Egyptian Recipes

by Maha Rabie

photographed and typed by Carrie Reed

Mahshi

Meat, rice and tomato stuffed vegetables

Ingredients

- 1/2 lb ground beef or lamb (optional)
- ~20 small vegetables for stuffing (zucchini, eggplant, bell peppers, tomatoes)
- 1 bunch each fresh dill, parsley, cilantro
- 1 onion
- 2 additional tomatoes
- 8 oz can tomato sauce
- 1 c rice
- garlic powder, allspice, red pepper flakes, cumin, pepper, salt, cinnamon, coriander, chili powder (optional)
- 1-2 T white sugar
- olive oil
- chicken or beef bouillon cubes or powder (optional)

Special Tools Needed:

- Hollowing tool (see photo)

Vegetable Prep

- Wash produce

- Zucchinis—cut off top and cut off bottom just slightly. Very slow and gently hollow out the inside. Move slowly at first so it doesn't break. Use tool to scrape outside to form lines (optional, for aesthetics only)

- Small Eggplant—if hard, roll on counter to soften. Hollow out insides until skin is very thin

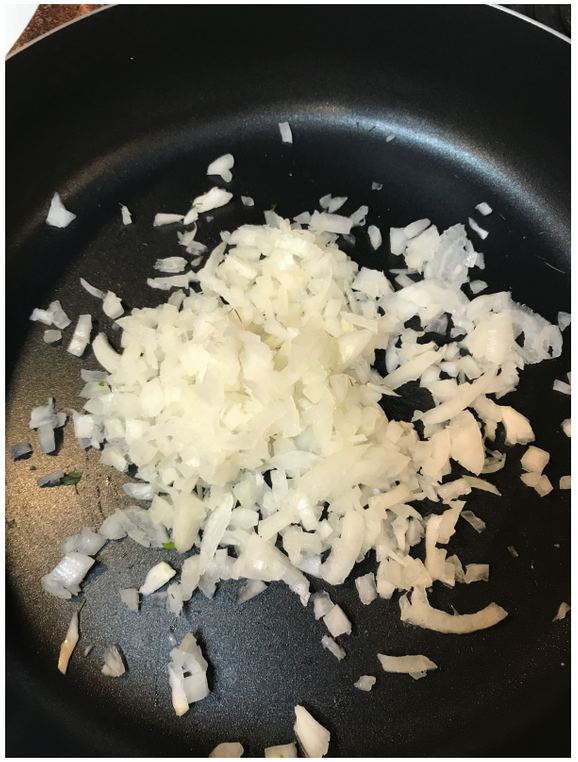
- Bell Peppers—Easiest if it has a stem remaining. Push the stem hard into the center of the bell pepper. Use your thumb to shove in a hole. Remove stem and shake out seeds. Wash out insides

- Tomato—cut hole in top and hollow out insides. Save the insides to line bottom of cooking pot

- Fresh greens—finely chop/cut the dill, parsley, and cilantro and set aside

Create the Filling

- Finely chop the onion and sauté in pan until starting to turn gold
- Add 1/2 lb ground beef or lamb, brown, and drain. Can leave out meat if desired.
- Grate 2 tomatoes to form a pulp. Set aside the skins
- Add grated tomatoes to meat/ onion mixture
- Add ~3oz (1/3 can) tomato sauce
- Cook on medium high heat, stirring regularly
- Meanwhile, rinse and set aside 1 cup rice



Create the Filling Part 2

- Add to the filling mixture while it cooks: sprinkle of garlic powder, pinch of allspice, red pepper flakes to taste, 1 t cumin, 1/2 tsp pepper, 1 tsp salt, sprinkle cinnamon, sprinkle coriander
- Cook til it thickens and then turn off heat
- add about 3 more oz tomato sauce
- add about 1 T sugar, the cut greens, and (optionally) chili powder
- taste and adjust seasonings to taste- particularly salt levels and spiciness
- stir in the uncooked rice and combine

Fill the Vegetables

- In the bottom of your cooking pot, place the tomato skins and innards of the tomatoes. This prevents vegetables from burning and adds flavor
- Add a little olive oil to the pot
- Stuff the vegetables by hand. For smaller pieces like zucchini and eggplant, tap the base on the counter to help the filling go all the way down
- Do not overfill as the rice expands when it cooks
- Place upright in the pot forming circles inside each other. If using tomatoes, put the tomatoes in the middle first to help the others stay upright

