

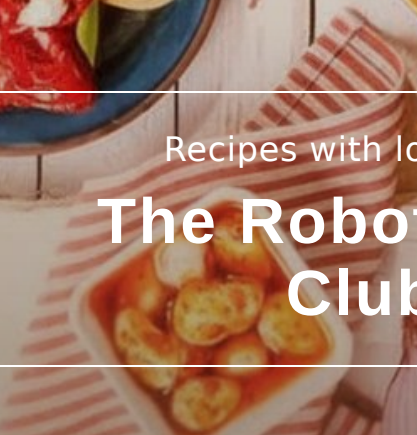
Cook

Lebanese

in America



Recipes with love from
The Robot Book Club



Cook Lebanese in America

Authentic Family Recipes for the Modern Home 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: Lebanese Home Cooking.

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

— Ted Benson

Prologue

The world spins. Time marches on. But some things, some sacred things, resist the relentless churn of the new and the shiny. Lebanese food, the real stuff, cooked in kitchens far from Beirut's bustling markets, is one of them. It's not just sustenance; it's a living memory, a steadfast anchor in a landscape that's constantly shifting.

For those who grew up in the quiet suburbs of Ohio, or anywhere the scent of unfamiliar spices wasn't a daily fixture, the precise flavor of simmering *yakhneh* or the rhythmic chop of parsley for *tabbouleh* isn't just dinner. It's a direct line, a portal straight back to a grandmother's kitchen, to a land they might only know through stories and the steam rising from a cherished pot. This book is for them. It's for you.

This isn't the slick, sanitized version you'll find in some trendy, tourist-trap spot. No, this is the good stuff, the marrow-deep flavor that generations of *Tetas*—our culinary Hakawatis, the keepers of taste and tradition—have whispered into existence. It's the kind of food that anchors you, that reminds you precisely who you are, even when you're a thousand miles from the Cedar Mountains, navigating fluorescent-lit grocery aisles.

We understand the grind. You don't have all day to track down obscure ingredients or labor for hours over a single dish. You've got work, kids, and a Tuesday night that demands something real, something that tastes like home. This guide translates those sacred family secrets—the ones passed down through instinct, memory, and gentle, often unspoken, instruction—into dishes you can actually make. We're talking practical techniques, ingredients you can find, and no fuss, no fakery. Just honest, soulful food, designed to fit your life.

From the slow, contemplative Saturday morning *Subhiyya*, the kind of breakfast that demands you linger, to the hearty *tanjara* bubbling on a weeknight stove, to the sprawling, generous abundance of a Sunday family feast, we'll trace the rhythms of a Lebanese home, transplanted but thriving. This isn't just a collection of recipes; it's a lifeline. A way to keep the stories, the laughter, and the undeniable flavors of Lebanon alive, right here, right now, in your American kitchen. Your *Teta* would approve. So, dig in.



Subhiyya: Slow Saturday Mornings

Embracing the sacred Lebanese morning gathering with comforting breakfasts, aromatic baking, and foundational flavors that wake up a household.

The world can wait. That is the fundamental promise of Subhiyya. In a Lebanese home on a Saturday morning, the frantic pace of the week stalls out entirely over a bubbling copper rakwe of cardamom-laced coffee. This isn't grab-and-go sustenance; it is a slow-motion, unapologetic ritual of garlic, lemon, and

blistering dough. It is a kitchen waking up by degrees, anchored by the earthy, cumin-heavy heat of foul mudammas and the sharp tang of green olive oil hitting a plate of fresh labneh.

These are the foundational rites of the weekend. No shortcuts. No rushing. Just the people you love, a stack of warm manakish, and the kind of heavy, comforting breakfasts that fortify a household against whatever the rest of the week might bring.





Fattet Hummus

فتة حمص

fat-tet hoom-moos

There is a beautiful economy to the way grandmothers cook. In Lebanon, day-old bread isn't trash; it's the foundation of a masterpiece. Fattet Hummus is peasant food elevated to royalty—crispy shards of pita bathed in hot, cumin-scented chickpea broth, blanketed with garlicky yogurt, and shocked into submission by blistering ghee and toasted pine nuts. Forget the heavy, deep-fried monstrosities you find in strip-mall restaurants. This is the real deal, pulled together in fifteen minutes on a weeknight but tasting like a slow Sunday morning in Beirut.

INGREDIENTS

2 large	thin Arabic-style pita bread <i>cut into 1-inch squares (split into single layers if using thick pita)</i>	2 med	garlic cloves <i>mashed into a paste with a pinch of salt</i>
1 tbsp	olive oil	3 tbsp	fresh lemon juice
30 oz	canned chickpeas <i>drained and rinsed</i>	1/2 tsp	kosher salt
2 cup	water	3 tbsp	ghee
1 large	garlic clove <i>smashed</i>	1/3 cup	pine nuts
1/2 tsp	ground cumin	1/2 tsp	sweet paprika
1/2 tsp	kosher salt	1/4 tsp	ground cumin
3 cup	whole-milk plain yogurt <i>brought to room temperature</i>	2 tbsp	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>finely chopped</i>
2 tbsp	tahini	2 tbsp	fresh pomegranate seeds

PREPARATION

- **Preheat the oven to 400°F.**

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Toast the bread.**

Toss the pita squares with the olive oil and a pinch of salt, then bake in the oven for 8 to 10 minutes until deeply golden and shattering crisp.

2. **Simmer the chickpeas to create the broth.**

In a medium saucepan, combine the rinsed chickpeas, water, smashed garlic, cumin, and salt, simmering for 15 minutes to soften the skins and build a starchy, aromatic broth.

3. **Whisk the yogurt sauce until silky.**

Combine the room-temperature yogurt, tahini, garlic paste, lemon juice, and salt, whisking vigorously until perfectly smooth and pourable.

1. Assemble the foundation.

Lay the toasted pita in a wide serving bowl and ladle about a half cup of the hot chickpea broth over the top to soften the edges while leaving the centers crisp, then top with the hot chickpeas, reserving a spoonful for the garnish.

2. Blanket the dish with the yogurt sauce.

Pour the room-temperature yogurt over the chickpeas, spreading it all the way to the edges to create a pristine white canvas.

3. Execute the sizzling tashha.

Melt the ghee in a small skillet over medium heat, add the pine nuts, and stir constantly for 2 to 3 minutes until golden brown, then immediately pour the blistering fat directly over the cool yogurt.

4. Garnish and serve immediately.

Scatter the reserved chickpeas, a dusting of paprika and cumin, fresh parsley, and pomegranate seeds over the top and eat it before the bread turns to mush.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Do not fry the bread.**

Deep frying the pita is a modern restaurant shortcut that makes the dish unnecessarily heavy and masks the delicate balance of the yogurt and chickpea broth. Toasting it yields the authentic structural crunch.

● **Never heat the yogurt directly.**

Applying direct heat to the yogurt will cause it to curdle and split. Always let it come to room temperature naturally, or loosen it with just a small splash of the warm chickpea broth.



Batata wa Bayd / Mfarakeh

مفركة بطاطا وبيض

ba-tah-tah wa bayd

It's the ultimate Levantine cucina povera—a dish born of necessity, utilizing the humble potato, good eggs, and the magic of a hot skillet. Western breakfast hashes lean on heavy meats, but the Lebanese mfarakeh is an elegant, minimalist masterclass in heat management. The secret isn't a complex pantry. It's the patience to let onions deeply caramelize, the trick of steam-frying potatoes so they crisp outside while remaining fluffy within, and the absolute restraint of pulling the pan off the heat so the eggs stay soft and luscious. This is the unadulterated taste of a village morning.

INGREDIENTS

3 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil	1/2 tsp	black pepper
1 med	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/2 tsp	ground cumin
3 med	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled, halved lengthwise, and sliced into 1/4-inch half-moons</i>	1/4 tsp	Lebanese Seven Spice
2 tbsp	water	4 large	eggs <i>beaten</i>
1 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>	1 tbsp	unsalted butter
		1/2 cup	fresh flat-leaf parsley <i>roughly chopped</i>

PREPARATION

- **Select the right skillet.**

A non-stick pan or a very well-seasoned cast iron skillet is highly recommended to prevent the starches and eggs from bonding to the metal.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Caramelize the base.**

Heat the olive oil in your skillet over medium-low heat, add the onion, and cook slowly until deeply golden and sweet, about 10 to 15 minutes.

- 2. Sauté the potatoes.**

Increase the heat to medium, add the sliced potatoes, and toss them thoroughly in the onion-infused oil until the edges just begin to turn a light golden brown.

- 3. Steam-fry to the center.**

Pour the water into the skillet and immediately cover with a tight-fitting lid to let the potatoes steam on low heat for 8 to 10 minutes until completely tender.

- 4. Evaporate and crisp.**

Remove the lid, allow any remaining water to evaporate, and let the potatoes sizzle and crisp back up in the residual oil for 2 minutes.

1. Aromatize the skillet.

Sprinkle three-quarters of the salt, along with the black pepper, cumin, and Seven Spice over the potatoes, tossing to distribute the spices evenly.

2. Execute the mfarakeh fold.

Drop the butter into the hot potatoes to melt, turn the heat down to the absolute lowest setting, and pour the beaten eggs evenly over the top.

3. Crumble the eggs.

Let the eggs sit untouched for 10 seconds to form a bottom curd, then use a spatula to gently fold and crumble the mixture from the outside in.

4. Pull from the heat early.

The moment the eggs are softly set but still look glossy and slightly wet, remove the skillet from the burner entirely so the residual heat finishes the job.

5. Garnish and serve.

Shower the skillet generously with fresh parsley and serve immediately, using torn pieces of warm pita bread to scoop up the eggs.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The right potato cut saves time.**

Slicing the potatoes into half-moons rather than traditional cubes maximizes surface area for caramelization and cooks through much faster on a weeknight.

● **Spice substitutions.**

If you cannot find Lebanese Seven Spice (Sabaa Baharat), a simple pinch of pure ground allspice will perfectly approximate that warm homeland aroma.

● **The danger of the dry scramble.**

Overcooked, rubbery eggs are the enemy of a good mfarakeh. Pulling the pan off the heat while the eggs still look slightly underdone is the single greatest secret to Levantine egg cookery.



Bayd w Banadoura

بيض وبندورة

bayd w ba-na-dou-ra

If you ask a Lebanese kid about Bayd w Banadoura, their eyes glaze over with a very specific kind of nostalgia. Let's get one thing straight: this is not Shakshuka. It's an exercise in village minimalism. No bell peppers, no cumin, no filler. Just the patience to scorch tomatoes in hot fat until they surrender their water and turn into a rich, sweet jam, marbled beautifully with soft-scrambled eggs. You don't plate it, and you certainly don't use a fork—you scoop it straight from the hot skillet with warm pita.

INGREDIENTS

4 med	fresh plum or beefsteak tomatoes <i>halved horizontally</i>	1/4 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly cracked</i>
1 tbsp	unsalted butter	1/8 tsp	Lebanese 7-Spice or ground cinnamon
1 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil	4 large	eggs <i>brought to room temperature and lightly beaten</i>
1 large clove	garlic <i>smashed and finely minced</i>	1 small handful	fresh parsley <i>roughly chopped</i>
1/2 tsp	Kosher salt	3 med	thin Lebanese pita bread <i>warmed</i>

PREPARATION

- **Grate the tomatoes to leave the skins behind.**

Place a box grater inside a large bowl. Rub the cut side of each fresh tomato half against the large holes. The flesh will instantly pulp into the bowl, leaving the tough skin flat in your palm to be discarded.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Scorch the aromatics.**

Place a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the olive oil and butter. Once the butter is melted and foaming, add the minced garlic and sauté for 30 seconds until fragrant—do not let it brown.

- 2. Fry the tomatoes into a jam.**

Carefully pour the grated tomatoes into the hot fat. Add the salt, black pepper, and 7-spice. Keep the heat at medium-high and fry the tomatoes for 5 to 8 minutes, squishing them with a wooden spoon until the watery liquid bubbles away and reduces into a dark, thick paste.

1. Fold in the eggs.

Lower the heat to medium-low. Pour the beaten eggs directly over the bubbling tomato jam and let it sit untouched for 15 seconds. Using a wooden spoon, gently fold and swirl the eggs through the tomatoes to create distinct, soft curds marbled with the dark red jam.

2. Pull from the heat while still wet.

Remove the skillet from the heat after about 2 to 3 minutes, while the eggs are still slightly wet and glistening. The residual heat of the pan will carry-over cook them to perfection.

3. Serve immediately from the skillet.

Place the pan directly in the center of the table on a trivet, garnish with chopped parsley, and dig in using torn pieces of warm pita bread.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The tomato hack.**

If fresh, deeply ripe tomatoes are out of season, substitute 1 1/2 cup of high-quality canned whole peeled tomatoes. Crush them thoroughly by hand. Do not use pre-diced canned tomatoes, as they are treated with calcium chloride to hold their shape and will never melt into the required jammy consistency.

● **Mind the egg temperature.**

Using eggs straight from the fridge will drastically drop the temperature of the tomato sauce, leading to uneven cooking and a watery separation in the pan.



Ejeh bi Koussa

عجة الكوسا

ej-jeh bee koo-sah

In the villages of Lebanon, nothing goes to waste. When a grandmother spends a Friday hollowing out dozens of pale squashes for stuffed kousa, she saves every ounce of the core. The next morning, that pulp is transformed into Ejeh—a deeply spiced, herbaceous fritter that puffs up beautifully in hot oil. It is the unpretentious, canonical taste of a slow weekend morning. You don't have to wait until you make stuffed squash to get there. By grating whole zucchini and applying one non-negotiable rule—wringing out the water until your hands ache—you can reproduce this exact Lebanese staple in your own kitchen.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	Mexican grey squash or green zucchini <i>ends trimmed</i>	4 large	eggs
1 tsp	kosher salt	1/3 cup	all-purpose flour
3 med	scallions <i>finely chopped, both white and light green parts</i>	1/2 tsp	baking powder
1 cup	flat-leaf parsley <i>finely chopped</i>	1/2 tsp	ground cumin
1/4 cup	fresh mint leaves <i>finely chopped</i>	1/2 tsp	Lebanese Seven Spice
2 large cloves	garlic <i>smashed and finely minced</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper
		1/2 cup	olive oil
		1 cup	labneh <i>for serving</i>
		4 large	pita bread <i>warmed</i>

PREPARATION

- **Grate and salt the squash.**

Using the large holes of a box grater, grate the squash entirely. Place it into a fine-mesh strainer set over a bowl, toss with the kosher salt, and let it sit for 15 minutes to draw out the water.

- **Execute the crucial squeeze.**

Grab handfuls of the salted squash and squeeze it as hard as you physically can over the sink. Alternatively, wrap it in a clean kitchen towel and wring it tight. You want to extract every possible drop of moisture, leaving a concentrated, dry mass of about a cup and a half of squash.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the flavor base.**

In a large mixing bowl, toss the dry squash with the scallions, parsley, mint, and minced garlic, using a fork to distribute the herbs evenly.

1. Bind the batter.

In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs until light and slightly frothy, then pour them over the vegetables. Add the flour, baking powder, cumin, Seven Spice, and black pepper. Mix until you have a thick, cohesive batter, and let it rest for 5 minutes so the baking powder can activate.

2. Heat the oil.

Place a large cast-iron skillet or heavy-bottomed frying pan over medium-high heat. Add enough olive oil to coat the bottom by a quarter inch and wait until it is hot and shimmering.

