

YOTAM OTTOLENGHI

SAMI TAMIMI

AUTHOR OF *PLENTY*



JERUSALEM

A COOKBOOK

Kohlrabi salad

Kohlrabi is a weird vegetable. We don't like saying it but it is. It is a cabbage with a swollen stem that looks like a bumpy green or purple apple and with a texture and flavor not dissimilar to a radish or cabbage heart. It is weird because of its look—it is like an alien vegetable, with a round, squat base from which straight leafy stems spew out haphazardly—and because people in the West, Germany excepted, have no clue what to do with it. Perhaps because of its oddity and eccentricity, or maybe because it is so easy to grow and tastes so fresh, people in Israel love it. Jerusalemites mainly use kohlrabi for refreshing and crunchy salads, sometimes in combination with other firm vegetables and fruit, such as fennel, radish, cabbage, and apple. But they also cook with it, adding it to stews and creamy gratins and sometimes even stuff it.

3 medium kohlrabies
 (1 $\frac{2}{3}$ lb / 750 g in total)
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup / 80 g Greek yogurt
 5 tbsp / 70 g sour cream
 3 tbsp mascarpone cheese
 1 small clove garlic,
 crushed
 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp freshly squeezed
 lemon juice
 1 tbsp olive oil
 2 tbsp finely shredded
 fresh mint
 1 tsp dried mint
 about 12 sprigs / 20 g
 baby watercress
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp sumac
 salt and white pepper

This salad was first made in our London West End restaurant, NOPI. It is simple, fresh, and makes for a great way to open or to end a meal. You can also serve it alongside a selection of other seasonal salads or cooked vegetables to make a light meal. Choose kohlrabies that are small and hard with tight-looking skin.

Peel the kohlrabies, cut into $\frac{2}{5}$ -inch / 1.5cm dice, and put in a large mixing bowl. Set aside and make the dressing.

Put the yogurt, sour cream, mascarpone, garlic, lemon juice, and olive oil in a medium bowl. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and a healthy grind of pepper and whisk until smooth. Add the dressing to the kohlrabi, followed by the fresh and dried mint and half the watercress. Gently stir, then place on a serving dish. Dot the remaining watercress on top and sprinkle with the sumac.

Puréed beets with yogurt & za'atar

scant 2 lb / 900 g medium
beets (about 1 lb / 500 g
in total after cooking and
peeling)
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 small red chile, seeded
and finely chopped
rounded 1 cup / 250 g
Greek yogurt
1½ tbsp date syrup
3 tbsp olive oil, plus extra
to finish the dish
1 tbsp za'atar
salt

TO GARNISH

2 green onions, thinly
sliced
2 tbsp / 15 g toasted
hazelnuts, coarsely
crushed
2 oz / 60 g soft goat's milk
cheese, crumbled



The beet is one of very few vegetables with a strong presence in the cuisine of almost every group in Jerusalem: it colors pickling juices on the Arab table (SEE PAGE 307) and is used in most meze selections; it is the base for Ashkenazic borscht and *hamitsa*, a refreshing cold version of the soup; and it forms the basis for another soup, of Iraqi Jewish and Kurdish origin, where the famous semolina *kubbeh* is served (PAGE 162).

Beets also cross cultural lines with the flexibility of an acrobat. On Yotam's tour of the city while filming a documentary about Jerusalem food, he met Michal Baranes and Yakub Barhum. They are a mixed couple, she is Jewish with Moroccan ancestry and he is a Muslim from the Arab village of Ein Raffa, on the outskirts of the city. At their restaurant, Michal, the chef, does some cross-cultural fireworks with her food, featuring elements from her Moroccan heritage, alongside very current Israeli themes and many traditional Palestinian dishes she learns from her cooks, who are mostly local. One of Michal's most useful tools is *chrein*, the horseradish and beet relish used in practically every Ashkenazic household. She puts it in her prawn "falafel"—minced prawns and *chrein*, rolled in panko crumbs and deep-fried—making scrumptious fish cakes that look like falafel but taste nothing like it.

You will be surprised how well beet works with chile and za'atar. Its sweetness takes on a seriously savory edge that makes it one of the most popular salads among Ottolenghi's customers. You can serve it as a dip or a starter, with bread, or as part of a meze. If the beet is watery and the dip ends up runny and doesn't hold its shape, consider adding a little mashed potato to help thicken it. Date syrup can be replaced with maple syrup.

Preheat the oven to 400°F / 200°C.