Cook the Mahshi

- Boil water (in a kettle is great) and fill the pot with the vegetables with hot water until about 1/2 way up the vegetables. Add a little water into the vegetables themselves to help the rice cook
- Optionally, add a bouillon cube or powder to the water for flavor.
- Cover and cook on high
- When the rice expands and is almost soft, reduce heat to low and continue to cook until rice is fully cooked

Lentil Soup with Bread Chips

a smooth, pureed soup

Ingredients

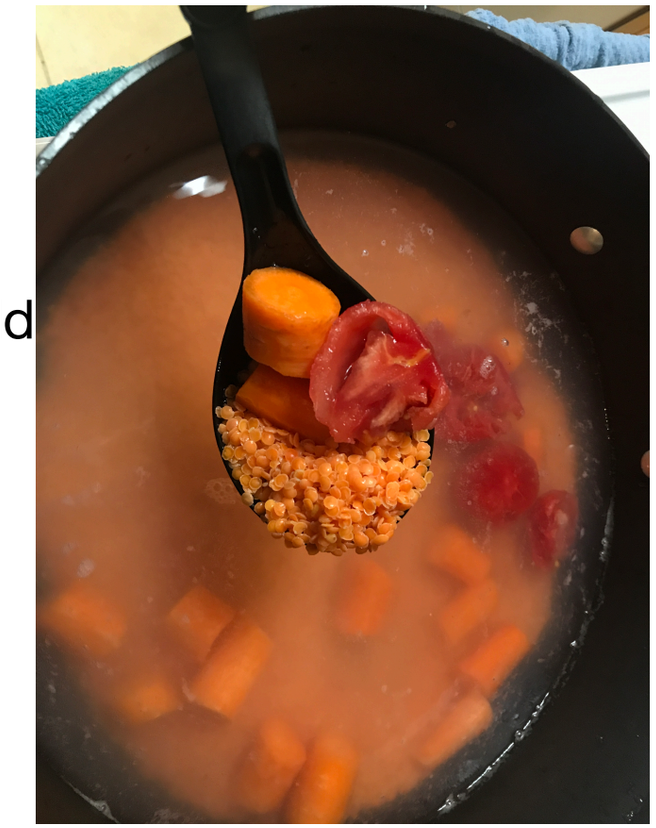
- 1/2 kilo yellow lentils (about 1 lb)
- 4 carrots
- 3 small tomatoes (like roma)
- 1/3 large onion
- 2 heads garlic
- salt
- cumin
- olive oil
- roasted coriander seeds, then crushed or sent through spice grinder; ground coriander works in a pinch
- 5 pieces pita bread
- garlic powder

Special Tools Needed:

- blender
- spice grinder (if roasting coriander seeds)

Cook the Lentils

- Pour bag of yellow lentils into large pot and rinse well 3-5 times until water is barely murky
- Fill pot with water about 1 1/2” above the lentils and put on high on stove
- Peel carrots and cut off ends. Cut into 1/2-1” chunks and add to pot
- Peel tomatoes (tossing skins), cut in half, and add to pot
- Cut 1/3 of onion into 3-4 pieces and add
- Add 3 garlic cloves, whole
- Cover and cook on high
- Foam is ok. If it starts to foam over, lower heat a bit
- Cook 1 hour



Blend and Remove Foam

- Cool soup a bit and then blend smooth in blender in batches. If soup is too hot, it can crack a blender. You can also use an immersion blender if it can blend carrot pieces smooth
- If tomato seeds both you, pour from blender through a fine sieve or colander before adding back to pot
- Put back on stove and bring to a boil
- As it boils, foam will form on top. Use a ladle and skim just the foam off the top and toss.
- Add about 1 spoonful salt and about 1/2-1 spoonful cumin. Stir
- Continue to ladle off foam until little remains

Cook the Seasonings

- Prep 1 1/2 heads garlic and either put through a garlic press or a mini food processor to make very fine pieces.
- Add to a small pan with cumin, salt, roasted ground coriander, and olive oil
- Heat on high and stir regularly until garlic is cooked
- Add a ladle of soup to the pan and immediately dump it all into the soup
- Stir and taste. Adjust seasonings as needed
- Serve with bread chips either on the side or sprinkled on top (see next page for recipe)
- Note: The coriander in this recipe starts as seeds. It is then dry roasted in the oven and sent through a spice grinder. For a slightly different taste, you can use regular ground coriander.