3. Shallow fry to a crisp.

Drop dollops of the batter into the hot oil, pressing down gently with the back of a spoon to flatten them into 3-inch discs. Fry in batches for 2 to 3 minutes until the edges turn a lacy golden-brown, then carefully flip and fry for another 2 minutes.

4. Drain and serve.

Transfer the cooked fritters to a plate lined with paper towels and hit them with a tiny pinch of salt. Serve warm or at room temperature with cold labneh and torn pita bread.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Adjusting the batter.**

The batter should resemble lumpy pancake mix. If it looks too thin, add another tablespoon of flour; if it is dense and doughy, whisk in an extra egg.

● **The spice substitution.**

If you don't have a pre-blended Lebanese Seven Spice at the ready, do not skip the warming spices. Simply substitute a quarter teaspoon of ground allspice and a quarter teaspoon of ground cinnamon.



Knafeh bi Jibneh

كنافة بالجبنه

kuh-nah-fuh bee jib-neh

There is a specific, intoxicating smell to a Lebanese Saturday morning —orange blossom water hitting hot, buttery semolina. It's a sensory memory etched permanently into the soul of anyone lucky enough to grow up around it. But tracking down unsalted Akkawi cheese and soaking it for twenty-four hours just isn't happening in an Ohio suburb. This is the real deal, adapted for the real world. Forget the shredded phyllo dough—that's for Baklawa. We build a true Farkeh crust using farina, and we hack the iconic, elastic cheese pull using

standard mozzarellas bound by a brilliant, quick stovetop pudding. It delivers the flawless texture of the homeland, leaving your slow morning exactly as it should be: slow.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cup	granulated sugar	8 oz	low-moisture part-skim mozzarella <i>freshly grated</i>
3/4 cup	water		
1 tsp	fresh lemon juice	8 oz	fresh mozzarella <i>torn into small pieces and patted completely dry</i>
1 tsp	Orange Blossom Water		
1 tsp	Rose Water	3/4 cup	whole milk
1 1/2 cup	fine semolina or farina	3 tbsp	fine semolina or farina
1/2 cup	ghee or unsalted butter <i>melted</i>	1 tbsp	granulated sugar
1/4 cup	whole milk	1 tbsp	ghee or unsalted butter <i>for greasing the pan</i>
2 tbsp	granulated sugar	1/4 cup	unsalted pistachios <i>finely crushed</i>
1 tbsp	Orange Blossom Water		

PREPARATION

- **Grate your own low-moisture mozzarella.**

Pre-shredded cheese is coated in anti-caking starches that ruin the melt; take the extra two minutes to grate it from the block.

- **Dry the fresh mozzarella aggressively.**

Moisture is the enemy of a tight cheese layer. Tear it up and use paper towels to press out as much water as possible before mixing.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Simmer the sugar, water, and lemon juice in a small saucepan over medium-high heat until slightly thickened, about 5 to 7 minutes.**

Remove from the heat, stir in the orange blossom and rose waters, and let it cool completely in the refrigerator—hot pastry requires cold syrup to stay crisp.

- 2. Rub the melted ghee into the semolina and sugar until it resembles wet sand, then knead in the milk and orange blossom water to form a thick paste.**

Spread this paste evenly, about a half-inch thick, onto a parchment-lined baking sheet.

- 3. Bake the semolina dough at 350°F for 10 to 12 minutes to dry it out without browning it.**

This grandmother's trick prevents a soggy crust. Once cooled, pulse the dried block in a food processor to create the fine, uniform crumb known as Farkeh.

- 4. Whisk the milk, semolina, and sugar in a small saucepan over medium heat until it suddenly thickens into a hot pudding.**

This stovetop trick is the secret to a cohesive cheese pull, preventing the mozzarella from separating and becoming greasy.

- 5. Pour the hot pudding over the grated and torn mozzarellas in a large bowl, folding them together.**

The residual heat will begin to soften the cheese into a thick, stretchy mass.

- 6. Firmly press the processed semolina crumbs into a greased 9-inch round pan, then spread the cheese mixture evenly on top.**

Compress the crumbs hard, pushing them about a quarter-inch up the sides to form a lip. Leave a small border around the cheese so it has room to spread as it melts.

- 7. Bake at 400°F for 25 to 30 minutes, until the edges of the crust are deep golden brown and the cheese is bubbling.**

Let it rest for exactly 5 minutes out of the oven so the cheese settles and the crust releases from the pan.

- 1. Invert the pan confidently onto a serving platter, immediately douse the hot crust with the chilled syrup, and garnish with pistachios.**

You should hear a satisfying sizzle. Serve immediately while the cheese is gloriously molten and stretchy.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The temperature rule of Levantine syrup.**

Hot pastry plus cold syrup equals crispy. Hot pastry plus hot syrup equals mush. Make your syrup first so it has plenty of time to chill.

- **Cast-iron alternative.**

If you want to mimic the traditional massive copper trays of a Lebanese sweet shop, bake this in a well-seasoned cast-iron skillet instead of a cake pan.



Tabkha Yawmiye: The Weeknight Tanjara

The beating heart of the Lebanese-American kitchen. Practical, scalable, one-pot stews (Yakhneh) designed for the modern weeknight.

Forget the sprawling Sunday mezze. The real soul of the Lebanese kitchen lives in the tanjara—that heavy, battle-scarred pot holding down the back burner on a Tuesday night. This is tabkha yawmiye, the daily cooking. It's unapologetic,

working-class food built for survival and scale. It's the sharp sizzle of garlic and cilantro hitting the pan for mloukhieh, or the utilitarian magic of cheap cuts of meat and white beans surrendering to a spiced tomato broth.

These yakhnehs aren't meant to dazzle tourists. They are engineered to feed a family after a ten-hour workday, forgiving a distracted cook and tasting infinitely better on day three. Poured over an unbreakable foundation of toasted vermicelli rice, this is how a diaspora sustains itself when the world demands everything else.





Riz bi Sha'riyeh

رز بالشعيرية

riz bee shah-ree-yeh

This isn't a mere side dish; it's the anchor of the Lebanese table, designed to soak up the rich, garlicky broths of the daily stew. To achieve that perfect mufalfal texture—where every grain stands distinct and proud—you don't need a culinary degree or specialized gear. You just need to obey a few unwritten laws of the grandmother: wash the starch off the rice, watch the toasting pasta like a hawk, hit the pot with boiling water, and never, ever stir it once it simmers. Unpretentious, absolutely perfect, and exactly the way it tastes back home.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 cup	Basmati rice <i>rinsed until the water runs completely clear</i>	1 tbsp	ghee
1/2 cup	vermicelli pasta <i>crushed into 1-inch pieces</i>	1 tbsp	olive oil
		3 cup	boiling water
		1 1/2 tsp	Kosher salt

PREPARATION

- **Wash the surface starch off the rice.**

Place the rice in a fine-mesh sieve and rinse under cold water, gently swishing the grains until the initially milky water runs entirely clear. This is your primary defense against gummy, glued-together rice.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Toast the vermicelli.**

Place a wide, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat and melt the ghee with the olive oil. Add the broken vermicelli and stir constantly until it takes on a deep, rich golden-brown color. Do not walk away; the pasta will turn from perfect to burnt in a matter of seconds.

- 2. Coat the rice.**

The moment the vermicelli is deeply golden, dump in the washed rice to instantly drop the temperature and stop the browning. Sauté for a minute or two, folding the mixture gently so every single grain is coated in the hot fat.

- 3. Shock with boiling water.**

Carefully pour the boiling water into the pot—stand back, as it will sputter aggressively. Add the salt and give it exactly one stir. Using boiling water forces the pot immediately back to a vigorous simmer, which locks the starch structure and prevents mushiness.

1. Simmer completely undisturbed.

Let the water boil forcefully for a minute until the liquid level drops to meet the rice. Turn the heat to the absolute lowest setting, cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid, and cook for 15 minutes. Do not lift the lid to peek, and absolutely do not stir.

2. Rest and fluff.

Turn off the heat, but leave the lid exactly where it is. Let the pot sit undisturbed for another 5 to 10 minutes so the residual steam can finish cooking the rice gently. Remove the lid, gently fluff the grains with a fork, and serve immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Use orzo if the vermicelli burns too fast.**

If you find that hair-thin vermicelli toasts too quickly for your stovetop or weeknight attention span, substitute dried orzo pasta. It browns at a much steadier, slower pace.



Yakhnet Fasoulia

بخنة فاصوليا

yakh-net fa-sou-li-ya

For generations of Lebanese grandmothers, this stew was a multi-day devotion of soaking beans and simmering bones until the broth was thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. But for the diaspora kid cooking on a Tuesday night in Ohio, survival means adaptation without compromise. By using rich canned butter beans and a high-quality bone broth, this recipe cheats time without cheating the soul of the dish. The non-negotiable magic that makes it taste exactly like home is the takliye—a sizzling, fragrant blast of garlic and fresh cilantro bloomed in fat and stirred in at the last possible second.

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp	olive oil	3 tbsp	tomato paste
1 tbsp	ghee	1 cup	canned crushed tomatoes
1 lb	boneless beef chuck roast <i>cut into 1-inch bite-sized cubes</i>	3 cup	beef bone broth
1 med	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	30 oz	canned butter beans <i>thoroughly rinsed and drained</i>
1 tsp	salt <i>plus more to taste</i>	1 tbsp	ghee
1/2 tsp	black pepper	5 large	garlic cloves <i>crushed into a paste or finely minced</i>
1 tsp	Lebanese Seven Spice	1 cup	fresh cilantro <i>tightly packed, leaves and tender stems finely chopped</i>

PREPARATION

- **Dry the beef thoroughly before searing.**

Wet meat will steam instead of brown in the pot, costing you the crucial Maillard reaction that builds the stew's depth in the absence of hours of boiling.

- **Rinse the canned beans completely.**

The starchy canning liquid will muddy the clean flavor of your stew, so rinse them under cold water until the water runs totally clear.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sear the meat to build the foundational flavor.**

Heat the olive oil and one tablespoon of ghee in a heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat, add the dried beef cubes in a single layer, and let them sear undisturbed for 3 to 4 minutes until a dark crust forms before flipping.

- 2. Sweat the aromatics and bloom the spices.**

Lower the heat to medium, add the diced onion, and sauté for about 5 minutes until soft, scraping up the browned beef bits, then stir in the salt, black pepper, and Seven Spice to toast for 30 seconds.

1. Caramelize the tomato paste to remove its metallic edge.

Clear a space in the center of the pot, drop in the tomato paste, and let it fry directly on the heat for 1 to 2 minutes until it darkens to a rusty brick orange before stirring it into the meat.

2. Simmer and tenderize the beef.

Pour in the crushed tomatoes and beef bone broth, bring to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 25 to 30 minutes until the beef yields completely to a fork.

3. Fold in the butter beans.

Gently stir the rinsed beans into the stew and let them simmer for just 10 minutes so they absorb the savory sauce without turning to mush.

4. Prepare the takliye, the undeniable soul of the dish.

While the beans simmer, melt the remaining tablespoon of ghee in a small frying pan over medium heat, sauté the crushed garlic for 30 seconds without browning, then instantly add the chopped cilantro and sauté for another 30 to 60 seconds until fragrant and wilted.

5. Marry the sizzling garlic and cilantro into the stew.

Scrape the entire contents of the frying pan into the simmering pot, stir gently, let it bubble for 2 more minutes to lock in the flavors, then turn off the heat and adjust the salt.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Serve with traditional vermicelli rice.**

A Lebanese stew is incomplete without Rizz bi Sh'ariyeh, where broken vermicelli noodles are toasted in ghee before adding washed long-grain rice and water to steam until completely fluffy.

● **A squeeze of lemon cuts the richness.**

Hit the bowl with fresh lemon juice right before eating to brighten the heavy, comforting weight of the meat and starch.

- **Watch the garlic like a hawk.**

If the garlic browns in the takliye, it turns bitter; having the cilantro ready to drop into the pan will instantly drop the fat's temperature and halt the garlic's cooking.

- **Mash beans to thicken the broth.**

If the stew feels too thin, mash a half-cup of the beans against the side of the pot and stir them in to release their natural starches.



Bazella w Riz

بازيلا ورز

ba-zel-la w riz

This is the smell of a Tuesday evening in a Lebanese household, the ultimate expression of the daily meal. The magic of this dish lies not in expensive ingredients, but in two ancient techniques: cutting an affordable steak into micro-cubes so it sears in minutes, and the takliya—a brief, violent frying of garlic and cilantro that forms the aromatic soul of the broth. It is a humble, deeply comforting pea and beef stew poured over toasted vermicelli rice, and it is exactly what home tastes like.

INGREDIENTS

1 tsp	ground allspice	3 tbsp	tomato paste
1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon	15 oz	crushed tomatoes
1/4 tsp	ground black pepper	3 cup	beef broth
2 tbsp	olive oil <i>divided</i>	16 oz	frozen green peas <i>kept frozen</i>
1 lb	tender beef steak <i>cut into tiny 1/2-inch cubes</i>	3 large	carrots <i>peeled and diced to match the size of the peas</i>
2 1/2 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>	2 cup	long-grain white rice <i>rinsed until water runs clear</i>
1 med	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	2 tbsp	unsalted butter
6 med	garlic cloves <i>crushed to a paste</i>	1/2 cup	crushed vermicelli noodles
1 bunch	fresh cilantro <i>stems removed and finely chopped</i>	3 cup	boiling water

PREPARATION

- **Master the Ras Asfour technique.**

The secret to a fast weeknight stew is the traditional 'bird's head' cut. Spend the time upfront to dice your steak into tiny half-inch cubes. This ensures the meat sears instantly and avoids the need for a long, heavy braise.

- **Blend your own 7-Spice.**

If you have a pre-mixed Middle Eastern Sabaa Baharat blend, simply use 1 1/2 teaspoons in place of the individual allspice, cinnamon, and black pepper listed here.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Sear the meat.**

Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the diced beef, season with 1/2 teaspoon of salt and the allspice, cinnamon, and black pepper. Sear until deeply browned, about 5 to 7 minutes, then remove the beef and its juices to a plate.

2. **Build the takliya.**

Lower the heat to medium and add the remaining tablespoon of oil to the pot. Sauté the diced onion for 3 minutes until translucent. Push the onions to the edge, drop the crushed garlic and chopped cilantro directly onto the hot pan, and let them fry for 45 to 60 seconds until highly fragrant and wilted into a dark green paste.

3. **Toast the tomato paste.**

Stir the tomato paste into the garlic and cilantro mixture, frying for 2 minutes until it deepens to a dark brick color to neutralize the raw canned flavor.

4. **Simmer the stew.**

Pour in the crushed tomatoes and beef broth. Return the seared beef to the pot along with the diced carrots. Bring to a rolling boil, then cover and simmer on low for 15 to 20 minutes to tenderize the carrots and beef.

5. **Finish with the peas.**

Uncover the pot, stir in the frozen peas, and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes. Taste the broth and season with 1 teaspoon of salt, adjusting as needed.

6. **Toast the vermicelli.**

While the stew simmers, melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the vermicelli noodles and stir constantly until they turn a deep, nutty golden brown.

1. **Steam the rice.**

Add the rinsed rice to the vermicelli, stirring for a minute to coat the grains in butter. Pour in the boiling water and the remaining 1 teaspoon of salt, cover tightly, reduce heat to the lowest setting, and cook for 15 minutes. Let it steam off the heat for 5 minutes before fluffing with a fork.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Serve with intention.**

Ladle the rich stew generously over a bed of the fluffy vermicelli rice. A squeeze of fresh lemon juice over the top provides the perfect hit of acidity.