Wash the beets and place in a roasting pan. Put them in the oven and cook, uncovered, until a knife slides easily into the center, about 1 hour. Once they are cool enough to handle, peel the beets and cut each one into about 6 pieces. Allow to cool down.

Place the beets, garlic, chile, and yogurt in a food processor and blend to a smooth paste. Transfer to a large mixing bowl and stir in the date syrup, olive oil, za'atar, and 1 teaspoon salt. Taste and add more salt if you like.

Transfer the mixture to a flat serving plate and use the back of a spoon to spread it around the plate. Scatter the green onions, hazelnuts, and cheese on top and finally drizzle with a bit of oil. Serve at room temperature.

Spiced chickpeas & fresh vegetable salad

½ cup / 100 g dried chickpeas
 1 tsp baking soda
 2 small cucumbers
 (10 oz / 280 g in total)
 2 large tomatoes
 (10½ oz / 300 g in total)
 8½ oz / 240 g radishes
 1 red pepper, seeded and ribs removed
 1 small red onion, peeled
 ⅔ oz / 20 g cilantro leaves and stems, coarsely chopped
 ½ oz / 15 g flat-leaf parsley, coarsely chopped
 6 tbsp / 90 ml olive oil
 grated zest of 1 lemon, plus 2 tbsp juice
 1½ tbsp sherry vinegar
 1 clove garlic, crushed
 1 tsp superfine sugar
 1 tsp ground cardamom
 1½ tsp ground allspice
 1 tsp ground cumin
 Greek yogurt (optional)
 salt and freshly ground black pepper

The inspiration for this salad didn't come directly from Jerusalem, but rather from Morito, a wonderful London tapas bar owned and run by Samantha and Samuel Clark, whose food is inspired by southern Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East, very much echoing the same voices that can be heard in Jerusalem's kitchens. The combination of the cold and fresh salad with the warm chickpeas is surprisingly enticing. You can serve this dish as it is, with just a thick, fresh pita. Still, a plate of Hummus (PAGE 114) alongside, or perhaps Fried cauliflower with tahini (PAGE 60), would complement it fantastically well. The salad also works on its own without the chickpeas (just omit the sugar).

Soak the dried chickpeas overnight in a large bowl with plenty of cold water and the baking soda. The next day, drain, place in a large saucepan, and cover with water twice the volume of the chickpeas. Bring to a boil and simmer, skimming off any foam, for about an hour, until completely tender, then drain.

Cut the cucumber, tomato, radish, and pepper into ⅔-inch / 1.5cm dice; cut the onion into ¼-inch / 0.5cm dice. Mix everything together in a bowl with the cilantro and parsley.

In a jar or sealable container, mix 5 tbsp / 75 ml of the olive oil, the lemon juice and zest, vinegar, garlic, and sugar and mix well to form a dressing, then season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss lightly.

Mix together the cardamom, allspice, cumin, and ¼ teaspoon salt and spread on a plate. Toss the cooked chickpeas in the spice mixture in a few batches to coat well. Heat the remaining olive oil in a frying pan over medium heat and lightly fry the chickpeas for 2 to 3 minutes, gently shaking the pan so they cook evenly and don't stick. Keep warm.

Divide the salad among four plates, arranging it in a large circle, and spoon the warm spiced chickpeas on top, keeping the edge of the salad clear. You can drizzle some Greek yogurt on top to make the salad creamy.

Shakshuka

Shakshuka is Tunisian in origin but has become hugely popular in Jerusalem and all over Israel as substantial breakfast or lunch fare. Tunisian cuisine has a passionate love affair with eggs and this particular version of *shakshuka* is the seasonal variant for the summer and early autumn. Potatoes are used during the winter and eggplants in spring.

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp Pilpelchuma (page 302) or harissa (store-bought or see recipe, page 301)
- 2 tsp tomato paste
- 2 large red peppers, cut into ¼-inch / 0.5cm dice (2 cups / 300 g in total)
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 5 large, very ripe tomatoes, chopped (5 cups / 800 g in total); canned are also fine
- 4 large free-range eggs, plus 4 egg yolks
- ½ cup / 120 g labneh (store-bought or see recipe, page 302) or thick yogurt
- salt

Having published recipes for shakshuka once or twice before, we are well aware of the risk of repeating ourselves. Still, we are happy to add another version of this splendid dish, seeing how popular it is and how convenient it is to prepare. This time the focus is on tomato and spice. But we encourage you to play around with different ingredients and adjust the amount of heat to your taste. Serve with good white bread and nothing else.