Bread Chips

- Cut or rip up 5 pieces of Shamy or pita bread into small chip-size pieces
- toss with 3 TB olive oil, salt, garlic powder, and cumin
- Mix and then lay out on a tray in a preheated oven (to 350 degrees F)
- Check periodically and stir until desired shade of brown

Tameya

Egyptian falafel with fava beans

- Ingredients for about 20 pieces
- 2 1/2 c split broad beans (fava beans)
- 1 1/2 sticks leaks
- 1 green onion
- 1 bundle of fresh parsley, cilantro, and dill (“hodra” in Egypt)—about 1/4 parsley, 1/4 dill and 1/2 cilantro
- 4 cloves garlic
- chili pepper (optional)
- roasted, ground coriander seeds
- sesame seeds
- pepper
- salt
- baking soda
- 1-2 eggs
- vegetable oil

Prep the Beans

- Advanced Prep!! 2 days before, soak 2 1/2 cups split broad beans (aka fava beans). Change water every hour and rinse and rub beans. If this is impractical, you can soak just overnight for potentially a texture difference. Beans and water should feel very clean and smooth
- Place soaked beans in a bowl
- Roughly chop the greens (parsley, cilantro, dill) and add. Add 4 garlic cloves whole.
- Cut up onion and leak in 1/4-1/2” pieces and add

Blend

- Add mixture to food processor and blend (in batches if needed)
- Blend until very fine and moist. The beans release water and the mixture should feel damp
- If it is finely blended and still a little dry, add a hint of water
- If freezing, place mixture at this point into a freezer bag and freeze. Thaw NOT in water. Only keep in freezer up to 10 days.

Not ready yet

Ready

Season

- Add to mixture:
  - 1 tsp dry roasted ground coriander seeds
  - 1/2 tsp sesame seeds
  - 1/2 tsp pepper
  - 1 tsp salt
  - 1/4 tsp baking soda (keeps it fluffy)
- Whisk 1 large egg (or 2 small ones) with a little pepper and add 1/2 to mixture. Use hands or a whisk to combine to keep air out. Mixture should form a slightly sticky patty. If needed, add additional egg mixture
- Taste to see if more salt is needed

dry roasted, then ground coriander seeds

Cook

- Fill a pot with vegetable oil about 1” deep. If only making a few, use a small pot. Heat to medium-high/high. Oil is hot enough when a small piece of bean mixture bubbles and rises to surface when dropped in
- On a small plate, place ground coriander and sesame seeds
- Fill a small bowl with water. Wet hands.
- Form a thin patty on your fingers with the mixture. Either sprinkle the seed mixture on top, or gentle place the patty on the plate and pick back up so one side has seeds
- Carefully place the patty into the hot oil. It should float
- Add additional patties, wetting hands every couple patties
- Flip patties occasionally and remove when brown enough to your liking. Place on a paper towel. Best eaten hot.
- Note: Can also make them all little balls instead of patties

Tomato and Carrot Filling

Tameya is excellent eaten on its own or stuffed into a pita or baladi (Egyptian) bread with a little hummus or tahini, and this tomato and carrot mixture. Or stuff the tomatoes and eat it as a side with the tameya

- Shred 2 peeled carrots and mix with a little fresh lemon juice, pureed or pressed garlic cloves (or use pre-minced for ease. I use about 2 Tbs), ground coriander, parsley, salt, and cumin. Stir and adjust for taste
- If stuffing tomatoes, slice a tomato most (but not all) the way through and stuff with the carrot mixture. Letting the flavors sit and blend a while before eating is delicious.
- Or slice tomatoes and stick into pita with the carrot mixture, tameya, and hummus
- The flavor contrast is great!

Koshari

A classic, Egyptian comfort food full of carbs and yumminess!