- **Leave the peas in the freezer until the last moment.**

Do not thaw your peas. Adding them straight from the freezer at the very end ensures they retain their bright green color and don't turn into mush.



Mloukhieh

الملوخية

mloo-khee-yeh

If there is a singular scent that yanks a Lebanese expat right back to their mother's kitchen, it's the intoxicating hit of garlic and fresh cilantro sputtering in hot butter. Mloukhieh is an ancient, regal stew of whole jute leaves and rich chicken broth. For the modern American weeknight, utilizing high-quality frozen whole leaves bypasses hours of tedious sorting without sacrificing a shred of authenticity. The magic lies in a crucial grandmother's secret—shocking the greens with lemon to perfectly manage their texture—and the final architectural assembly: vermicelli rice, tender poached chicken, crispy pita, and a brutally sharp hit of vinegar-soaked onions.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb	bone-in skinless chicken breasts	2 tbsp	unsalted butter
1 med	yellow onion <i>quartered</i>	10 large cloves	garlic <i>crushed into a paste</i>
1 large	cinnamon stick	1 large bunch	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>
2 med	dried bay leaves	1 tbsp	ground coriander
4 med	green cardamom pods	1 large	lemon <i>juiced</i>
1 tsp	Lebanese 7-Spice	1 small	white onion <i>finely diced</i>
1 tbsp	kosher salt	3/4 cup	apple cider vinegar
6 cup	water	2 med	thin Lebanese pita bread <i>cut into squares</i>
14 oz	frozen whole leaf Mloukchieh <i>kept frozen</i>	4 cup	vermicelli rice <i>cooked and kept warm</i>
2 tbsp	olive oil		

PREPARATION

- **Prep the rice and onions early.**

Make sure you have a batch of fresh vermicelli rice ready to go, and let the onions sit in the vinegar for at least 20 minutes before serving so they pickle properly.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil the chicken and meticulously skim the surface.**

Place the chicken pieces and water in a large pot over medium-high heat, using a slotted spoon to aggressively remove the white foam that rises; a clear broth is the foundation of a good stew.

- 2. Infuse the broth.**

Once the liquid is clear, drop in the quartered onion, cinnamon stick, bay leaves, cardamom, 7-Spice, and salt, then cover and simmer gently for 30 minutes.

1. Strain the broth and shred the meat.

Remove the chicken to a cutting board, strain the golden broth through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl, and pull the meat into bite-sized shreds once it's cool enough to handle.

2. Pickle the onion and toast the pita.

While the chicken cooks, submerge the finely diced white onion in the apple cider vinegar to steep, and toast the pita squares in a 375°F oven for five minutes until shatteringly crisp.

3. Build the taqliya.

Melt the olive oil and butter in a heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, fry the garlic paste for exactly 30 seconds, then dump in the fresh cilantro and dried coriander, stirring until deeply fragrant.

4. Shock the greens with lemon.

Drop the frozen block of whole-leaf Mloukhieh straight into the sizzling taqliya and immediately squeeze the lemon juice over the top. This is the grandmothers' trick: the acid chemically halts the plant's natural mucilage, ensuring a clean, rich stew rather than a slimy one.

5. Simmer the stew.

Pour four to five cups of the hot, strained chicken broth over the thawing greens, bringing the pot to a gentle simmer for 15 to 20 minutes before folding the shredded chicken back in.

6. Assemble the bowls in the canonical Lebanese fashion.

Build the dish by layering warm vermicelli rice, a heavy ladle of the stew, a handful of crispy pita squares, and a generous, sharp spoonful of the vinegar-soaked onions right on top.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Do not thaw the Mloukhieh.**

It is imperative that the frozen whole leaves hit the hot oil directly from the freezer. Thawing them beforehand encourages the exact slimy texture we are using the lemon juice to avoid.

- **Seek out whole leaves.**

Ensure your bag of frozen Mloukhieh explicitly says "whole leaves." The minced Egyptian style will turn this hearty stew into a thick soup.



Daoud Basha

داود باشا

da-wood ba-sha

If you ask a first-generation kid what home smells like on a Tuesday at dusk, they will describe this pot. Named after a nineteenth-century Ottoman ruler who supposedly demanded it daily, Daoud Basha is the undisputed king of the weeknight tanjara. Forget the giant, bread-heavy diner meatballs of your youth. These are dense, heavily spiced kafta simmering in a violently savory pool of rendered beef fat, caramelized crescent onions, and pomegranate molasses. It is sweet, aggressively tangy, deeply comforting, and exactly what your grandmother would feed you to make the world right again.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	80/20 ground beef	2 med	russet potatoes <i>peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>
1 small	yellow onion <i>grated and squeezed of excess water</i>	2 large	yellow onions <i>cut into thin crescents</i>
1/2 cup	fresh parsley <i>finely minced</i>	3 med	garlic clove <i>thinly sliced</i>
2 med	garlic clove <i>minced to a paste</i>	2 tbsp	tomato paste
1/4 cup	plain breadcrumbs	14 1/2 oz	crushed tomatoes
2 tbsp	whole milk	1 1/2 cup	beef broth
1 tsp	Lebanese Seven-Spice	1/2 tsp	Lebanese Seven-Spice
1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon	1/4 tsp	ground cinnamon
1 tsp	kosher salt	2 tbsp	pomegranate molasses
1/2 tsp	black pepper	1/4 cup	pine nuts
2 tbsp	neutral oil	1 tbsp	unsalted butter

PREPARATION

- **Prepare the Lebanese vermicelli rice.**

Daoud Basha is never eaten alone; you will want rice ready by the time the stew is done. Toast half a cup of broken vermicelli pasta in a tablespoon of ghee until nutty and dark brown, then stir in a cup and a half of washed basmati rice, add water, and steam until fluffy to create the ultimate sponge for this tangy sauce.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Shallow fry the cubed potatoes in hot oil until they develop a golden brown crust.**

They do not need to be cooked through, just crispy enough on the outside to maintain their structural integrity when they hit the stew. Remove them to a paper towel.

- 1. Combine the ground beef, grated onion, minced garlic, parsley, breadcrumbs, milk, and spices, rolling the mixture into small meatballs.**

Let the breadcrumbs and milk sit for two minutes first. This is the grandmotherly secret to an incredibly tender meatball. Mix gently with your hands and do not overwork the meat.

- 2. Sear the meatballs in the tanjara until a dark crust forms on all sides, then remove them to a plate.**

Work in batches to avoid steaming the meat, and whatever you do, leave every drop of the rendered fat and browned bits in the bottom of the pot.

- 3. Sauté the crescent onions in the residual meat fat until deeply softened and starting to caramelize at the edges.**

This is the architectural soul of the dish. Stir in the sliced garlic for the final minute of cooking.

- 4. Push the onions aside and fry the tomato paste in the center of the pot until it darkens to a rusty brick color.**

This vital step cooks out the raw, metallic flavor of the paste. Stir in the crushed tomatoes, broth, and the remaining cinnamon and seven-spice, scraping the bottom of the pot to release the fond.

- 5. Nestle the browned meatballs and fried potatoes back into the bubbling sauce, cover, and simmer on low for fifteen minutes.**

The potatoes will become completely tender, the meat will cook through, and the liquids will reduce into a rich, cohesive stew.

- 6. Turn off the heat entirely and stir in the pomegranate molasses.**

Never aggressively boil pomegranate molasses. Adding it completely off the heat preserves its delicate fruity acidity and prevents the sugars from turning bitterly abrasive.

- 7. Toast the pine nuts in melted butter until fragrant and pour them directly over the finished dish.**

Watch them like a hawk in the skillet as they will burn in seconds. Garnish with a handful of fresh parsley and serve immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Embrace the bouillon cube.**

While high-end Western kitchens demand homemade stock, modern Lebanese diaspora kitchens rely heavily on Maggi or Knorr bouillon cubes. Dissolving one in hot water introduces a specific, nostalgic umami profile that is entirely true to weeknight home cooking.

- **Mix your own Seven-Spice.**

If you cannot find authentic Sabaa Baharat, a mixture of mostly allspice with a pinch of nutmeg and cloves serves as a highly accurate substitute for the American home cook.



Yakhnet Sabaneekh

يخنة سبانخ

yakh-net sa-ba-nekh

If there is a dish that defines the frantic rhythm of a working family's weeknight, it's Yakhnet Sabaneekh. Tuesday night belongs to the tanjara—a heavy pot filled with this lemony, garlicky spinach stew. For first-generation kids growing up in the diaspora, the smell of Lebanese 7-Spice hitting rendered beef fat, followed by the pungent sizzle of cilantro and garlic, is the universal signal that dinner is almost ready. Forget the grueling weekend cooking projects; Lebanese grandmothers fully endorse the modern miracle of high-quality frozen spinach, which brings its own rich juices to the broth. The real magic happens at

the very end with the takleya—a sizzling pan of garlic and cilantro folded into the hot stew alongside a heavy-handed squeeze of fresh lemon, creating a bright, deeply savory flavor bomb.

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup	pine nuts	1/2 tsp	black pepper
4 tbsps	olive oil <i>divided</i>	6 clove	garlic <i>minced and divided</i>
1 med	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1 bunch	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped and divided</i>
1 lb	lean ground beef	24 oz	frozen spinach <i>chopped; do not thaw or drain</i>
2 tsp	Lebanese 7-Spice	1 1/2 cup	beef broth
1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt	1/4 cup	lemon juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Toast the pine nuts in a splash of olive oil until golden brown.

Heat a heavy-bottomed pot over medium-low heat. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and the pine nuts, stirring constantly for 3 to 4 minutes. They burn in seconds, so watch them closely, then remove them to a paper towel.

2. Build the savory base by browning the beef and onions.

In the same pot, turn the heat to medium-high and add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Sweat the diced onion until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the ground beef, breaking it apart with a wooden spoon into very fine pieces, and cook until deeply browned with no pink remaining.

1. Bloom the spices and half the aromatics in the hot beef fat.

Sprinkle the Lebanese 7-Spice, salt, and black pepper over the beef. Stir and let the spices toast for sixty seconds. Toss in exactly half of your minced garlic and half of the chopped cilantro, sautéing for another minute or two until the kitchen smells incredible.

2. Simmer the stew with the frozen spinach and broth.

Drop the frozen blocks of spinach straight into the pot and pour in the broth. Bring it to a gentle boil, cover, and drop the heat to medium-low. Let it simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally to break up the thawing spinach blocks.

3. Sizzle the remaining garlic and cilantro in a separate pan to create the takleya.

With five minutes left on the stew, heat the remaining tablespoon of olive oil in a small skillet over medium heat. Sauté the remaining garlic and cilantro for just one minute until fragrant and wilted, but not browned.

4. Fold the takleya and fresh lemon juice into the stew off the heat.

Turn off the heat under the spinach pot. Pour in the sizzling garlic-cilantro mixture and the fresh lemon juice, stirring to combine. Taste and adjust the seasoning—it should be deeply savory and punchy with bright lemon acid. Serve over Lebanese vermicelli rice, topped with the toasted pine nuts.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Lebanese 7-Spice Substitute.**

If you don't have access to a Middle Eastern market to buy Sabaa Baharat, open your baking cabinet. Mix together 1 tsp allspice, 1/2 tsp cinnamon, 1/2 tsp black pepper, and a pinch of ground nutmeg. It will get you 90% of the way to Beirut.

● **The Vegan Switch.**

Want to make this meatless? Swap the ground beef for two 15-oz cans of drained and rinsed chickpeas. Sauté them exactly as you would the beef to coat them in the spices before adding the spinach.

- **The Soap Gene.**

If cilantro tastes like soap to you, a bunch of flat-leaf parsley is the widely accepted substitution. It won't have the exact same aromatic punch, but it still works beautifully in the takleya.



Yakhnet Batata

بخنة بطاطا

yakh-net ba-ta-ta

If there is a smell that defines walking into a Lebanese home at 5:00 PM on a Tuesday, it is the *qadha*—garlic and fresh cilantro sizzling in hot oil. Yakhnet Batata is the ultimate everyday pot of food, a tangy, unpretentious tomato stew meant to be ladled generously over a mountain of vermicelli rice. The grandma trick here is all in how you treat the potatoes. Boil them raw in the stew and they turn to mush. Pre-fry them—or in our weeknight case, roast them—and they form a lipid barrier, becoming perfect little sponges that soak up the rich broth while holding their shape. It is the real deal, adapted for a modern kitchen without losing an ounce of its soul.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	beef stew meat <i>cut into 1-inch cubes</i>	3 tbsp	tomato paste
5 tbsp	olive oil <i>divided</i>	4 cup	low-sodium beef broth
1 med	yellow onion <i>finely chopped</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1 tsp	Lebanese Seven Spice	6 clove	garlic <i>crushed or minced into a paste</i>
1 1/2 lb	Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled and cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes</i>	1 bunch	fresh cilantro <i>stems removed, leaves finely chopped</i>
		1 med	lemon <i>cut into wedges for serving</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Roast the potatoes to build a structural crust.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Toss the cubed potatoes with 2 tablespoons of olive oil and a pinch of salt, then roast for 25 to 30 minutes until golden brown. This essential step prevents them from disintegrating in the stew.

2. Sear the beef and aromatics.

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the beef cubes and sear until browned on all sides, about 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in the chopped onion and Seven Spice, sautéing until the onions soften.

3. Simmer the broth until the meat is tender.

Pour in the broth and bring to a rolling boil, skimming off any foam that rises to the surface. Reduce the heat to low, cover tightly, and simmer for 45 to 60 minutes until the beef gives easily when pierced.

4. Build the stew.

Stir the tomato paste and salt into the pot until dissolved into a rich red broth. Gently fold in the roasted potatoes and let the stew simmer uncovered on medium-low for 10 to 15 minutes.

1. Prepare the qadha.

In a small skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium heat. Sauté the crushed garlic and chopped cilantro for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring constantly until intensely fragrant and the garlic is a pale gold—do not let it burn.

2. Plunge the tempering into the stew.

Immediately pour the sizzling garlic-cilantro mixture directly into the simmering pot, giving it a gentle stir before turning off the heat. Serve hot over Lebanese vermicelli rice with a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The Seven Spice Shortcut.**

If you cannot find Lebanese Seven Spice at your local market, you can substitute a blend of 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice, 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon, and 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper to achieve an authentic flavor profile.



Yakhnet Arnabit

بخنة القرنبيط

yakh-net ar-na-beet

This dish proves Lebanese cooking is about technique, not just ingredients. Traditionally, mothers stood over hot oil, deep-frying cauliflower until it became a caramelized sponge for the broth. We're bypassing the mess by blast-roasting it, but we aren't skipping the taqliya. Frying mashed garlic and cilantro in butter right before it hits the stew releases essential oils that give your kitchen that unmistakable Lebanese home smell. Finished with a heavy hand of lemon, this transcends a simple meat-and-veg pot into bright, crave-worthy comfort.

