30 minutes. Cool on a wire rack and serve warm.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Sour cream stands in for matzoon.**

Traditional recipes rely on matzoon, an indigenous fermented milk. American full-fat sour cream perfectly mimics its fat ratio and lactic tang, ensuring a tender dough without a trip to a specialty market.

- **Cardamom is the secret.**

While some recipes use only vanilla or cinnamon, cardamom is the hallmark of the Iranian-Armenian diaspora flavor profile. It provides a distinctly aromatic, floral note that elevates the pastry.



Soorj yev Paghpaghag

soorj pagh-pagh-a-kov

It is the ultimate nostalgic collision of ancient Near Eastern brewing and mid-century Soviet indulgence. Before the ubiquity of espresso machines, Armenian grandmothers relied on the narrow-necked jazve to coax a thick, dark crema—affectionately known as the "love"—from pulverized beans. Cooled just enough to welcome a massive scoop of sweet cream ice cream without instantly liquefying it, this isn't some fussy Italian affogato. It is a rich, unpretentious, working-class masterpiece, finished with a blizzard of grated dark chocolate.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup cold filtered water

4 tsp Armenian coffee

2 tsp granulated sugar

1 small dark chocolate
grated

2 large sweet cream ice cream

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Combine the cold water, ground coffee, and sugar in a traditional jazve or the smallest heavy-bottomed saucepan you own.**

Stir the mixture gently just once to saturate the grounds, then step away. Once it goes on the stove, stirring is strictly forbidden.

- 2. Place the pot over medium-low heat and watch it closely.**

Patience is your only tool here. As it heats, a thick, dark ring of foam—the highly prized "love"—will build at the edges and rush toward the center.

- 3. Pull the pot off the heat the exact millisecond the foam surges upward like a miniature volcano.**

Do not let the coffee reach a rolling boil. Boiling shatters the delicate colloidal structure of the foam, leaving you with flat, bitter water.

- 4. Allow the brewed coffee to rest undisturbed for two to three minutes.**

This brief pause allows the muddy particulate to sink to the bottom of the pot and cools the liquid slightly, ensuring your ice cream won't instantly dissolve.

- 5. Carefully pour the warm coffee into two wide glass tumblers, leaving the thick sludge behind in the pot.**

- 6. Submerge a large scoop of ice cream into each glass and shower immediately with grated dark chocolate.**

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Source the right dairy.**

Authentic Soviet-era Plombir uses condensed milk, not eggs. Skip the French Vanilla and look for premium "Sweet Cream" or Philadelphia-style ice cream to replicate that clean, high-butterfat childhood memory.

- **Respect the grind.**

Standard American drip or espresso grinds will fail completely here. You need coffee labeled for Armenian, Greek, or Turkish preparation, which is milled to the consistency of talcum powder.

- **Fake the jazve if you have to.**

The thermodynamic trick to brewing this is surface area. If you lack a traditional copper pot, a narrow, heavy-bottomed butter warmer or milk frothing pitcher works flawlessly to concentrate the rising foam.