Ingredients: (This makes a ton! Cut in half as needed)

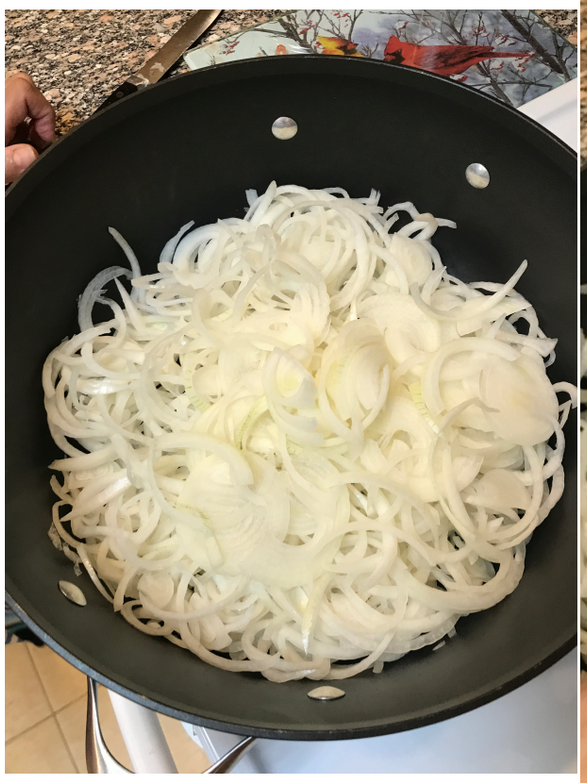
- 8 big onions for crispy fried topper (optional; makes about 8c fried onions. Reduce as desired)
- vegetable oil (if frying the optional onion topping 2L/66 oz of oil and possibly more)
- 1-1/2 bag of brown lentils (1 lb/500g)
- 2 16 oz cans of chickpeas
- 1 box spaghetti (about 1/2 needed)
- 1 bag vermicelli pasta (durum wheat; shaareya) (about 5 oz needed, see note)
- 1 bag ditalini pasta (small tubes)—about 5 oz needed
- 1 1/2 cups rice
- 20 garlic cloves, minced (10-15 tsp pre-minced garlic)
- white vinegar
- 4 medium tomatoes
- 4 15 oz cans tomato sauce
- 2 T white sugar
- salt
- cumin
- pepper
- garlic powder

Note: Make sure to get vermicelli pasta, not rice vermicelli. You want the type that is broken into tiny pieces in a bag. This can be hard to find in US stores but is sometimes in the international or Hispanic area of the store (called Fideo in Spanish). Target.com has it for $0.49 for 7 oz (as of Aug 2019). The nice thing about Koshari is the ingredients amounts are very forgiving! Use more or less of the various items or leave out if needed. I often use whole wheat pasta as well and reduce the quantities of rice and pasta while increasing chickpeas and lentils. Or I use brown rice in a rice cooker and add to koshari when layering. It is up to you!

Fry the Onions

Koshari is topped with delicious fried onions. This is optional, but very delicious! It does take a while, however, to make. Luckily they can be made ahead and stored in the fridge. They will easily last over 2 weeks in the fridge.

- Slice 8 big onions into thin strips, toss and coat with salt (adds crunch) in a large pot
- Pour oil (approximately 2L or 66 oz) over onions until well covered and turn on high heat
- Stir very frequently.
- Note: The onions go from almost ready to burnt very quickly. Prepare a cookie sheet covered in paper towels and have slotted spoons ready to go next to the stove.
- While cooking the onions, start the lentils



Fry the Onions Cont

- Keep stirring until the onions are lightly brown. Be ready! They go from deliciously crispy to burnt very fast.
- Scoop and drain and place on paper towels on a cookie sheet.
- Place onions in the path of cold air (like in front of an AC vent) to finish crisping. Once cool, put in a sealed container.
- These are delicious and addictive! Store in fridge.

Cook the Lentils

- Put the brown lentils into a large pot and rinse well, then drain. Note: Use 1/2-1 bag (1/2-1 lb; 250-500g) depending on how much you like lentils
- Refill pot about half way with water and cook on high
- While lentils are cooking, make sauce
- When lentils are cooked, drain but do not rinse
- Set aside

Make the Sauce

- Grate 4 medium tomatoes
- Mince 20 cloves garlic (or use 10-15 tsp pre-minced garlic from a jar) and place in pot with olive oil. Cook on medium high, but don’t let get too golden
- Add 4 T white vinegar, grated tomatoes, and 4 cans tomato sauce to pot. Cover and cook on medium low
- After about 15 min, add 1-2T white sugar
- While it cooks, cook pasta
- Cook about 15 min longer, then add cumin, 1/2 tsp pepper, garlic powder, and salt to taste. If you like spicy, add some chili powder red pepper flakes.
- You might need to cook it down some depending on how juicy your tomatoes were.
- This freezes well, so make extra and thaw it later for future koshari