INGREDIENTS

1 large	cauliflower <i>cut into medium-large florets</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper
3 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1/2 tsp	kosher salt	4 cup	beef stock
1 tbsp	butter	1 tbsp	butter
1 small	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	6 large	garlic <i>mashed into a paste</i>
1 lb	ground beef	1 cup	fresh cilantro <i>stems removed and leaves finely chopped</i>
1 tsp	Lebanese 7-Spice	1/2 cup	fresh lemon juice

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Roast the cauliflower in a hot oven until deeply caramelized.**
Preheat your oven to 425°F. Toss the florets with the olive oil and a half-teaspoon of salt, then roast on a baking sheet for 20 to 25 minutes until the edges are dark and crispy. Do not skip this; pale cauliflower will turn to mush and ruin the flavor.
- 2. Build the savory base with aromatics and meat.**
While the cauliflower roasts, heat a tablespoon of butter in a heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Sauté the diced onion until softened, then add the ground beef, breaking it apart with a wooden spoon until deeply browned and cooked through.
- 3. Season the beef and simmer the broth.**
Stir in the 7-Spice, black pepper, and remaining salt. Pour in the beef stock, bring it to a gentle boil, then lower the heat, cover, and let it simmer for 10 minutes to allow the flavors to meld.

1. Fry the taqliya to awaken the essential oils.

In a separate small skillet, melt the remaining tablespoon of butter over medium-low heat. Gently sauté the mashed garlic and chopped cilantro for one to two minutes until highly fragrant, watching closely so the garlic doesn't brown and turn bitter.

2. Marry the roasted cauliflower and taqliya in the simmering broth.

Carefully transfer the roasted florets and every scraped bit of the garlic-cilantro mixture into the pot. Stir gently to keep the cauliflower intact, cover, and simmer on low for another 10 to 15 minutes so the florets soak up the spiced broth.

3. Finish with a heavy hand of fresh acid.

Remove the pot from the heat entirely and stir in the fresh lemon juice. Taste the broth to ensure it has a vibrant, tangy punch that cuts right through the rich earthiness of the meat.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The 7-Spice hack.**

If you don't have a jar of Lebanese 7-Spice (Sab'a Baharat) handy, simply substitute a 50/50 mix of ground allspice and ground cinnamon to replicate that sweet-savory Levantine warmth.

● **Mash the garlic, don't mince it.**

Smashing the garlic cloves with a pinch of coarse salt using the flat of your knife draws out the allicin, creating a paste that melts perfectly into the fat of the taqliya.

● **Serve with vermicelli rice.**

Ladle this hot stew over a mound of freshly made Lebanese Vermicelli Rice (Roz bi Sh'eiriyeh). The rice is essential for soaking up the lemony, garlicky broth.



Teta's Hands: Weekend Prep for Weekday Eating

*Honoring the labor-intensive heritage dishes of stuffing, rolling, and shaping—
weekend family projects that yield authentic meals for busy weeknights.*

The soul of a Lebanese kitchen isn't found in a frantic thirty-minute weeknight scramble. It lives in the slow, rhythmic labor of a Sunday afternoon—an assembly line of hands, elbows deep in spiced lamb and hollowed-out squash, rolling grape leaves and pinching dumplings until the work is done. This is the heavy lifting of love, the kind of repetitive, uncompromising prep that sustained the generations before us.

Put in the hours on the weekend, and you earn the ultimate payoff: a fridge stacked tight with Kousa Mehshi, trays of baked kibbeh, and Shish Barak waiting in its yogurt bath. When Wednesday rolls around and the world has

ground you down, all you have to do is turn on the stove. The hard work is behind you. Now, you just eat.





Kousa Mehshi

محشي كوسا

koo-sa meh-shee

There used to be a time when hollowing out summer squash was an all-day Sunday affair, a labor of love orchestrated by a symphony of grandmothers. For those of us raised in the American diaspora, the scent of Lebanese 7-Spice, warm cinnamon, and a pungent hit of garlicky dried mint simmering in tomato broth is the visceral definition of home. We don't have all Sunday anymore, but we still want the real thing, eschewing the fake Hollywood shortcuts. The secret to making this happen on a Tuesday night is an old-country trick: prep the squash

and the raw, fat-laced rice and meat filling on the weekend, freeze them solid, and drop them straight into a boiling broth when you get home from work. It tastes exactly like Teta's, because it is.

INGREDIENTS

12 med	Mexican squash or gray squash <i>brought to room temperature</i>	28 oz	crushed tomatoes or tomato passata
1 lb	ground beef (80/20) or beef-lamb blend	3 tbsp	tomato paste
1 cup	medium-grain white rice <i>rinsed well</i>	4 cup	water or low-sodium beef broth
1 tsp	Lebanese 7-Spice	6 med clove	garlic <i>crushed into a paste</i>
1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon	1 1/2 tbsp	dried mint
1 tsp	kosher salt	1 med	lemon <i>juiced</i>
1/2 tsp	black pepper	1 tsp	kosher salt <i>reserved for the broth and squash preparation</i>
1 tbsp	ghee or neutral oil		

PREPARATION

- **Freeze the stuffed, raw squashes for weeknight convenience.**

Stop right after stuffing the squashes. Arrange them in a single layer in a freezer-safe bag and freeze solid for up to two months. When you want them on a Tuesday night, drop the rock-hard frozen squashes directly into the boiling tomato broth (never thaw them first, or they turn to mush) and add fifteen to twenty minutes to your simmering time.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Hollow the squashes carefully to leave a quarter-inch wall.

Slice off the stem and rub the cut end with a generous pinch of kosher salt, letting it sit for ten minutes to soften the flesh and prevent cracking. Using a zucchini corer, apple corer, or serrated spoon, gently hollow out the core. Poke two tiny holes in the bottom of each squash with a toothpick so the boiling broth can flow through later, cooking the rice evenly and preventing blowouts.

2. Mix the raw filling and stuff the squashes loosely.

Gently mix the beef, rinsed rice, 7-Spice, cinnamon, 1 teaspoon salt, pepper, and ghee with your hands, taking care not to over-knead and break the rice. Drop the filling into the squash, filling only to your first knuckle (about three-quarters full), and tap the squash on the counter to settle the mix instead of aggressively packing it down.

3. Bring the tomato broth to a rapid boil and submerge the squashes.

In a large, wide Dutch oven, whisk together the crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, water, half of the crushed garlic, and half of the dried mint. Carefully slide the stuffed squashes into the boiling broth, ensuring they are almost entirely submerged.

4. Weigh down the squashes with an inverted plate and simmer.

Place a heavy, heat-proof plate directly on top of the squashes inside the pot to keep them from bobbing and spilling their contents. Reduce the heat to a gentle simmer, cover the pot with a lid, and cook for forty-five minutes.

5. Finish the broth with the remaining garlic, mint, and lemon juice.

Carefully remove the plate using tongs. Stir the remaining crushed garlic, the rest of the dried mint, and the fresh lemon juice directly into the simmering broth, cooking for five more minutes so the volatile mint oils and sharp garlic hit the palate immediately upon serving.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Never throw away the extracted squash core.**

Traditionally called lib el kousa, the scooped-out flesh is chopped and sautéed in olive oil with onions and garlic, or folded into eggs to make a savory Levantine frittata called Ijeh. Any leftover meat stuffing is rolled into meatballs and dropped right into the broth.

- **Adjust your broth depending on the canned tomatoes.**

American canned tomatoes vary wildly in acidity and thickness. Taste your broth halfway through; if it is too thick, add a splash of water, and if it is aggressively acidic, a tiny pinch of sugar will balance it out.



Warak Enab bi Lahm

ورق عنب باللحم

wa-rak e-nab bi lahm

There is a profound misunderstanding in the States about stuffed grape leaves. People think they're all cold, herb-packed vegetarian mezze. But the real deal—what a Lebanese grandmother actually spends her Sunday making for the family—is a hot, savory masterpiece built on fatty lamb, spiced meat, and short-grain rice. No parsley, no mint, no nonsense. It is an architectural marvel layered over seared chops and whole garlic, bathed in lemon juice. It takes patience to roll, but if you assemble the pot on a weekend, you are just a hands-off, ninety-minute simmer away from the most authentic Tuesday night dinner of your life.

INGREDIENTS

16 oz	jarred grape leaves in brine <i>soaked, rinsed, and stems snipped</i>	1 lb	lean ground beef
1 1/2 lb	bone-in beef short ribs or lamb chops	1 tbsp	ghee or neutral oil
1 large	potato <i>sliced into 1/2-inch rounds</i>	1 1/2 tsp	Lebanese 7-Spice
1 large	garlic <i>cloves separated and peeled</i>	1 tsp	ground cinnamon
2 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil	2 1/2 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>
1 1/2 cup	short-grain rice <i>rinsed until water runs clear</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper
		3/4 cup	fresh lemon juice
		4 cup	water or low-sodium beef broth

PREPARATION

- **Assemble the pot on a Sunday.**

You can roll the leaves and build the entire pot up through the potato, meat, and garlic layers on a weekend, keeping it covered in the fridge for up to two days before pouring in the lemon broth and turning on the stove.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Purge the brine from your grape leaves.**

Soak the leaves in a large bowl of boiling water for 10 minutes to pull out the harsh, metallic preserved flavor, then drain, rinse under cold water, and carefully snip off the tough little stems at the base with scissors.

- 2. Massage the meat, rice, and spices together.**

In a large bowl, combine the rinsed rice, raw ground beef, ghee, 7-spice, cinnamon, 1 1/2 teaspoons of the salt, and black pepper, using your hands to mix gently until the fat and spices are evenly distributed throughout.

1. Roll the leaves into tight, compact cigars.

Lay a leaf flat with the shiny side down and the dull, heavily veined side up, pinch about a teaspoon of filling into a thin horizontal log just above the bottom notch, fold the bottom flaps up, bring the sides in tightly, and roll upward to the tip while keeping tension so it does not fall apart.

2. Construct the base of the pot.

Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat, quickly sear the short ribs or lamb chops on both sides just until browned, turn off the heat, and layer the thick potato slices over the meat to act as a heat shield.

3. Tightly layer the stuffed leaves and garlic into the pot.

Pack the rolled grape leaves over the potatoes, seam-side down, in tight concentric circles or snug parallel rows, scattering the whole peeled garlic cloves into the crevices as you build the layers upward shoulder-to-shoulder.

4. Weigh down the leaves and simmer until tender.

Place a heavy, heat-proof dinner plate upside down directly on top of the leaves to keep them locked in place, mix the fresh lemon juice, remaining 1 teaspoon of salt, and water, then pour it over the top before bringing to a rolling boil and immediately dropping the heat to the lowest possible setting to simmer gently for 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

5. Rest the pot and invert onto a platter.

Let the pot sit off the heat for 15 minutes, remove the plate, place a large serving platter upside down over the pot, and carefully flip the entire thing over to reveal the glorious, meat-topped architecture.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Keep the herbs out of the meat.**

Mint, parsley, and tomatoes belong exclusively in the cold, vegetarian version of this dish; the authentic meat filling relies solely on warm spices and rendered fat.

- **Do not substitute long-grain rice.**

Basmati or Jasmine rice lack the necessary starch to bind the filling properly and will puncture the delicate grape leaves as they cook and expand.



Shish Barak

شيش برك

sheesh ba-rak

There is no shortcut to the soul-deep comfort of Shish Barak, but there is a system. This is a dish that demands the collective hands of a family around a flour-dusted table on a Sunday afternoon, folding tiny meat-filled hats. The secret to making it work on a random Tuesday in an Ohio suburb is the freezer. We stick to the authentic tenets: unfermented dough, pre-cooked spiced meat, and the meticulous, unyielding continuous stir of the yogurt stew. No yeast, no raw meat shortcuts, and absolutely no Greek yogurt. Just honest, unapologetic Levantine flavor, stabilized by science and crowned with a sizzling garlic finish.

INGREDIENTS

2 cup	all purpose flour	1 tsp	kosher salt
1/2 cup	whole wheat flour	1/2 tsp	black pepper
1 tsp	kosher salt	6 cup	whole milk plain yogurt
1 tbsp	olive oil	1/2 cup	labneh or sour cream
3/4 cup	warm water	3 cup	cold water
1 tbsp	ghee	3 tbsp	cornstarch
1 med	yellow onion <i>very finely minced</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
1 lb	lean ground beef or lamb	1 tbsp	ghee
1/4 cup	pine nuts <i>toasted</i>	4 clove	garlic <i>mashed to a paste</i>
1 tsp	Lebanese seven spice	1/2 cup	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped</i>

PREPARATION

- **Mix and rest the unfermented dough.**

In a large bowl, combine the all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, and salt. Drizzle in the olive oil and gradually add the warm water, kneading until smooth and elastic, then cover tightly with plastic wrap and let rest for at least 30 minutes to relax the gluten.

- **Cook and completely cool the spiced meat filling.**

Heat the ghee in a skillet over medium-high heat, sautéing the minced onion until translucent, then add the ground meat and cook until no pink remains and the liquid has evaporated. Stir in the seven spice, salt, pepper, and toasted pine nuts, then transfer to a wide bowl to cool so the hot meat doesn't tear the raw dough.

- **Fold the dumplings into traditional tortellini-like shapes.**

On a lightly floured surface, roll a quarter of the dough out to 1/16-inch thick and stamp out circles with a 1.5-inch cutter. Place a scant half-teaspoon of cooled filling in the center, fold into a half-moon and pinch shut, then bring the two corners together and pinch to seal.

- **Flash freeze the dumplings for weeknight readiness.**

Arrange the folded dumplings on a flour-dusted, parchment-lined baking sheet so they don't touch, and freeze for two hours until rock solid. Transfer to a heavy-duty freezer bag for storage.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the cold yogurt base off the heat.**

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot, vigorously whisk the cold plain yogurt, labneh, cold water, and cornstarch until completely smooth.

- 2. Execute the continuous stirring ritual.**

Place the pot over medium heat and stir slowly, continuously, in one direction without stopping until the yogurt reaches a gentle, rolling boil. If you walk away or stop stirring before it boils, the yogurt will separate and curdle.

- 3. Boil the frozen dumplings in the stabilized yogurt.**

Once boiling, stop stirring, stir in the salt, and immediately drop the frozen dumplings directly into the stew. Reduce the heat and simmer gently for 10 to 15 minutes until they float and the dough is tender.

- 4. Sizzle the garlicky aromatic finish.**

While the dumplings simmer, melt the ghee in a small skillet over medium heat and sauté the mashed garlic for just 30 seconds until fragrant but not browned. Stir in the chopped cilantro, cook for 10 seconds, and immediately remove from the heat.

- 5. Crown the stew and serve immediately.**

Pour the sizzling garlic and cilantro mixture directly into the yogurt stew, give it one gentle stir, and serve in deep bowls alongside plain vermicelli rice.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The whole wheat flour is a non-negotiable family secret.**

Cutting the all-purpose flour with a little whole wheat prevents the dumplings from puffing up into soggy, bloated sponges when boiled.

- **Avoid Greek yogurt at all costs.**

Greek yogurt lacks the necessary whey content to create the proper consistency for this stew. Stick to standard, full-fat plain yogurt, supplemented with a little labneh for authentic Levantine tang.

- **Pre-bake for extra structural insurance.**

If you're worried about the dumplings unraveling in the violent boil of the yogurt, bake them at 400°F for 6 to 8 minutes until barely golden before sending them to the freezer.



Kibbeh bil Saniyeh

كبة بالصينية

kib-beh bil sah-nee-yeh

If shaping the iconic, football-like fried kibbeh requires a PhD in Middle Eastern grandmothering, kibbeh bil saniyeh—kibbeh in a tray—is the brilliant weeknight hack. It delivers the identical savory, herbaceous crunch of the Lebanese staple without the infuriating labor, layered like a pie and baked to a deep bronze. The real secret here isn't the meat; it's the Kamouneh, an unapologetic, fragrant spice mix that turns a simple beef and bulgur paste into the undeniable, perfumed taste of home. Make this on a Sunday, cover it in the fridge, and on Wednesday night you're forty-five hands-off minutes away from greatness.