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat and add the pilpelchuma or harissa, tomato paste, peppers, garlic, cumin, and ¾ teaspoon salt. Stir and cook over medium heat for about 8 minutes to allow the peppers to soften. Add the tomatoes, bring to a gentle simmer, and cook for a further 10 minutes until you have quite a thick sauce. Taste for seasoning.

Make 8 little dips in the sauce. Gently break the eggs and carefully pour each into its own dip. Do the same with the yolks. Use a fork to swirl the egg whites a little bit with the sauce, taking care not to break the yolks. Simmer gently for 8 to 10 minutes, until the egg whites are set but the yolks are still runny (you can cover the pan with a lid if you wish to hasten the process). Remove from the heat, leave for a couple of minutes to settle, then spoon into individual plates and serve with the labneh or yogurt.

SERVES 4 AS PART OF
A MEZE PLATE

Burnt eggplant with garlic, lemon & pomegranate seeds

4 large eggplants
(3¼ lb / 1.5 kg before
cooking; 2½ cups /
550 g after burning
and draining the flesh)
2 cloves garlic, crushed
grated zest of 1 lemon and
2 tbsp freshly squeezed
lemon juice
5 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp chopped flat-leaf
parsley
2 tbsp chopped mint
seeds of ½ large
pomegranate (scant
½ cup / 80 g in total)
salt and freshly ground
black pepper

This salad has the most wonderful smoky aroma and works well with grilled meat or fish, as well as with other dips and salads to kick-start a passionate Levantine feast. But in order to get the full smoky flavor, you really need to stick to the instructions and allow the eggplants to burn well. If you want to turn it into a "real" baba ghanoush, whatever that may be (SEE PAGE 76), drizzle on some light tahini paste at the end.

If you have a gas range, line the base with aluminum foil to protect it, keeping only the burners exposed. Place the eggplants directly on four separate gas burners with medium flames and roast for 15 to 18 minutes, until the skin is burnt and flaky and the flesh is soft. Use metal tongs to turn them around occasionally. Alternatively, score the eggplants with a knife in a few places, about ¾ inch / 2 cm deep, and place on a baking sheet under a hot broiler for about an hour. Turn them around every 20 minutes or so and continue to cook even if they burst and break.

Remove the eggplants from the heat and allow them to cool down slightly. Once cool enough to handle, cut an opening along each eggplant and scoop out the soft flesh, dividing it with your hands into long thin strips. Discard the skin. Drain the flesh in a colander for at least an hour, preferably longer, to get rid of as much water as possible.

Place the eggplant pulp in a medium bowl and add the garlic, lemon zest and juice, olive oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and a good grind of black pepper. Stir and allow the eggplant to marinate at room temperature for at least an hour.

When you are ready to serve, mix in most of the herbs and taste for seasoning. Pile high on a serving plate, scatter on the pomegranate seeds, and garnish with the remaining herbs.

Tabbouleh

"If you want to find a good husband, you'd better learn how to chop your parsley properly," Sami's mother sternly cautioned his sister when she was a teenager. Indeed tabbouleh, as is not always understood in the West, is all about parsley. It is a key ingredient—both in this salad and in Palestinian cuisine in general—and it must be treated with respect and great deftness, as implied by Sami's mum.

Tabbouleh probably hails from Lebanon and Syria, but has become such an essential part of the Palestinian heritage that nobody seems to remember any more. A good tabbouleh is based on plenty of fresh flat-leaf parsley and mint, carefully shredded by hand to prevent bruising, well seasoned and sharp, mixed with some tomato and al dente bulgur wheat. The exact proportions of parsley to bulgur vary. The Lebanese use the least amount of bulgur, just a tiny quantity of grain dotted sparingly among the parsley. The Palestinians add a little more. Other elements need to be added carefully. Whichever way, this is, essentially, a parsley salad, not a bulgur salad.

1/3 cup / 30 g fine bulgur wheat
 2 large tomatoes, ripe but firm (10 1/2 oz / 300 g in total)
 1 shallot, finely chopped (3 tbsp / 30 g in total)
 3 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice, plus a little extra to finish
 4 large bunches flat-leaf parsley (5 1/2 oz / 160 g in total)
 2 bunches mint (1 oz / 30 g in total)
 2 tsp ground allspice
 1 tsp baharat spice mix (store-bought or see recipe, page 299)
 1/3 cup / 80 ml top-quality olive oil
 seeds of about 1/2 large pomegranate (1/3 cup / 70 g in total), optional
 salt and freshly ground black pepper

If you can't get fine bulgur wheat, or if the pack doesn't mention the grade, soak it in boiling water for 5 minutes, then drain and leave to dry in a fine sieve. Tabbouleh is traditionally eaten scooped up with small romaine lettuce leaves. These can be arranged on a platter at the start of a meal and everybody helps themselves. It also goes well next to most meat and fish dishes.