Make the pasta and rice

- Rinse 1.5 cups rice and set aside
- Put 1/2 c oil in a pot on high heat.
- Add 1 1/2 c vermicelli pasta and stir constantly so it doesn't burn. The goal is golden brown, but not burnt
- Add the rinsed rice and about 1 T salt
- Add 1 1/2-2 c water so the rice and vermicelli is covered by about 1/2" water
- Cover and cook on high. As water disappears, reduce heat to low.
- While it cooks, cook the spaghetti and ditalini pasta together in a separate pot. Break the spaghetti into 1 1/2" pieces before adding to pot. Cook according to package instructions. Drain and set aside.
- When rice is cooked through and water is gone, fluff with a fork.

Combine the Koshari

- In a large pot, put lentils on the bottom, then the rice mixture, then the pasta and top with chick peas
- Add about 1 tsp white vinegar and gently toss/stir ingredients
- To Serve: Scoop the mixture into a bowl. Add the sauce and then sprinkle (or pile!) the fried onions on top.

Baba Ghanough

Baked eggplant dip

Ingredients

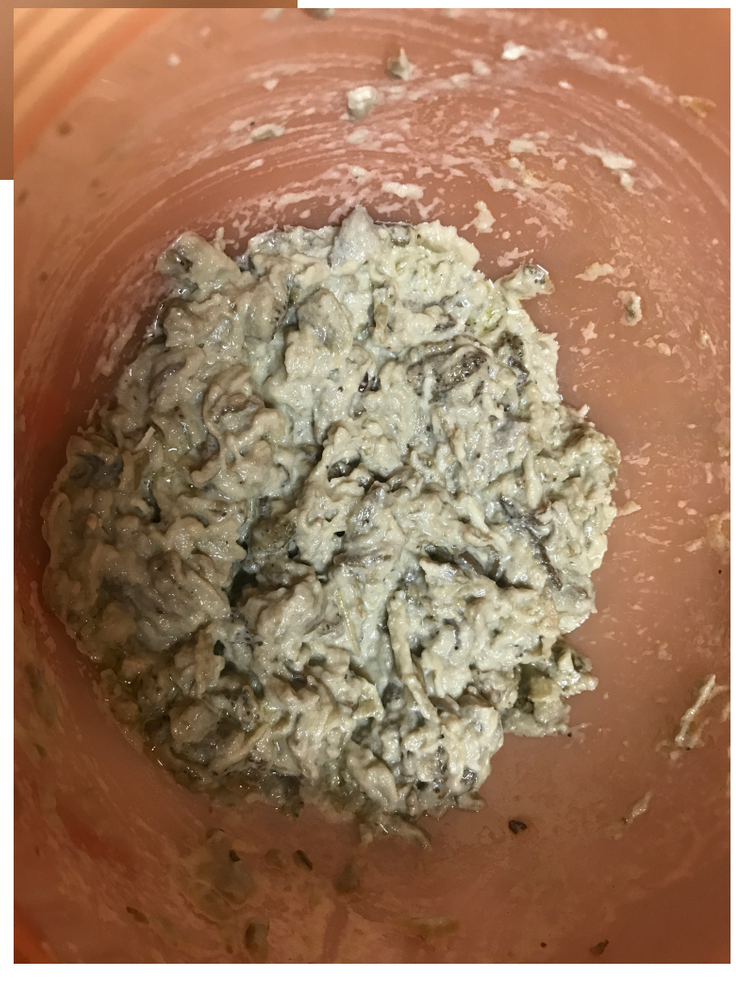
- 2 eggplants (about 25oz total)
- 1 large garlic clove
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp vinegar
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 2 forkfuls tahina (tahini)
- 1/4 tsp garlic powder
- red pepper flakes or other “heat” to taste

Bake the Eggplants

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees F
- Cut off tops of eggplant and poke 5 holes in them to release water during baking
- Put in oven directly on shelf
- Cook 1 hr and check for doneness. They are done when the skin is shrunken, they are very soft inside, and when you stab them, water drips out.
- Mine took 1.5 hours