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil or ghee	1 lb	93% or 95% extra-lean ground beef
2 large	yellow onions <i>very finely diced</i>	1 med	yellow onion <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 lb	80% to 85% lean ground beef or lamb	1/2 cup	ice water <i>plus extra for assembly</i>
1/2 cup	pine nuts or walnuts <i>finely chopped if using walnuts</i>	1/2 cup	extra-virgin olive oil or melted ghee
1 1/2 tsp	Lebanese Seven Spice	1 tbsp	dried mint
1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon	1 tbsp	dried basil
1 tsp	kosher salt	1 tsp	dried marjoram or oregano
1 1/2 tbsp	pomegranate molasses	1 tsp	ground cumin
1 tsp	sumac	1 1/2 tsp	Lebanese Seven Spice
1 1/2 cup	fine bulgur wheat <i>rinsed well</i>	1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon
		2 tsp	kosher salt

PREPARATION

- **Set up an ice water station.**

You will need a bowl of ice water at your workstation throughout the dough assembly to keep your hands cold and wet.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Soak the fine bulgur in cold water.**

Place the rinsed fine bulgur in a large bowl, cover with a quarter inch of cold water, and let sit for 15 to 20 minutes. Never use boiling water—it will turn the grain to mush. Once hydrated, grab handfuls and squeeze out as much water as humanly possible, transferring the dry bulgur to a clean bowl.

1. Build the hashweh filling.

In a large skillet over medium heat, warm the oil or ghee. Toast the pine nuts until golden, remove, and set aside. Sauté the finely diced onions until deeply softened, then add the fattier ground beef. Break it up relentlessly with a wooden spoon into tiny curds, and stir in the Seven Spice, cinnamon, and salt.

2. Finish and cool the filling.

Once the meat is completely browned and the liquid evaporates, turn off the heat. Fold in the toasted nuts, pomegranate molasses, and sumac. Let it cool completely so it doesn't melt the fat in the dough later.

3. Process the kamouneh spice paste.

In a food processor, pulse the chopped onion alongside the dried mint, basil, marjoram, cumin, Seven Spice, cinnamon, and salt until puréed into a fragrant paste. Add the extra-lean ground beef and process until the meat is smooth and paste-like.

4. Emulsify the shell dough with ice water.

Add the meat mixture to the squeezed bulgur. Prepare a bowl of ice water. Dipping your hands continuously, knead the meat and bulgur together like bread dough for 3 to 5 minutes until it forms a sticky, cohesive mass. The ice water prevents the friction from melting the fat; stop kneading as soon as it holds together.

5. Assemble the bottom and middle layers.

Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C) and grease a 9×13-inch pan with 2 tablespoons of oil. Divide the dough in half. Flatten small pieces of the first half and press them into the pan, using wet hands to smooth them into an even, solid 1/4-inch bottom layer. Spread the cooled filling evenly, leaving a tiny border around the edges.

6. Patchwork the top layer.

Take the remaining dough, flatten small patches in your wet palm, and lay them over the filling like a quilt. Once covered, dip your hands in ice water and massage the surface until the seams vanish entirely and the top is perfectly smooth.

1. Score the tray and add oil.

Using a sharp knife, cut deep diamond patterns through to the bottom of the pan. Poke a small hole dead in the center with your finger. Drizzle the remaining 1/2 cup of olive oil or ghee evenly over the top, letting it seep into the cuts so the internal edges oven-fry.

2. Bake until deeply bronzed.

Bake on the middle rack for 40 to 45 minutes until the edges pull away from the pan and the top is dark and crisp. Let it rest for 15 minutes before slicing so the pieces hold together.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Find the right bulgur.**

This recipe fails entirely with medium or coarse bulgur. Look for Grade #1 Fine Bulgur, which is ubiquitous at local Middle Eastern markets or online.

● **Lean meat is mandatory for the shell.**

Standard 93% or 95% lean ground beef is crucial. If the shell has too much fat, it melts in the oven and the kibbeh cracks apart. Keep the fat strictly in the filling.

● **Freeze for later.**

This dish was born for meal prep. Assemble the entire tray, cover tightly, and freeze unbaked. You can bake it straight from frozen, adding 15 to 20 minutes to the total oven time.



Malfouf

ملفوف

mal-foof

There is a distinct moment when the sharp, bright scent of simmering garlic, lemon, and crushed dried mint hits the air, and suddenly an Ohio suburb smells exactly like a grandmother's kitchen in Beirut. Unlike heavy, tomato-braised Eastern European versions, authentic Lebanese malfouf is all about delicate, thin rolls bathed in a profoundly tangy, herbaceous broth. The great secret of the matriarchs is remarkably simple: short-grain rice expands to plug the ends, meaning you never have to fold the cabbage leaves inward. Roll them straight like a cigar on a Sunday, stash the heavy pot in the fridge, and bring it to a simmer on a Tuesday night for the ultimate heritage meal.

INGREDIENTS

1 large	green cabbage <i>cored</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
1 tbsp	ground cumin	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
1 tbsp	kosher salt	20 clove	garlic <i>peeled and left whole</i>
1 lb	ground beef or lamb	2 tbsp	dried mint <i>lightly crushed between your fingers</i>
1 cup	short-grain rice <i>rinsed until clear and soaked for 15 minutes</i>	1/2 cup	lemon juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>
2 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil	1/4 cup	extra-virgin olive oil
1 1/2 tsp	Lebanese Seven Spice	3 cup	chicken broth or water <i>warmed</i>
1 tsp	ground cumin		

PREPARATION

- **This is the ultimate make-ahead heritage meal.**

You can soften the leaves, mix the filling, and assemble the entire pot on a Sunday. Keep the covered, un-cooked pot in the fridge for up to 48 hours, then proceed straight to the stove on a Tuesday night.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil the cored cabbage head to soften the leaves.**

Bring a large stockpot of water to a rolling boil with the salt and tablespoon of cumin. Submerge the entire cabbage core-side down for 5 to 8 minutes, gently peeling away the outer leaves with tongs as they turn vibrant green and become pliable.

- 2. Remove the thick central stems to split the large leaves.**

Once cool enough to handle, slice down both sides of the rigid central rib of each leaf, dividing it into two pliable halves. Reserve these tough stems to line the cooking pot later.

1. Combine the soaked rice, ground meat, and spices.

In a large bowl, gently mix the drained short-grain rice, meat, 2 tablespoons olive oil, Seven Spice, 1 teaspoon cumin, salt, and black pepper with your hands until just incorporated.

2. Roll the leaves tightly like a cigar without tucking the ends.

Lay a cabbage leaf half flat and place a tablespoon of filling in a thin horizontal line across the lower third. Roll it forward tightly, leaving the sides completely open, and give it a gentle squeeze to secure the shape. The rice will expand and plug the open ends as it cooks.

3. Line the bottom of a heavy pot with the reserved stems and pack the rolls tightly on top.

The stems create a heat shield. Place the cabbage rolls seam-side down in a snug circular layer, scattering a few whole garlic cloves and a pinch of dried mint between every layer until you reach the top.

4. Submerge the rolls in broth and weigh them down with an inverted plate.

Pour the 1/4 cup olive oil and enough warm chicken broth to reach the bottom edge of a heavy, heat-proof plate pressed firmly on top of the rolls. Bring to a boil, then immediately reduce to the lowest heat, cover, and simmer for 1 hour.

5. Pour the lemon juice into the pot for the final simmer.

After an hour, carefully remove the lid, pour the fresh lemon juice evenly over the plate, recover, and simmer for another 30 to 45 minutes until the cabbage is easily pierced with a fork.

6. Let the pot rest off the heat before serving.

Remove from heat and let sit uncovered for 20 minutes. This allows the rice to absorb the remaining juices and stabilizes the rolls so they hold their shape. Serve warm with the garlic-lemon pan juices.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The short-grain rice is strictly non-negotiable.**

Long-grain varieties like basmati lack the necessary starch structure to bind the meat and will result in a dry, crumbly filling that spills out of the open-ended rolls.

- **Do not skip the plate weight.**

The heavy plate counteracts the buoyancy of the boiling liquid and the expanding rice, ensuring the rolls stay tightly packed, perfectly cylindrical, and submerged.



Kibbeh Kras

أقراص الكبة

kib-beh kras

The scent of frying kibbeh is the scent of the Levantine homeland, an olfactory tether to Sunday afternoons spent watching the matriarchs of the family work absolute magic. For first-generation kids in American suburbs, it seemed like an untouchable sorcery of pounding meat in stone mortars, but the real secret of the grandmother was ruthless practicality. By weaponizing a standard food processor with a few ice cubes, sourcing extra-lean supermarket cuts, and deploying the non-negotiable duo of dried marjoram and mint, you can engineer these

iconic, crispy-shelled torpedoes. They are designed for the deep freeze, ready to be dropped into hot oil for an immediate, soul-satisfying weeknight feast.

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp	olive oil or ghee	2 cup	fine brown bulgur <i>rinsed under cold water</i>
2 med	yellow onions <i>finely diced</i>	1 lb	extra-lean ground beef <i>90% to 95% lean</i>
1 lb	ground beef or lamb <i>80% to 85% lean</i>	1 med	sweet onion <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 tsp	salt	2 tsp	salt
1 tsp	Lebanese Seven Spice	1 tsp	dried marjoram
1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon	1 tsp	dried mint
1/4 tsp	ground black pepper	1/2 tsp	Lebanese Seven Spice
1/3 cup	pine nuts or walnuts <i>finely chopped and lightly toasted in a dry pan</i>	1/2 tsp	ground cinnamon
1 tbsp	pomegranate molasses	1 cup	ice water <i>mixed with 1 teaspoon cornstarch</i>

PREPARATION

- **Always prepare the filling first.**

The filling must be completely cold before it meets the dough. If it is warm, it will melt the emulsified fat in the outer shell and cause the croquettes to disintegrate.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Sauté the onions for the filling.**

Heat the olive oil or ghee in a large skillet over medium-high heat and cook the diced onions until deeply softened and golden, taking care not to rush their caramelization since their sweet depth balances the savory meat.

1. Brown the fattier meat and toast the spices.

Add the 80% lean ground beef or lamb, breaking it up constantly with a wooden spoon until browned and crumbly, then stir in one teaspoon of salt, one teaspoon of Seven Spice, a half teaspoon of cinnamon, and the black pepper to toast for one minute.

2. Finish and chill the filling.

Remove the pan from the heat, stir in the toasted nuts and pomegranate molasses, and transfer the mixture to a wide tray in the refrigerator to cool completely so the fat doesn't melt the bulgur dough later.

3. Hydrate the fine bulgur.

Place the rinsed bulgur in a large bowl, cover it barely with warm water, and let it sit for twenty minutes before fluffing it with a fork and squeezing out any excess pooling moisture.

4. Emulsify the aromatics and extra-lean meat for the shell.

In a food processor, pulse the chopped sweet onion, two teaspoons of salt, marjoram, mint, remaining Seven Spice, and remaining cinnamon into a wet paste, then add the extra-lean ground beef and a few ice cubes, processing until it forms a smooth, sticky paste.

5. Knead the meat paste and bulgur into a cohesive dough.

Transfer the emulsified meat to the bowl of hydrated bulgur and knead vigorously with your hands for five to eight minutes, occasionally dipping your fingers in the prepared ice water, until the dough holds together tightly when squeezed.

6. Hollow and shape the dough into eggshells.

Roll a golf-ball-sized piece of dough, cradle it in your left palm, and use a wet right index finger to gently press and rotate the center outward until the walls are uniformly thin without tearing.

7. Stuff and seal the croquettes.

Spoon about a tablespoon of the completely cold filling into the hollowed cup, pinch the open top shut, and gently roll the sealed kibbeh between wet, cupped palms to form the classic pointed football shape.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Freeze the raw kibbeh individually before storing.**

Place the shaped croquettes on a parchment-lined tray making sure they do not touch, freeze for three hours until rock solid, and then transfer them to a heavy-duty bag where they will keep perfectly for up to three months.

- **Fry them directly from the freezer.**

For a weeknight meal, let the frozen kibbeh temper on the counter for exactly ten minutes to take off the harsh chill, then fry in small batches in 350°F oil for seven to ten minutes until they possess a deep, rich, golden-brown crust.



The Sunday Feast: Mezze & Mashewe

Recreating the institution of the Lebanese Sunday lunch. A guide to communal dining, scaling for crowds, mastering the shared appetizer table, and achieving the perfect grill.

The Lebanese Sunday lunch is less a meal and more a feat of endurance. It's the beautiful, loud, smoke-hazed institution of folding tables dragged onto patios, buckling under the weight of mezze before the grill even sparks. There is

the sharp, acidic bite of a proper tabbouleh—dominated by parsley, not bulgur, just as god intended—and the smoky, garlic-punched depth of real baba ghanouj. This is communal dining in its purest form, utterly devoid of pretense.

When the coals finally glow hot, it's an exercise in fire control. Skewers of blistered shish taouk and fiercely spiced kafta hit the grates, destined for the center of the table alongside massive, cinnamon-scented platters of riz a dej. You don't just scale this food up for a crowd; you surrender to the ritual of it. It's meant to be unapologetic, loud, and aggressively shared.





Tabbouleh

تبولة

tab-boo-lee

For a first-generation kid in the Midwest, the deli counter's version of tabbouleh—a soggy, bloated bowl of cracked wheat—was always a source of quiet heartbreak. Real Lebanese tabbouleh is an edible garden, overwhelmingly green and sharp, with just enough grain to absorb the gorgeous dressing. The secret to that unmistakable, transportive flavor isn't in hard-to-find ingredients, but in knowing how to treat them. You soak the wheat in lemon juice instead of water, massage the onions with warm spices to kill their raw bite, and treat

the parsley with the surgical precision of a sharp knife. Wash the herbs the night before, and you can have the uncompromised taste of the Levantine homeland on a Tuesday night.

INGREDIENTS

3 large	flat-leaf parsley <i>washed, thoroughly dried, and finely chopped</i>	1/4 cup	white onion <i>finely minced</i>
1 small	fresh mint <i>washed, thoroughly dried, and finely chopped</i>	1/2 cup	freshly squeezed lemon juice
1/4 cup	fine bulgur wheat	1/2 cup	extra-virgin olive oil
3 med	roma tomatoes <i>finely diced, juices reserved</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
4 med	green onions <i>finely sliced</i>	1/4 tsp	black pepper <i>finely ground</i>
		1/2 tsp	Lebanese 7-spice
		1 large	romaine lettuce hearts <i>leaves separated, for serving</i>

PREPARATION

- **Wash and dry the herbs the night before.**

Parsley and mint must be bone-dry before the knife touches them. Wash them, spin them dry, and leave them wrapped in paper towels in the fridge overnight to eliminate the biggest weeknight hurdle.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Hydrate the bulgur with flavor, not water.**

Place the fine bulgur in a wide mixing bowl. Pour the freshly squeezed lemon juice directly over the grain, scraping in any extra tomato juices from your cutting board. Let it soak in this acidic bath for 15 to 20 minutes to plump up beautifully without becoming waterlogged.

1. Macerate the white onion.

In a small bowl, combine the minced white onion with the black pepper and the Lebanese 7-Spice. Use your fingertips to physically rub the spices into the onions for about 15 seconds. This ancestral trick kills the sharp, raw bite of the allium and blooms the warm spices.

2. Chop the bone-dry herbs in a single direction.

Gather the completely dry parsley into a tight bundle and slice thinly in one direction only. Never rock your knife back and forth over the pile, which bruises the leaves and turns the salad bitter. Finely chop the mint using the same single-direction method.