Put the bulgur in a fine sieve and run under cold water until the water coming through looks clear and most of the starch has been removed. Transfer to a large mixing bowl.

Use a small serrated knife to cut the tomatoes into slices 1/4 inch / 0.5 cm thick. Cut each slice into 1/4-inch / 0.5 cm strips and then into dice. Add the tomatoes and their juices to the bowl, along with the shallot and lemon juice and stir well.

Take a few sprigs of parsley and pack them together tightly. Use a large, very sharp knife to trim off most of the stems and discard. Now use the knife to move up the stems and leaves, gradually "feeding" the knife in order to shred the parsley as finely as you can and trying to avoid cutting pieces wider than 1/32 inch / 1 mm. Add to the bowl.

Pick the mint leaves off the stems, pack a few together tightly, and shred them finely as you did the parsley; don't chop them up too much as they tend to discolor. Add to the bowl.

Finally, add the allspice, baharat, olive oil, pomegranate, if using, and some salt and pepper. Taste, and add more salt and pepper if you like, possibly a little bit of lemon juice, and serve.

Sabih

This isn't a Jerusalem dish. It was developed by Iraqi Jews settling in the 1950s in the city of Ramat Gan, near Tel Aviv. It incorporates so many elements, though, that it perfectly epitomizes the jumble of cuisines of the region. The simply fried eggplant slices are a mainstay of both Arab and Sephardic cooking. Tahini has a similar lineage. The *zhoug* (PAGE 301) is a Jewish Yemeni chile paste that has become the Israeli equivalent to ketchup. The savory mango pickle the Iraqis brought with them reflects Indian influence. Hard-boiled egg is another Sephardic basic, and the chopped salad, well, that's as Arab and as Israeli as can be (PAGE 29).

2 large eggplants
(about 1½ lb / 750 g
in total)
about 1¼ cups / 300 ml
sunflower oil
4 slices good-quality white
bread, toasted, or fresh
and moist mini pitas
1 cup / 240 ml Tahini sauce
(page 298)
4 large free-range eggs,
hard-boiled, peeled, and
cut into ¾-inch / 1cm
thick slices or quartered
about 4 tbsp Zhoug
(page 301)
amba or savory mango
pickle (optional)
salt and freshly ground
black pepper

CHOPPED SALAD

2 medium ripe tomatoes,
cut into ¾-inch / 1cm dice
(about 1 cup / 200 g
in total)
2 mini cucumbers, cut into
¾-inch / 1cm dice (about
1 cup / 120 g in total)
2 green onions,
thinly sliced
1½ tbsp chopped flat-leaf
parsley
2 tsp freshly squeezed
lemon juice
1½ tbsp olive oil

This mumbo-jumbo served in or on a pita is one of the most exciting street foods you can come across. If you can't get a thick, fresh pita from a Middle Eastern grocer, don't bother with the supermarket brands and use toasted bread instead. While you are there, buy a savory mango pickle if you can. Sweet mango pickles or mango chutneys are not really suitable.

Use a vegetable peeler to peel away strips of eggplant skin from top to bottom, leaving the eggplants with alternating strips of black skin and white flesh, zebra-like. Cut both eggplants widthwise into slices 1 inch / 2.5 cm thick. Sprinkle them on both sides with salt, then spread them out on a baking sheet and let stand for at least 30 minutes to remove some water. Use paper towels to wipe them.

Heat the sunflower oil in a wide frying pan. Carefully—the oil spits—fry the eggplant slices in batches until nice and dark, turning once, 6 to 8 minutes total. Add oil if needed as you cook the batches. When done, the eggplant pieces should be completely tender in the center. Remove from the pan and drain on paper towels.

Make the chopped salad by mixing together all the ingredients and seasoning with salt and pepper to taste.

Just before serving, place 1 slice of bread or pita on each plate. Spoon 1 tablespoon of the tahini sauce over each slice, then arrange the eggplant slices on top, overlapping. Drizzle over some more tahini but without completely covering the eggplant slices. Season each egg slice with salt and pepper and arrange over the eggplant. Drizzle some more tahini on top and spoon over as much zhoug as you like; be careful, it's hot! Spoon over mango pickle as well, if you like. Serve the vegetable salad on the side, spooning some on top of every serving if desired.