Make the Dip

- Allow to cool until you can hold long enough to remove skin
- Peel off skin. If the end is hard, cut it off. Discard skin.
- Put flesh into a bowl, mash it, and drain off excess liquid
- Grade in 1 large garlic clove, 1 tsp lemon juice, 1/4 tsp cumin, 1/4 tsp salt, and 2 large forkfuls of tahina (tahini)
- Mash and stir with a fork vigorously
- Add 1/4 tsp vinegar, 1/4 tsp garlic powder, and sprinkle of red pepper flakes (optional- or other heat like sliced chili peppers, chili powder, etc)
- Taste and adjust seasonings as desired
- Drizzle olive oil on top
- Serve with baladi bread, pita bread, or chips



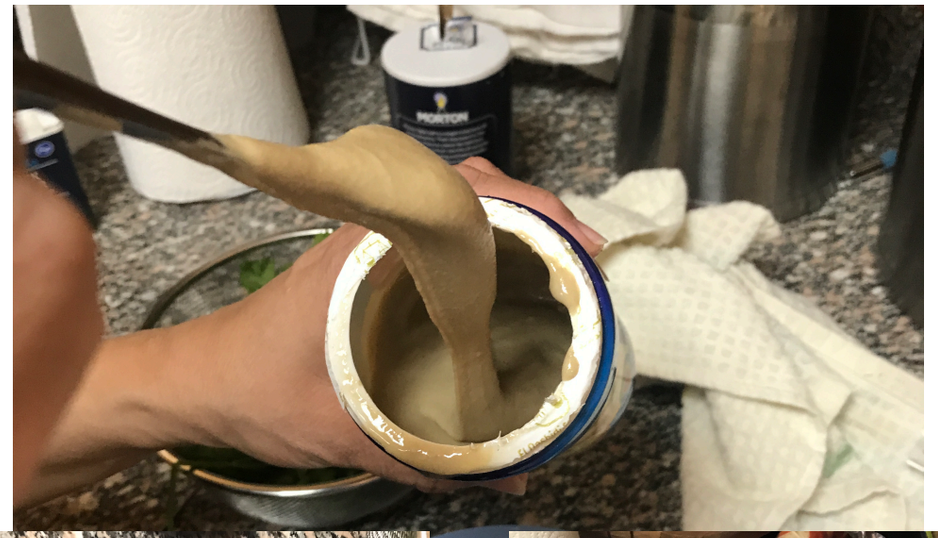
Tahina

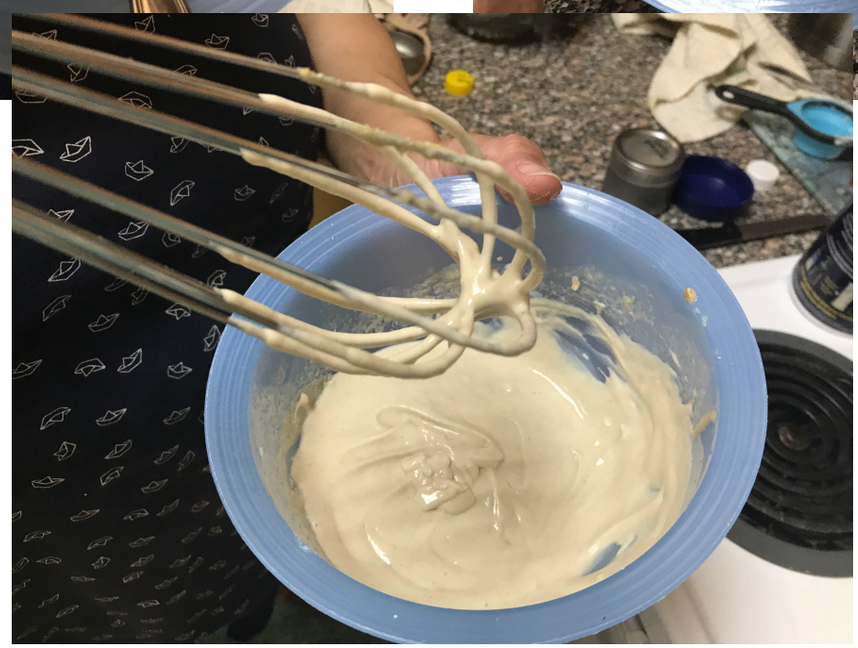
Sesame seed paste based dip

- Ingredients
- Tahina/tahini (sesame seed paste; name depends on location)
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 T vinegar
- juice of 1/2 lime
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- 1/8 c plain yogurt
- 1/4 c very hot water
- 1/4 tsp garlic powder