3. Toss the salad with your fingertips.

Add the chopped parsley, mint, diced tomatoes, green onions, and spiced white onion mixture to the bowl with the plumped bulgur. Using your clean fingertips, gently lift and toss the ingredients together so everything remains light and airy.

4. Dress and serve immediately.

Do not add the salt and olive oil until just before eating, or the salt will pull the water out of the tomatoes and wilt the herbs. Pour in the olive oil, sprinkle with salt, toss gently one last time, and serve immediately with crisp romaine lettuce leaves for scooping.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The food processor is a cardinal sin.**

The rotary blades of a food processor tear rather than slice, rupturing the cellular vacuoles within the parsley leaves. The result is a wet, dark green paste that leaches bitter chlorophyll into the dressing. Always use a well-honed chef's knife.

● **Pantry spice substitutions.**

If you cannot easily source Lebanese 7-Spice (Baharat), a mixture of 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon and 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice perfectly mimics the traditional flavor profile.

- **The cucumber controversy.**

Many Western adaptations and regional variants include finely diced cucumber for extra crunch. However, the strictly canonical Lebanese version omits it entirely to preserve the concentrated herbaceousness of the dish.



Fattoush

فتوش

fat-toosh

Tabbouleh is the meticulous showpiece, but fattoush is the loud, unapologetic, rustic cousin. Born in the mountain villages as a peasant's trick to use up yesterday's flatbread, this is the definitive taste of the Lebanese home table, stripped of any fake fusion. It hits every sensory note: the fierce crunch of baked pita, the hydration of roughly chopped garden vegetables, and a dressing that will ruin you for all other salads. That dressing is a dark, emulsified punch in the mouth of fresh lemon, astringent sumac, and the deep, sweet-sour complexity of pomegranate molasses. Toss it together at the exact second before serving, and it is perfectly, aggressively delicious.

INGREDIENTS

2 med	Lebanese-style thin pita bread <i>split in half to form thin discs</i>	1 large	romaine lettuce <i>roughly chopped into 1-inch squares</i>
3 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil	3 med	Persian cucumbers <i>sliced into half-moons</i>
1 tsp	ground sumac	3 med	firm tomatoes <i>chopped into bite-sized chunks</i>
1/2 tsp	kosher salt	5 med	red radishes <i>thinly sliced</i>
1/3 cup	extra virgin olive oil	4 med	scallions <i>thinly sliced</i>
1/4 cup	fresh lemon juice	1 small	green bell pepper <i>cored and diced</i>
2 tbsp	pomegranate molasses	1 cup	flat-leaf Italian parsley <i>roughly chopped, stems removed</i>
2 large	garlic cloves <i>smashed into a paste</i>	1/2 cup	fresh mint leaves <i>roughly chopped</i>
1 tsp	ground sumac	1 cup	baby arugula
1 tsp	dried spearmint		
1 tsp	kosher salt		
1/4 tsp	black pepper		

PREPARATION

- **Prep components ahead for a sixty-second weeknight assembly.**

Bake the pita chips on Sunday and store them in an airtight bag. Pre-mix the dressing in a jar and keep it in the fridge. Chop the sturdy vegetables in the morning so you can simply toss everything together at dinner.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Crisp the pita in a hot oven until deeply blistered.**

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Brush both sides of the split pita halves generously with olive oil, then sprinkle evenly with sumac and salt. Bake for 8 to 12 minutes until deeply golden. Let them cool completely, then shatter them with your hands into rustic, bite-sized crackers.

1. Aggressively emulsify the dressing.

In a glass jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the olive oil, lemon juice, pomegranate molasses, garlic paste, sumac, dried mint, salt, and pepper. Shake it violently until the molasses dissolves and you are left with a thick, unified, dark-red emulsion that makes your mouth pucker.

2. Chop the vegetables coarsely to prevent a soggy salad.

In a wide serving bowl, combine the romaine, cucumbers, tomatoes, radishes, scallions, bell pepper, parsley, fresh mint, and the arugula. Do not chop them too small; fattoush requires a coarse, rustic 'khishin' chop so the vegetables hold their crunch and release less water.

3. Dress and toss the salad immediately before serving.

Timing is everything. Just before you carry the bowl to the table, pour the dressing over the vegetables and toss gently. Add the shattered pita chips and give it one final toss so the bread is coated in the tart dressing but still fiercely crunchy.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Never substitute the core flavor trinity.**

Authentic fattoush relies entirely on ground sumac and real pomegranate molasses (dibs rumman). Do not use regular molasses or pomegranate juice, which lack the required syrupy tartness.

● **Mimic traditional purslane with peppery greens.**

Traditional Lebanese recipes mandate purslane (baqleh), a lemony, fleshy weed rarely found in American supermarkets. Baby arugula or watercress perfectly replicates its necessary peppery bite.



Hummus bi Tahini

حمص بالطحينة

hum-moos bee ta-hee-nee

Real Lebanese hummus isn't the dense, grainy paste you buy in a plastic tub at the American supermarket. It's a revelation—ethereal, pale, and whipped into a cloud that perfectly balances nutty sesame and bright lemon. The secret to getting that exact Sunday mezze texture on a Tuesday night isn't peeling chickpeas by hand; it's basic kitchen alchemy. A baking soda boil obliterates the tough skins in minutes, while ice water shocks the tahini into a brilliant, fluffy emulsion. This is uncompromised homeland authenticity, straight out of a can.

INGREDIENTS

15 oz	canned chickpeas <i>drained and rinsed well</i>	1/4 tsp	ground cumin
1/2 tsp	baking soda	4 small	ice cubes
2 small	garlic cloves <i>peeled and smashed</i>	2 tbsp	ice-cold water
1/3 cup	fresh lemon juice	3 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil
1/2 cup	tahini <i>stirred well until pourable</i>	1 pinch	sumac or paprika <i>for garnish</i>
1/2 tsp	fine sea salt	1 tbsp	fresh parsley <i>finely chopped, for garnish</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Boil the chickpeas with baking soda.

Place the rinsed chickpeas in a medium saucepan, cover with two inches of water, and add the baking soda. Bring to a rigorous boil over medium-high heat and cook for 15 to 20 minutes until the skins disintegrate and the water turns foamy.

2. Shock and drain the chickpeas.

Pour the chickpeas into a fine-mesh strainer and run cold tap water over them for a minute to stop the cooking process. Shake off as much excess water as possible.

3. Process the chickpeas into a paste.

Add the warm chickpeas to a food processor and blend alone for about 60 seconds until they break down into a thick, powdery paste, scraping down the sides as needed.

4. Incorporate the flavorings.

Add the smashed garlic, lemon juice, tahini, sea salt, and cumin to the food processor and run the machine until the mixture looks incredibly thick and heavy.

1. Emulsify with ice.

With the processor running, drop in the ice cubes one by one, followed by the ice-cold water. Let the machine run continuously for a full 3 to 4 minutes until the friction and cold transform the paste into a brilliant, pale, fluffy cloud.

2. Taste, plate, and garnish.

Adjust salt or lemon if necessary, then spoon the hummus onto a wide, shallow serving plate. Use the back of a spoon to create a swooping crater in the center, pool heavily with extra virgin olive oil, and garnish with sumac and fresh parsley.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Never blend the olive oil.**

Blending extra virgin olive oil under high shear causes it to oxidize and turn bitter, ruining the delicate flavor profile. Olive oil belongs exclusively on top as a garnish.

● **Show restraint with the garlic.**

Authentic hummus relies on a harmonious balance of sesame, chickpea, and lemon. Too much raw garlic will overpower the dip and create a harsh flavor if stored in the fridge overnight.



Baba Ghanouj / Moutabal

متبل

moo-tah-bal

If you grew up in the diaspora, you know the creamy, smoky, tahini-laced eggplant dip as 'Baba Ganoush.' But take a trip back to the mountains of Lebanon and ask a grandmother for Baba Ghanouj, and she'll hand you a vibrant, tangy eggplant salad. The creamy dip you actually want is called Moutabal. We're setting the record straight. The secret to the genuine article is fire: you must char the living daylights out of the eggplant over an open flame. Don't be afraid of it; that blackened, blistered skin is exactly what gives the flesh its unmistakable, intoxicating smokiness.

INGREDIENTS

2 large	Globe eggplants <i>pierced all over with a fork</i>	2 large	garlic <i>peeled</i>
1/3 cup	Lebanese tahini <i>well-stirred</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
2 tbsp	plain whole-milk yogurt	2 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil
3 tbsp	fresh lemon juice	2 tbsp	pomegranate seeds
		1 tbsp	fresh mint leaves

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Char the eggplant without mercy.

Line the area around your gas burners with foil. Place the pierced eggplants directly on the grates over medium-high heat, turning with metal tongs until completely ashy, collapsed, and weeping—about 15 to 20 minutes. If you only have an electric stove, broil them on a foil-lined sheet as close to the element as possible.

2. Drain the bitter juices.

Let the eggplants cool until you can safely handle them, then peel away and discard the blackened skin. Place the smoky flesh in a fine-mesh strainer over a bowl and let it drain for at least 15 minutes.

3. Mash the aromatics into a paste.

Sprinkle the salt over the garlic cloves on your cutting board. Using the flat side of your chef's knife, aggressively scrape and mash the garlic and salt together until it forms a fine, smooth paste.

4. Mash the eggplant by hand.

Transfer the drained eggplant to a mixing bowl and use a fork to mash it until relatively smooth, retaining a slightly rustic, stringy texture.

1. **Emulsify and plate.**

Add the garlic paste, tahini, yogurt, and lemon juice to the eggplant. Stir vigorously with your fork until the mixture becomes creamy, cohesive, and pale. Spread onto a shallow serving plate, create a well with the back of a spoon, and garnish with olive oil, pomegranate seeds, and mint.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Step away from the food processor.**

Do not even look at your food processor for this recipe. The high-speed blades will obliterate the eggplant's delicate cellular structure and turn your dip into a viscous, unappetizing glue. Do the work by hand.

- **The grandmother's yogurt trick.**

The spoonful of yogurt isn't just for tang. It cuts the oily weight of the tahini and acts as a natural bleaching agent, preventing oxidation and keeping the dip a brilliant, appetizing white.



Batata Harra

بطاطا حرة

ba-TA-ta HAR-ra

For first-generation kids growing up in a Lebanese household, the smell of garlic and cilantro hitting warm olive oil is a dinner bell. Batata Harra translates simply to 'spicy potatoes,' but the dish relies on a flawless harmony of crispy edges, bright lemon, and a savory, garlicky punch. Back in Beirut, these are strictly deep-fried, but on a busy weeknight in America, a quick parboil and a high-heat roast achieves the exact same crunch. The true secret of the homeland isn't the potato, though—it's the dressing. The trick is warming the garlic gently, then killing the heat entirely before stirring in the cilantro and

lemon juice. This keeps the herbs bright emerald and the garlic perfectly sweet. Keep it simple, leave the cumin in the pantry, and let the canonical flavors speak for themselves.

INGREDIENTS

2 lb	Russet or Yukon Gold potatoes <i>peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes</i>	5 large	garlic <i>finely minced or crushed to a paste</i>
3 tbsp	neutral oil	1 cup	fresh cilantro <i>finely chopped, leaves and tender stems</i>
1 tsp	kosher salt	1 tsp	red pepper flakes
3 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil	1 large	lemon <i>juiced</i>
		to taste	salt and black pepper

PREPARATION

- **Soak the potatoes to remove excess starch.**

Place the cubed potatoes in a bowl of cold water and let them sit for 5 to 10 minutes. This draws out the surface starch so they get crispy instead of gummy when roasted. Drain well before cooking.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Parboil the potatoes to gelatinize the exterior.**

Bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a boil. Drop in the drained potatoes and boil for exactly 5 to 7 minutes until they are just tender enough to yield to a fork, but not falling apart. Drain well and let them sit in the colander for a minute to allow the steam to evaporate.

1. Roast the potatoes at high heat until crispy.

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Transfer the dried potatoes to a large sheet pan, drizzle with the neutral oil and kosher salt, and toss to coat. Spread them in a single, even layer so they don't steam, and roast for 25 to 30 minutes, flipping halfway through, until deeply golden.

2. Gently bloom the garlic and chili in extra-virgin olive oil.

When the potatoes have about 5 minutes left, place a large skillet over medium-low heat and add the extra-virgin olive oil. Stir in the minced garlic and red pepper flakes, sautéing for just 30 to 60 seconds until fragrant. Do not let the garlic turn brown; it should remain pale and sweet.

3. Kill the heat entirely to finish the dressing.

This is the grandmother secret: turn off the stove completely. Immediately stir the chopped cilantro and fresh lemon juice into the warm oil. The residual heat gently wilts the cilantro and releases its oils without turning it a dull, cooked green.

4. Toss the hot potatoes in the dressing and serve.

Pull the crispy potatoes straight from the oven and dump them directly into the skillet with the dressing. Toss vigorously until every single cube is glossy and coated in the herbaceous oil. Adjust seasoning with a little more salt or lemon if needed, and serve immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Use Shatta if you can find it.**

While red pepper flakes provide an excellent and accessible heat, traditional Lebanese Batata Harra uses Shatta, a regional chili paste, or Aleppo pepper. If you have access to a Middle Eastern market, make the swap for a milder, fruitier heat.



Arayes bi Kafta

عرايس بالكفتة

ah-RYE-ess bee KAF-ta

They call them brides in Arabic, a nod to the old days when street vendors handed over these hot, fat-slicked meat pies tightly wrapped in pristine white paper. Today, Arayes bi Kafta is the ultimate Levantine comfort food—think of it as Beirut's answer to the smashburger, but infinitely better. The grandmother's secret here isn't some complex technique, it's simple moisture control. Dump raw, watery vegetables straight into your beef and you'll pull a soggy, ruined pita out of the oven. Purge the onion juice, spread the heavily spiced kafta impossibly thin, and you are rewarded with a violent crunch that tastes exactly like the busy streets of the homeland.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	80% lean ground beef	1 tbsp	pomegranate molasses
1/2 med	yellow onion <i>finely grated</i>	1 tbsp	tomato paste
1/2 cup	flat-leaf parsley <i>finely chopped</i>	1 1/2 tsp	Lebanese 7-Spice
1 small	Roma tomato <i>seeds removed and finely diced</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt
2 small	garlic <i>minced</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper
		4 large	Arabic pocket pitas <i>cut in half to create half-moon pockets</i>
		3 tbsp	extra virgin olive oil

PREPARATION

- **Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).**
- **Set up your baking station to ensure airflow.**

Place a wire cooling rack inside a rimmed baking sheet. This is crucial—it ensures the pitas get crispy on both sides without steaming in their own juices.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Purge the vegetables of their water to prevent a soggy pita.**

Thoroughly squeeze the grated onion in a paper towel or fine mesh sieve over the sink until dry. Do the exact same thing for the diced tomato.

2. **Knead the kafta mixture until uniform and tacky.**

In a large bowl, combine the drained onion and tomato with the parsley, garlic, pomegranate molasses, tomato paste, 7-spice, salt, pepper, and ground beef. Work it aggressively with your hands for a minute or two.

3. **Stuff the pita pockets impossibly thin.**

Gently pry open the pita halves and spread about 2 to 3 tablespoons of the raw meat mixture inside. Press it flat until it's a 1/4-inch thick layer reaching all the way to the absolute edges.