SERVES 4
MAKES 12 LATKES

Latkes

5½ cups / 600 g peeled
and grated fairly waxy
potatoes such as
Yukon Gold
2¾ cups / 300 g peeled and
grated parsnips
⅔ cup / 30 g chives, finely
chopped
4 egg whites
2 tbsp cornstarch
5 tbsp / 80 g unsalted butter
6½ tbsp / 100 ml sunflower
oil
salt and freshly ground
black pepper
sour cream, to serve

We would like to thank our friend Helen Goh, a true perfectionist if ever there was one, for perfecting this Ashkenazic Hanukkah specialty for us. Don't save latkes just for holidays though; they are truly marvelous and a good way to start any meal, or to accompany roasted beef. Latkes are also often served sweet. To do this, remove the chive and reduce the salt. Serve warm with sour cream and sprinkled with superfine sugar.

Rinse the potato in a large bowl of cold water. Drain in a colander, squeeze out any excess water, and then spread the potato out on a clean kitchen towel to dry completely.

In a large bowl, mix together the potato, parsnip, chives, egg whites, cornstarch, 1 teaspoon salt, and plenty of black pepper.

Heat half the butter and half the oil in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Use your hands to pick out portions of about 2 tablespoons of the latke mix, squeeze firmly to remove some of the liquid, and shape into thin patties about ⅝ inch / 1 cm thick and 3¼ inches / 8 cm in diameter. Carefully place as many latkes as you can comfortably fit in the pan, push them down gently, and level them with the back of a spoon. Fry over medium-high heat for 3 minutes on each side. The latkes need to be completely brown on the outside. Remove the fried latkes from the oil, place on paper towels, and keep warm while you cook the rest. Add the remaining butter and oil as needed. Serve at once with sour cream on the side.

Falafel

Falafel and hummus are the ultimate daily grub in Muslim Jerusalem. As a little boy, Sami used to be sent out to the shops every morning to buy breakfast for his older brothers: hummus and freshly fried falafel balls. He'd take an empty plate to Abu Shukri, a famous hummus spot in the Old City, and the man himself would spread the warm paste over the plate and, with much attention, garnish it with herbs, spices, and pickled cucumber. The warm falafel and fresh pitas were carried alongside in a brown paper bag. Sami would charge his brothers "a little something" for the task, which he always spent in the sweet shop.

And that was not the end of it. Fresh falafel was sold as a snack—stuffed into pita with hummus, tahini sauce, fiery red chile sauce, and chopped salad—throughout the day. Sami would often come back from school with a stained uniform and no appetite for lunch after slyly indulging in one on the way home. Na'ama wasn't happy.

Over on the west side of the city, Yotam had a pretty similar experience: school-day end, a massive falafel sandwich, tahini-stained shirt, no appetite, angry mother.

In west Jerusalem, as in the rest of Israel, it was Yemeni Jews arriving in the country in the first half of the twentieth century who set up falafel shops and introduced the street food to Jewish society for the first time. The iconic Israeli "mana falafel," the pita pocket stuffed with falafel, french fries, salad, and other goodies, emerged when the Yemenis began to flavor falafel with *hawayej* (PAGE 226) and *zhoug* (PAGE 301).

Don't be alarmed about not boiling the chickpeas before they are blitzed into a falafel mix. This is part of the process. When frying falafel, it is important that they get just the right amount of time in the oil. If you don't have an appropriate thermometer, assess the temperature of the oil by frying one falafel ball as instructed, making sure it takes the specified amount of time to cook through completely but without burning on the outside. Serve hot with pita bread, Tahini sauce (PAGE 298), chopped tomato and cucumber salad (SPICED CHICKPEAS AND FRESH VEGETABLE SALAD, PAGE 56), Zhoug (PAGE 301), and pickles (PICKLED TURNIP AND BEET, PAGE 307).

1¼ cups / 250 g dried chickpeas
 ½ medium onion, finely chopped (½ cup / 80 g in total)
 1 clove garlic, crushed
 1 tbsp finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
 2 tbsp finely chopped cilantro
 ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
 ½ tsp ground cumin
 ½ tsp ground coriander
 ¼ tsp ground cardamom
 ½ tsp baking powder
 3 tbsp water
 1½ tbsp all-purpose flour
 about 3 cups / 750 ml sunflower oil, for deep-frying
 ½ tsp sesame seeds, for coating
 salt

Place the chickpeas in a large bowl and cover with cold water at least twice their volume. Set aside to soak overnight.