Add the Ingredients

- If the tahini has an oil layer on top, pour it off
- Add 1/2 c tahini in a bowl
- Grate and add 1 garlic clove. Add 1 T vinegar, juice of 1/2 lime, 1/4 tsp salt, 1/4 tsp cumin, 1/4 tsp garlic powder, 1/8 c plain yogurt
- Add in 1/4 c very hot water (from an electric kettle is great) and whisk quickly and vigorously





Adjust Dip

- Taste dip and adjust salt and other seasonings as needed
- If you like it hot, add in heat as desired—red pepper flakes, cut chili peppers, chili powder, etc
- If tahina is too thin, add a bit a more tahini
- If too thick, add a hint vinegar or a little hot water
- You want a dip slightly thinner than hummus
- Serve with kofta, tameya, falafel, or pita bread

Kofta

Egyptian “meatballs”

- Ingredients for ~18 3” pieces
- 1 bunch cilantro
- 1 bunch parsley
- 2 lb ground beef (or 1 lb beef and 1 lb lamb)
- 2 large cloves garlic
- small onion
- salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 3/4 tsp cumin
- 1/4 tsp allspice
- pinch nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp ginger
- 1/2 c bread crumbs
- 1 egg
- olive oil
- wooden pencil

Add the Seasonings

- Put meat into a bowl and squeeze out excess blood/ liquid and drain
- Grate 1 small onion into meat using small side of grater to make a paste. Do the same with the 2 garlic cloves. Can also put through a small food processor
- Mix in with hand
- Add 1/2-1 tsp salt (to taste), 1/2 tsp pepper, 3/4 tsp cumin, 1/4 tsp allspice, pinch nutmeg

Add the Other Ingredients

- Rinse and dry cilantro and parsley. Finely chop so you have 1/4c of each and add to bowl
- Add in 1/2 c fine breadcrumbs and 1 egg
- Mix by hand. It will look similar to meatloaf or meatball mixture
- Grease 2 casserole dishes (we needed 1 9x13 and 1 8x8) with olive oil

Make the Kofta Cylinders

- Take a golfball size piece of meat mixture. Take a clean (preferably unsharpened) pencil, ice pick, long meat thermometer or similar and shove through the ball.
- Squeeze and shape the beef around the pencil to make a cylinder about 5” long. The hole in the meat will allow for heat circulation. These will shrink to about 3” long with cooking
- Gently pull out pencil and lay meat into casserole dish
- If sticking, grease stick

Bake Kofta

- Arrange the kofta in the dishes with some space between each one.
- Bake about 20 minutes at 400. Then pull out, drain excess grease from dish and shift around a bit. They will have shrunk some and you can probably combine into one container at this point if desired.
- Bake another 8-10 minute until meat is cooked through
- Serve with tahina, on a bed of rice, or inside of baladi or pita bread (particularly good with tahina or hummus, tomato, cucumber, and lettuce). If with tahina-rinse and dry remaining cilantro and parsley and lay out on serving dish. Add kofta on top. The herbs will collect grease and add a hint of color.
- Note: These are also good on the grill!

Kunafa

Wheat-based syrupy dessert with nut filling

Ingredients

- sugar
- water
- raw, unsalted peanuts (or other nuts like pistachios, almonds, or walnuts)
- cinnamon
- lemon
- 1/2 kg kunafa (very fine wheat threads, name of both the wheat and the dessert itself)
- 1/4 c unsalted butter
- 1 packet vanilla powder (See photo)

Note: Both the kunafa and vanilla powder packet might be hard to find except in specialty stores or in Egypt. There are also cream filled versions of kunafa, which essentially combine equal parts ricotta cheese and cream as the filling instead of nuts.