1. Coat the exterior of the pitas with olive oil.

Brush both the top and bottom of the stuffed pitas generously with olive oil to guarantee a deep, golden crunch in the oven.

2. Bake on a wire rack until shatteringly crisp.

Arrange the pitas in a single layer on your prepared wire rack and bake at 400°F (200°C) for 10 minutes. Flip them and bake for another 5 to 8 minutes until the bread is browned and the meat sizzles.

3. Slice into wedges and serve immediately.

Serve hot alongside a bowl of plain whole-milk yogurt or tahini sauce to cut through the rich, spiced fat of the beef.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Make your own Lebanese 7-Spice if you can't find it locally.**

In a small jar, mix 1 tbsp allspice, 1 tsp black pepper, 1 tsp cinnamon, 1/2 tsp ground coriander, 1/2 tsp cumin, 1/4 tsp ground cloves, and 1/4 tsp nutmeg. Allspice should always be the dominant note.

● **You can use the stovetop method for maximum crunch.**

If you don't want to use the oven, heat a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Place the oiled pitas in the pan, press down lightly with a spatula, and cook for 3 to 4 minutes per side until deeply browned.



Shish Taouk

شيش طاووق

sheesh tah-wook

If you grew up in a quiet Ohio suburb, you already know the smell of a Lebanese Sunday afternoon—the intoxicating tang of garlic, lemon, and charring yogurt wafting from the backyard grill. When we try to recreate these memories as adults, we tend to overcomplicate things with fifteen-spice blends or by swapping traditional chicken breasts for thigh meat. But the secret to authentic Shish Taouk—the kind that makes you close your eyes and know you're home—is a strictly enforced simplicity. It's a thick, unapologetic marinade of full-fat

yogurt and garlic, given the respect of time, and the old-school grandmother's trick of wrapping the freshly grilled meat in pita to trap the steam and soak up the seasoned oils.

INGREDIENTS

2 1/2 lb	boneless skinless chicken breasts <i>cut into large, uniform 1.5 to 2-inch cubes</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
		1 tsp	white pepper
3/4 cup	plain full-fat yogurt	1 tsp	sweet paprika
1/4 cup	lemon juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>	1/2 tsp	ground ginger
		1/2 tsp	dried oregano
1 tbsp	lemon zest	4 large	Lebanese pita bread
1/4 cup	olive oil	1/2 cup	toum
10 med	garlic cloves <i>finely crushed or grated into a paste</i>	1 cup	Middle Eastern pickled cucumbers
2 tbsp	tomato paste	2 cup	french fries <i>cooked hot</i>
1 tbsp	apple cider vinegar		

PREPARATION

- **Soak the wooden skewers.**

If cooking with bamboo skewers, submerge them in water for 30 to 45 minutes to prevent them from incinerating on the grill.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk the marinade ingredients together.**

In a large, non-reactive bowl, whisk the yogurt, lemon juice, lemon zest, olive oil, garlic paste, tomato paste, vinegar, salt, white pepper, paprika, ginger, and oregano until the tomato paste dissolves and the mixture turns a pale orange.

1. Massage the marinade into the chicken.

Add the cubed chicken to the bowl and use your hands to massage the marinade into the meat, ensuring every single crevice is heavily coated.

2. Refrigerate and wait.

Cover the bowl tightly and let it sit in the fridge for a minimum of four hours, though overnight is where the magic really happens.

3. Thread the skewers.

Pack five to six cubes onto each skewer so they just touch, but aren't squished too tightly together.

4. Grill the chicken.

Over a medium-high grill, cook the skewers for 5 to 7 minutes per side until you get dark char marks and an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Alternatively, broil 4 inches from the heat source for 6 to 8 minutes per side.

5. Build the pita tent.

The second the chicken comes off the heat, sandwich the hot skewers inside an open pita and let them rest for 5 to 10 minutes. The bread traps the steam, forcing juices back into the meat while soaking up the highly spiced garlic oils.

6. Assemble the sandwich.

Slide the meat off the skewer into a fresh pita, smear with a generous spoonful of toum, add salty pickles and hot french fries right into the sandwich, then roll it up tight.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Use the right yogurt.**

Avoid the non-fat aisle. You need the fat from whole milk yogurt to protect the lean chicken breast from the high heat of the grill.

- **Respect the white pepper.**

Do not substitute with black pepper. White pepper provides the distinct, slightly earthy background heat that separates a true Lebanese Taouk from generic grilled chicken.

- **Shortcut the toum.**

If you don't have the time to whip up a batch of traditional Lebanese garlic paste, you can mimic the experience by mixing a half-cup of high-quality mayonnaise with four cloves of finely crushed raw garlic and a squeeze of lemon juice.



Riz a Djej

رزع دجاج

riz ah djej

If there is a smell that defines a Lebanese American childhood, it is the intoxicating cloud of cinnamon, toasted pine nuts, and chicken broth of Riz a Djej. Traditionally, Teta spends all day boiling a whole bird. We don't have all day, but we aren't resorting to sad boxed stock shortcuts either. By using chicken thighs, you extract a deeply authentic, collagen rich broth in a fraction of the time. This is the real deal—fluffy spiced meat and rice crowned with poached chicken and golden nuts—engineered to respect both the homeland and your Tuesday night.

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lb	chicken thighs <i>bone-in and skin-on</i>	2 tbsp	ghee
6 cup	water	1/3 cup	pine nuts
1 med	yellow onion <i>peeled and halved</i>	1/3 cup	slivered almonds <i>blanched</i>
1 large	cinnamon stick	1/2 lb	ground beef <i>eighty percent lean</i>
3 med	bay leaves	1 small	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>
4 small	cardamom pods	1 tbsp	Lebanese seven spice
1 tsp	kosher salt	1 tsp	ground cinnamon
2 cup	basmati rice <i>washed aggressively until water runs completely clear</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
		1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>

PREPARATION

- **Make ahead practicality.**

The chicken and homemade broth can be prepared up to three days in advance and kept in the refrigerator. Use a spoonful of the solidified chicken fat from the top of the chilled broth when frying your ground beef for an unbelievable depth of flavor.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil the chicken and ruthlessly skim the foam.**

Bring the chicken thighs and cold water to a boil in a large pot, and use a spoon to carefully skim away the gray foam (the zafra) before adding aromatics to guarantee a pure, clean tasting broth.

1. Simmer the aromatics to create the broth.

Once the water is clear, drop in the halved onion, cinnamon stick, bay leaves, cardamom pods, and salt, then lower the heat and simmer covered for 30 minutes until the chicken is fall-apart tender.

2. Shred the chicken and strain the liquid gold.

Pull the meat from the bones, discard the skin, and strain the broth through a sieve, reserving exactly 4 cups of this liquid for cooking the rice.

3. Toast the nuts in ghee.

Melt the ghee in a wide heavy bottomed pot over medium heat and toast the pine nuts and almonds until warm and golden, watching them like a hawk so they do not burn, then remove them to a paper towel lined plate.

4. Brown the spiced meat base.

Return the pot to the heat and brown the ground beef and diced onion in that same nutty fat along with the seven spice, extra cinnamon, salt, and pepper to bloom the essential oils.

5. Coat and fry the rice.

Add the aggressively washed and drained rice to the meat mixture, stirring for two minutes to coat every single grain in the seasoned beef fat.

6. Simmer the rice and let it rest undisturbed.

Pour in the hot reserved chicken broth, bring to a gentle boil, cover tightly, and simmer on the absolute lowest heat for 15 to 20 minutes, then turn off the heat and let it rest for 10 minutes without opening the lid.

7. Assemble and serve.

Fluff the rice gently, spoon the spiced meat and rice onto a large platter, arrange the shredded chicken generously over the top, and scatter everywhere with the toasted nuts.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Respect the Zafra.**

Do not skip skimming the gray foam off the boiling chicken. It is the absolute difference between a pristine, authentic broth and a muddy, bitter one.

- **The Rotisserie Exception.**

If you are cooking on a Tuesday night with absolutely zero time to boil raw chicken, you can substitute a rotisserie bird and boxed broth, but you must simmer that boxed broth with a cinnamon stick, a bay leaf, and an onion slice for ten minutes first to fake the authenticity.



The American Dukkan: Pantry Suppers & Market Hacks

A weeknight survival guide utilizing quick fixes, standard grocery store adaptations, and strategic bulk buys to get authentic Lebanese flavors on the table in minutes.

The dukkan is the corner market, the local lifeline. In America, it's wherever a homesick expat can score a decent jar of pomegranate molasses and a stack of pita that lacks the structural integrity of a mousepad. But really, the American dukkan is the pantry you build yourself—a bulwark against the soul-crushing fatigue of a Tuesday night.

This is how a culture survives the workweek. You don't surrender to the drive-thru. You deploy the arsenal. You smash leftover kafta into bread for blistering arayas. You summon fire, cilantro, and garlic for a quick pan of batata harra. You turn humble bulgur and bruised tomatoes into a pilaf that tastes like a mountain village, even if the view out the kitchen window is a suburban strip mall. It's survival food, sure. But it is profoundly, uncompromisingly ours.





Nawashif

نواشف

na-wa-shif

If you grew up in a Lebanese-American household, you already know the best meals rarely involve a stove. This isn't a recipe; it's a philosophy of assembling the ready things of the house—tangy labneh, earthy za'atar, oil-cured eggplants, and salty cheeses—balanced with the crunch of fresh cucumbers and mint. It is the ultimate expression of Levantine hospitality, designed for nights when you only have fifteen minutes but still demand the precise, uncompromised flavors of the old country.

INGREDIENTS

16 oz	labneh	1 cup	mixed cracked green and cured black olives
1/2 cup	za'atar		
1/2 cup	extra virgin olive oil	4 med	Persian cucumbers <i>quartered lengthwise into spears</i>
1 small jar	makdous <i>drained slightly</i>	2 med	vine-ripe tomatoes <i>cut into wedges</i>
1 med block	halloumi cheese <i>sliced into thick rectangles</i>	1 med bunch	fresh mint <i>washed and dried, left on the stem</i>
8 oz	kashkaval or feta cheese <i>sliced or cubed</i>	2 med bags	thin Arabic pita bread

PREPARATION

- **Wash and prep the fresh produce.**

Quarter the cucumbers, slice the tomatoes, and rinse the mint, leaving it on the stem so guests can pick leaves as they eat.

- **Slice the cheeses.**

Prepare the halloumi for searing and cube or slice the kashkaval.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Sear the halloumi.**

Heat a dry non-stick skillet over medium-high heat and pan-fry the thick slices of halloumi until both sides are golden and squeaky.

- 2. Plate the labneh.**

Spoon the labneh into a shallow bowl and use the back of a spoon to swoop a circular trench into the center, flooding it with the absolute best extra virgin olive oil you own.

1. Arrange the earthy dippers.

Place the za'atar in a small bowl next to an identical bowl of olive oil for dipping, and set out the makkous drizzled with a bit of their preserving oil.

2. Assemble the spread.

Surround the dips with the seared halloumi, fresh cheese, olives, and a communal platter scattered with the cucumbers, tomatoes, and fresh mint.

3. Revive the pita over an open flame.

Using tongs, hold the pita directly over a gas burner for about three seconds per side until it lightly puffs and chars, then wrap immediately in a clean kitchen towel to keep it steaming hot.

4. Ditch the silverware and eat with your hands.

Tear off a piece of warm pita and use it to pinch cheese and mint together, or swoop it through the labneh, alternating rich, oily bites with crisp cucumber.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The DIY labneh hack.**

If you cannot find labneh, buy a tub of whole-milk Greek yogurt, stir in a half teaspoon of kosher salt, and let it drain overnight in the fridge through a mesh strainer lined with two layers of paper towels.

● **Source your za'atar wisely.**

Standard supermarket za'atar is often just stale thyme, so head to a Middle Eastern market to find a genuine imported blend heavy with roasted sesame seeds and tangy sumac.

● **Add eggs for a winter supper.**

Fry four eggs in olive oil and dust them heavily with sumac and sea salt just before the yolks set for a traditional hot addition.

● **The nostalgia hack.**

For true diaspora authenticity, include a wheel of processed cheese wedges like The Laughing Cow or Picon on the table.



Burghul bi Banadoura

برغل بندورة

boor-ghool bee ba-na-doo-ra

This is the ultimate first-generation survival meal, born of a bare fridge and a loaded pantry. Before quinoa was a trend, Lebanese mothers were turning coarse, parboiled wheat into something profound. It is a beautifully cheap, vegetarian powerhouse that smells like a summer evening in the mountains, relying entirely on the holy trinity of good olive oil, sweet tomatoes, and knowing exactly how to treat the grain.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup coarse bulgur
left dry and unwashed

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

2 tbsp tomato paste

1 1/2 cup boiling water

1 tsp kosher salt
1/2 tsp black pepper
1/2 tsp Lebanese 7-Spice

1 large yellow onion
finely diced
1 1/2 lb ripe tomatoes
cored and diced
1/2 med green bell pepper
finely diced

PREPARATION

- **Do not soak the grain.**

Traditionalists do not wash high-quality boxed bulgur. If you bought yours from a bulk bin and feel the need to clean it, give it one extremely fast rinse in a fine-mesh sieve and immediately shake it dry.

- **Hack the pale tomatoes.**

If your tomatoes are slightly underripe, grate them on the large holes of a box grater instead of dicing them; the skins will stay in your hand, leaving you with a rich, natural tomato puree.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Build the aromatic base.**

Heat the olive oil in a medium, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium heat, add the diced onions and green bell pepper, and sauté for 5 to 7 minutes until soft, translucent, and just beginning to caramelize.

- 2. Toast the grain.**

Add the dry, coarse bulgur directly to the pot with the onions and oil, stirring continuously for 2 to 3 minutes so the grains are thoroughly coated and lightly toasted.

- 3. Caramelize the paste.**

Clear a small hot spot in the center of the pot, drop in the tomato paste, and let it sizzle for 60 seconds to cook out the raw tinny flavor before stirring it through the bulgur.

1. Add the tomatoes and spices.

Pour in the fresh tomatoes, salt, black pepper, and 7-Spice, letting the mixture cook down for 3 to 4 minutes until the tomatoes begin to release their natural juices.

2. Simmer the pilaf.

Pour in the boiling water, stir once to combine, bring the pot to a rolling boil, then immediately drop the heat to the absolute lowest setting and cover tightly.

3. Let it cook undisturbed.

Leave the pot alone for 15 to 20 minutes, or until all the visible liquid has been absorbed by the grain.

4. Execute the steam rest.

Turn off the heat, but do not touch the lid; walk away for 10 minutes to allow the bulgur to absorb the trapped steam and fluff up into distinct, tender grains.

5. Fluff and serve.

Remove the lid, fluff gently with a fork, and serve warm or at room temperature with a massive dollop of cold Greek yogurt or labneh.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Sourcing the grain.**

Look for grade #2 or #3 coarse bulgur at the market. If the bag says #1 or Fine, put it back—that is for tabbouleh and will turn into glue if you try to cook it like a pilaf.

● **The tomato reality.**

If your supermarket tomatoes are out of season and hard, swap them for a 14.5 oz can of high-quality crushed or petite diced tomatoes, and reduce your added boiling water by 1/4 cup to balance the extra liquid.



Macarona bil Laban

معكرونة باللبن

ma-ka-ro-na bil la-ban

If you grew up in an Arab household, this dish is your childhood in a bowl. Long before the concept of a fifteen-minute meal existed in American media, Lebanese grandmothers were boiling spaghetti and tossing it with a cool, garlicky, mint-infused yogurt sauce to feed hungry kids on blistering summer afternoons. It is unapologetically simple, deeply comforting, and relies entirely on staples you already have in the pantry. The secret isn't some complex technique, it's just respecting the ingredients: full-fat yogurt, garlic crushed with salt, and the earthy, savory intensity of dried mint.

INGREDIENTS

1 lb	dry spaghetti	1/2 lb	lean ground beef
3 cup	plain whole-milk yogurt	1/2 med	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>
4 small clove	fresh garlic <i>peeled</i>	1 tbsp	olive oil
1 tbsp	dried mint	1 tsp	Lebanese 7-Spice
1 tsp	kosher salt	1/2 tsp	sumac
1 tbsp	extra-virgin olive oil	1/4 cup	pine nuts
		1 tbsp	unsalted butter

PREPARATION

- **Pound the garlic into a paste.**

Place the peeled garlic cloves in a mortar and pestle with the kosher salt and pound them into a smooth, watery paste so the flavor permeates the yogurt without leaving harsh, raw chunks.

- **Wake up the dried mint.**

Rub the dried mint vigorously between the palms of your hands to release the dormant essential oils before adding it to the yogurt.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Boil the pasta in aggressively salted water.**

Bring a large pot of water to a rapid boil, salt it until it tastes like the sea, and cook the spaghetti until al dente, about 9 to 12 minutes.

- 2. Build the yogurt sauce in a large serving bowl.**

Whisk together the whole-milk yogurt, the garlic-salt paste, and the crushed dried mint until it is incredibly smooth and creamy.

1. Drain and cool the cooked pasta.

Drain the pasta thoroughly and rinse it briefly under cold water to stop the cooking and drop the temperature.

2. Combine the pasta and the yogurt sauce.

Vigorously toss the cooled pasta into the cold yogurt sauce, drizzling it with a touch of extra-virgin olive oil and a final tiny pinch of dried mint if serving the minimalist version.

3. Brown the spiced meat topping if making the diaspora upgrade.

In a medium skillet over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil, sauté the diced onion until translucent, and then brown the ground beef with the Lebanese 7-Spice and sumac.

4. Toast the pine nuts in butter.

In a small skillet, melt the butter over medium heat and continuously stir the pine nuts for 3 to 5 minutes until they turn a deep golden brown.

5. Assemble the final feast.

Smother the yogurt pasta with the warm, spiced ground beef, then pour the toasted pine nuts and all the browned butter from the skillet directly over the top before serving immediately.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Never substitute fresh mint for dried.**

Dried mint is the absolute backbone of the Lebanese pantry, offering an earthy, savory intensity that fresh mint simply cannot replicate in a dairy-based sauce.

● **Mind the temperature of the pasta.**

Adding boiling hot pasta directly to cold yogurt can cause the dairy proteins to tighten and curdle, which is why traditional recipes demand the pasta be rinsed in cold water first.

- **Adapt for Greek yogurt if needed.**

If you only have thick Greek yogurt, it will be too dense; slowly whisk in a half cup of hot, starchy pasta water a few tablespoons at a time until it reaches the consistency of heavy cream.



Foul Moudammas

فول مدمس

fool moo-dah-mahs

In Lebanon, Sunday mornings smell of sharp garlic, bright lemon, and toasted pita. Foul Moudammas is a humble, ancient dish of fava beans, but the Lebanese made it their own by inviting chickpeas to the party. While traditionalists might soak dried beans overnight in copper pots, modern diaspora cooks know a brilliant market hack: high-quality canned beans. Rinsed thoroughly and simmered briefly to wake them up, they yield that identical, soul-warming texture in ten minutes. The real secret is the dressing. A raw emulsion of aggressively smashed

garlic, cumin, and lemon cuts right through the earthy starch of the legumes. This isn't a smooth puree like hummus; it is rustic, chunky, and meant to be scooped up by the handful.

INGREDIENTS

15 oz	plain fava beans	1/4 cup	extra virgin olive oil
15 oz	chickpeas	1 med	tomato <i>finely diced</i>
1/2 cup	water	1/4 cup	fresh parsley <i>finely chopped</i>
3 med cloves	garlic <i>peeled</i>	4 large	pita bread <i>warmed</i>
1/2 tsp	kosher salt	1 cup	radishes cucumbers and scallions <i>sliced</i>
1 tsp	ground cumin	1/2 cup	Middle Eastern pickles

PREPARATION

- **Assemble the sofra.**

A bowl of fowl is incomplete without its spread. Wash and slice your cucumbers, radishes, and scallions before you start cooking, as the beans come together in just ten minutes.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Strip away the canning liquid.**

Pour the fava beans and chickpeas into a large colander and rinse them aggressively under cold running water until the water runs clear. This removes the salty, metallic brine and gives you a clean slate.

1. Simmer and soften the legumes.

Transfer the rinsed beans to a medium saucepan with the water. Place over medium heat and bring to a gentle simmer for 5 to 7 minutes to heat through and soften the skins for mashing.

2. Crush the garlic into a paste.

Do not just mince the garlic with a knife. Place the cloves and kosher salt into a mortar and pestle and pound them aggressively into a smooth, sticky paste. Transfer to a small bowl and whisk in the cumin, lemon juice, and olive oil.

3. Mash the beans directly in the pot.

Remove the saucepan from the heat, but do not drain the starchy liquid. Using a potato masher or sturdy fork, mash roughly one-third to one-half of the beans. You want a rustic texture where some are obliterated into cream and others remain entirely whole.

4. Dress and emulsify the stew.

Pour the raw garlic-lemon dressing over the hot, mashed beans and stir vigorously. The hot starches will grab the oil and lemon, emulsifying into a thick, glossy gravy. Taste and add more salt or lemon if needed.

5. Plate and serve immediately.

Transfer the fowl to a wide, shallow bowl. Top with the diced tomato, parsley, and a generous pour of high-quality extra-virgin olive oil. Serve hot, surrounded by warm pita and small plates of crunchy vegetables and pickles.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **The great tahini divide.**

If you ask ten Lebanese grandmothers how to make Foul, five will tell you to add a spoonful of tahini, and five will call it a sin. For a creamier, nuttier version, whisk a tablespoon or two into the lemon-garlic dressing.

- **Control the spice.**

When buying canned fava beans at the international market, always opt for the cans labeled 'Plain' or 'Sada'. Pre-spiced 'Lebanese Recipe' cans lock you into an artificial flavor profile; building it fresh with raw garlic and lemon is the entire point of the dish.



Mujadarat Bulgur

مجدرة برغل

moo-jah-dah-rat bool-goor

If you want to know what a Lebanese home actually smells like on a Tuesday night, it's not roasting lamb or complex spice bazaars. It's the intoxicating, deeply savory aroma of onions slowly turning to dark mahogany in a pool of olive oil. Mujadara is the ultimate peasant food—a masterpiece born out of necessity, using cheap, shelf-stable ingredients from the pantry to build something transcendent. The secret to making it taste exactly like the homeland isn't a magical spice mix, but absolute patience. You have to take the onions right to the

brink of ruin, turning the infused olive oil into liquid gold that flavors the hearty grains. No stock cubes, no turmeric, no nonsense. Just the pure magic of the humble onion, done right.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup	brown lentils <i>rinsed</i>	1 tbsp	all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cup	coarse bulgur wheat <i>rinsed under cold water and drained</i>	1 1/2 tsp	kosher salt
4 large	yellow onions <i>halved and thinly sliced</i>	1 tsp	ground cumin
1/2 cup	extra virgin olive oil	4 1/2 cup	water <i>divided</i>

PREPARATION

- **Prep the onions for dual duty.**

Take exactly half of your sliced onions and toss them in a bowl with the flour until lightly coated to ensure they fry up crispy for the garnish. Keep the other half plain for caramelizing into the base.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Fry the floured onions into a crispy garnish.**

In a large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the flour-coated onions and fry, stirring frequently, until they turn a deep, dark golden brown and become crispy, about 15 to 20 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon to a paper towel-lined plate, salt lightly, and set aside.

- 2. Build the deep, dark base.**

Lower the heat to medium and add the plain sliced onions to the exact same pot, utilizing that deeply flavored, onion-infused oil. Cook until they are heavily caramelized and dark brown, almost jammy and verging on burnt, which will give the dish its authentic color and depth.

1. Parboil the lentils to soften their bite.

While the onions are caramelizing, place the brown lentils in a small saucepan, cover with 2 cups of the water, and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer for 10 to 12 minutes until just starting to soften. Do not drain them; that dark, iron-rich cooking water is essential for the final dish.

2. Marry the grains in the main pot.

Add the rinsed bulgur, the parboiled lentils along with their cooking water, the remaining 2 1/2 cups of water, the salt, and the cumin directly into the large pot with the jammy onions and oil. Stir well to combine.

3. Simmer, then steam off the heat.

Bring the pot to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to the lowest possible setting. Cover with a tight-fitting lid and simmer for 20 minutes. Turn off the heat completely and let the pot sit, unopened, for another 10 minutes to allow the bulgur to absorb every last drop of moisture without turning to mush.

4. Fluff and crown with crispy onions.

Remove the lid and fluff the pilaf gently with a fork. Transfer to a large serving platter and top generously with the reserved crispy onions.

CHEF'S NOTES

● **Bulgur size matters.**

You must use coarse bulgur (look for size #3 or #4 at a Middle Eastern market, or Bob's Red Mill 'Coarse'). Fine bulgur, typically used for tabbouleh, will turn into an unappetizing paste when simmered like this.

● **Serve it like a local.**

Eat this warm or at room temperature alongside a generous dollop of cold plain yogurt or labneh. The sharp contrast of the hot, earthy grains with the cold, acidic yogurt is the defining bite.



Salatet Toun

سلطة طون

sa-la-tet toun

If you grew up in a Lebanese-American household, a can of tuna was never subjected to the indignity of being drowned in industrial mayonnaise and stuffed into white bread. Instead, it was the starting point for a feast. The secret to this quick pantry supper is treating humble staples—olive oil-packed tuna and canned sweet corn—with the exact same respect you would a fresh catch. Dressed in an aggressive, unapologetic vinaigrette of freshly squeezed lemon and olive oil, then loaded with a staggering amount of fresh mint and parsley, it's a bright, crunchy, deeply refreshing bowl that tastes exactly like home.

INGREDIENTS

10 oz	olive oil-packed tuna <i>lightly drained</i>	1/4 cup	fresh mint leaves <i>roughly chopped</i>
1/2 cup	canned sweet corn <i>drained and rinsed</i>	1/4 cup	extra-virgin olive oil
2 med	Persian cucumbers <i>finely diced</i>	3 tbsp	lemon juice <i>freshly squeezed</i>
1 cup	cherry tomatoes <i>quartered</i>	1 large	garlic clove <i>mashed into a paste</i>
1/2 med	red onion <i>very thinly sliced into half-moons</i>	1/2 tsp	kosher salt
4 med	radishes <i>sliced into thin matchsticks</i>	1/4 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly cracked</i>
1/2 cup	flat-leaf parsley <i>roughly chopped, stems removed</i>	1/2 tsp	sumac

PREPARATION

- **Soak the sliced red onion in ice water for five minutes if you prefer a milder, less aggressive bite.**

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Whisk together the olive oil, fresh lemon juice, mashed garlic paste, salt, pepper, and sumac to build the emulsion.**
Let the dressing sit for five minutes to allow the lemon juice to mellow the raw bite of the garlic.
- 2. Place the lightly drained tuna into a large, wide serving bowl and use a fork to gently flake it apart.**
Take care to leave large, meaty chunks rather than mashing the fish into a paste.
- 3. Add the drained sweet corn, diced cucumbers, quartered cherry tomatoes, sliced red onions, and radishes directly to the bowl.**
- 4. Scatter the freshly chopped parsley and mint over the top of the vegetables.**

- 1. Pour the resting dressing over the entire bowl and gently toss the salad from the bottom up to ensure every flake of fish and vegetable is coated.**

Let the salad rest at room temperature for ten minutes before serving with toasted pita so the tuna can fully absorb the lemon juice.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **Respect the herbs.**

Treat the parsley and mint as foundational salad greens, not optional garnishes, as they provide the crucial cooling contrast to the rich oil and fish.

- **The pita hack.**

To replicate traditional Lebanese crispy bread on a weeknight, brush store-bought pita pockets with olive oil, cut them into triangles, and bake at 350°F for 8 to 10 minutes until golden.

- **Water-packed tuna adaptation.**

If you only have water-packed tuna on hand, drain it aggressively and overcompensate by adding an extra tablespoon of high-quality olive oil to the dressing to restore the necessary fat.



Mfarakeh Kousa

مفركة كوسا

m-fa-ra-keh koo-sa

If there is one dish that separates the restaurant version of Lebanese food from the reality of the Lebanese home, it is Mfarakeh. You will never find this on a white-tablecloth menu, but ask any first-generation kid from Ohio to Dearborn what their grandmother made on a Tuesday night when the fridge was bare, and they will name this humble scramble. The secret is ignoring the giant, watery American zucchinis and seeking out Mexican Grey Squash, which perfectly mimics the dense, sweet Middle Eastern Kousa. Cooked slowly in ghee until meltingly tender, then folded gently with eggs and dusted with dried mint, this is a twenty-minute masterclass in heritage comfort.

INGREDIENTS

3 med	Mexican Grey Squash <i>trimmed, quartered lengthwise, and cut into 1/2-inch cubes</i>	1 tsp	kosher salt <i>divided</i>
1 med	yellow onion <i>finely diced</i>	1/2 tsp	black pepper <i>freshly ground</i>
2 tbsp	ghee	1/4 tsp	Lebanese Seven-Spice
1 tbsp	neutral oil	1 tsp	dried spearmint
5 large	large eggs	4 med	Arabic pita bread <i>warmed, for serving</i>

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Soften the aromatics.

In a large non-stick skillet over medium heat, melt the ghee with the neutral oil to prevent burning. Add the diced onion and a quarter teaspoon of the salt, cooking until deeply softened and entirely translucent, about 5 to 7 minutes. Do not let the onions brown.

2. Sweat the squash.

Add the diced squash and another quarter teaspoon of salt to draw out the moisture. Do not add any water to the pan. Cover the skillet with a tight-fitting lid, lower the heat slightly, and let the squash sweat in its own steam for 8 to 10 minutes until it turns a soft, translucent yellow.

3. Whisk the eggs.

While the squash cooks, crack the eggs into a bowl and whisk vigorously with the remaining half teaspoon of salt, black pepper, and Lebanese Seven-Spice.

4. Execute the curd fold.

Once the squash is tender and the pan's liquid has mostly evaporated, pour the beaten eggs evenly over the vegetables and stop. Let them sit completely undisturbed for 15 to 30 seconds until the edges turn opaque, then gently fold from the outside in with a spatula to create large, tender curds.

1. **Finish and serve.**

Remove the skillet from the heat while the eggs are still slightly glossy. Crush the dried mint between your palms directly over the hot pan, and serve immediately with warm pita bread for scooping.

CHEF'S NOTES

- **The zero-waste pulp hack.**

If you ever make hollowed-out stuffed zucchini, never throw away the watery core. Sauté that scooped-out pulp in a skillet with olive oil, smashed garlic, and dried mint until it reduces into a savory, garlicky jam—a zero-waste variation known as Mfarakeh Lubb al-Kousa.

- **The carnivore's upgrade.**

To build a heavier winter supper, swap the eggs for a half-pound of ground beef or lamb. Brown the meat with the onions first, season heavily with cinnamon and allspice, then simmer the zucchini in the rendered fat until meltingly tender.