Make the Syrup

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees
- Combine 2 c sugar and 1 1/4 c water in a small pot
- Stir slowly to dissolve sugar without the sugar sticking to side of pot (which will burn)
- Put on med high heat
- When boiling, squeeze in juice of 1/2 lemon
- Put on medium heat and continue to cook
- Syrup is done when it feels slightly sticky between your fingers
- Stir in vanilla powder packet and set aside

Make the Filling

- Put 1 c peanuts (or other nut) in small food processor with 1 T sugar. (The sugar helps keep it fluffy and not oily or mushy)
- Grind until small pieces but not a paste
- Set aside and repeat with remaining 3/4 c peanuts
- Combine ground peanuts in bowl and add 1 1/2-2 T cinnamon and stir
- Set aside

Prep the Kunafa

- Put the kunafa in a bowl and shred it
- Put 1/4 c butter and 1/2 c oil in a small pan on high heat
- After 2 min, lower heat to med low and move pan regularly until butter is mostly melted
- Put 1 T of mixture into round cooking pan (what you will cook kunafa in) and spread around
- Pour rest of mixture onto the shredded kunafa
- Add 1 T sugar to bowl and mix well with adds, squeezing together to distribute butter/oil mixture and sugar throughout

Layer the Kunafa

- Take 1/2 of kunafa mixture and pat hard into round cooking dish to form a flat, solid layer
- top with nuts and pat down. Do not put nuts right up to the edge. Leave about 1/2” nut free
- Top with rest of kunafa mixture and pat hard

Cooking the Kunafa

- Bake at 350 degrees on bottom rack of oven
- After about 40 min, check for doneness
- Side one is done when the edges pull away and brown and it sounds “crunchy” when you shake it (shifts slightly in pan). This took about 45 min for me
- Carefully flip the kunafa onto a plate. Add oil to the pan.
- Slide the kunafa back into the pan so the cooked bottom is now the new top
- Put back into the oven for about 45 minutes more until other side is done

Serve the Kunafa

- Flip onto a large plate.
- Pour syrup on top!
- Eat!

Orzo Chicken Soup

“Shorbet Lesan ‘Asfour” is a popular Egyptian soup

Ingredients

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- oil
- 300g orzo
- 8 c chicken broth
- 4 green cardamom pods
- 1 carrot
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- butter for sauteeing
- salt and pepper
- mastic (or corn starch or flour for thickening)

Note: This makes a very large pot of soup. For smaller amounts, I suggest halving.

Cook the Chicken

- Cut chicken into bite sized pieces
- Cook chicken in pan on stove top on med high with no oil until cooked, then drain, rinse (this removes the white fatty bits), and set aside
- In same pan, add 1 T butter and the finely chopped onion. Sauté until cooked.

Fry the Orzo and Make Soup

- Add 1/2 c oil in a very large pot on high heat. Allow to heat up. Test by putting in 1 piece orzo to see if it starts to fry
- Pour in 300g orzo and stir regularly until it turns golden.
- Drain excess oil and return orzo to pot on high
- Pour in 8 c chicken broth. Add in 4 cardamom pods, pepper, chicken and 3 pieces mastic
- Shred into pot 1 carrot

Cook and Adjust

- Bring pot to a boil. Boil 10 min and take off the heat.
- Add salt if needed
- Cover and let sit a bit.
- Add hot water or hot broth to the soup if you want it to be thinner

Shish Tawook

Marinated chicken and veggie kebabs

Ingredients

- 5 small potatoes
- 7 small zucchini (or 3 regular)
- 3 red bell pepper
- 1 yellow bell pepper
- 3 carrots
- 1 eggplant
- 1/2 onion
- 1 kg (2 lb) boneless skinless chicken thigh or breast
- pepper, garlic powder, paprika, ground ginger, garam masala, oregano, salt, lemon
- 1 c plain yogurt
- olive oil

Note: You can use different vegetables based on personal preference

Prep

- Peel vegetables (except peppers) and cut into 1/2-1” chunks
- Remove bell pepper seeds and cut into wide pieces
- Cut chicken into chunks, rinse, and drain
- If putting on wooden kebab sticks, soak sticks in water to prevent burning

Make the Marinade

- Add chicken to a bowl and add
  - 1 1/2 tsp pepper
  - 2/3 tsp garlic powder
  - 2/3 tsp paprika
  - 2/3 tsp ground ginger
  - 1/4 tsp garam masala
  - 2/3 tsp oregano
  - 1 1/2 tsp salt
  - juice of 1 small lemon
  - add 1 c plain yogurt
- Mix with your hands.
- Add all the chopped vegetables and 1 T olive oil.
- Mix again and let marinate at least 20 min

Cook

- Two Options:
- Stick the meat and vegetables on kebab sticks in varying patterns
  - Grill or
  - Put on baking sheet or in casserole dish and bake in oven at 350 degrees until chicken is cooked through
- Spread out meat and veggies onto a baking sheet and cook on pan