The next day, drain the chickpeas well and combine them with the onion, garlic, parsley, and cilantro. For the best results, use a meat grinder for the next part. Put the chickpea mixture once through the machine, set to its finest setting, then pass it through the machine for a second time. If you don't have a meat grinder, use a food processor. Blitz the mix in batches, pulsing each for 30 to 40 seconds, until it is finely chopped, but not mushy or pasty, and holds itself together. Once processed, add the spices, baking powder, ¾ teaspoon salt, flour, and water. Mix well by hand until smooth and uniform. Cover the mixture and leave it in the fridge for at least 1 hour, or until ready to use.

Fill a deep, heavy-bottomed medium saucepan with enough oil to come 2¾ inches / 7 cm up the sides of the pan. Heat the oil to 350°F / 180°C.

With wet hands, press 1 tablespoon of the mixture in the palm of your hand to form a patty or a ball the size of a small walnut, about a scant 1 oz / 25 g (you can also use a wet ice-cream scoop for this).

Sprinkle the balls evenly with sesame seeds and deep-fry them in batches for 4 minutes, until well browned and cooked through. It is important they really dry out on the inside, so make sure they get enough time in the oil. Drain in a colander lined with paper towels and serve at once.



Barley risotto with marinated feta

1 cup / 200 g pearl barley
 2 tbsp / 30 g unsalted butter
 6 tbsp / 90 ml olive oil
 2 small celery stalks, cut
 into ¼-inch / 0.5cm dice
 2 small shallots, cut into
 ¼-inch / 0.5cm dice
 4 cloves garlic, cut into
 ⅛-inch / 2mm dice
 4 thyme sprigs
 ½ tsp smoked paprika
 1 bay leaf
 4 strips lemon peel
 ¼ tsp chile flakes
 one 14-oz / 400g can
 chopped tomatoes
 scant 3 cups / 700 ml
 vegetable stock
 1¼ cups / 300 ml passata
 (sieved crushed tomatoes)
 1 tbsp caraway seeds
 10½ oz / 300 g feta cheese,
 broken into roughly
 ¾-inch / 2cm pieces
 1 tbsp fresh oregano leaves
 salt

This vegetarian main course is a dish everybody loves, particularly children. Unlike the proper Italian risotto, ours does not require the exact precision and meticulous preparation, but still tastes sensational.

Rinse the pearl barley well under cold water and leave to drain.

Melt the butter and 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a very large frying pan and cook the celery, shallots, and garlic over gentle heat for 5 minutes, until soft. Add the barley, thyme, paprika, bay leaf, lemon peel, chile flakes, tomatoes, stock, passata, and salt. Stir to combine. Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce to a very gentle simmer and cook for 45 minutes, stirring frequently to make sure the risotto does not catch on the bottom of the pan. When ready, the barley should be tender and most of the liquid absorbed.

Meanwhile, toast the caraway seeds in a dry pan for a couple of minutes. Then lightly crush them so that some whole seeds remain. Add them to the feta with the remaining 4 tablespoons / 60 ml olive oil and gently mix to combine.

Once the risotto is ready, check the seasoning and then divide it among four shallow bowls. Top each with the marinated feta, including the oil, and a sprinkling of oregano leaves.

Conchiglie with yogurt, peas & chile

Cooking or serving pasta in hot yogurt sauce may sound slightly out of the ordinary, but the Palestinian classic *shishbarak*—ravioli-like dumplings stuffed with meat—is prepared in just such a manner.

Turkish and Armenian *manti* are similar examples. The yogurt gives a delightful creaminess, without the heaviness of cream, and we urge you to try it as an alternative to the familiar Italian sauces.

2½ cups / 500 g Greek yogurt
 ⅔ cup / 150 ml olive oil
 4 cloves garlic, crushed
 1 lb / 500 g fresh or thawed frozen peas
 1 lb / 500 g conchiglie pasta
 scant ½ cup / 60 g pine nuts
 2 tsp Turkish or Syrian chile flakes (or less, depending on how spicy they are)
 1⅔ cups / 40 g basil leaves, coarsely torn
 8 oz / 240 g feta cheese, broken into chunks
 salt and freshly ground white pepper

Turkey and Syria produce many types of dried chile flakes, known throughout the region, varying greatly in sweetness, acidity, smokiness, heat, and earthiness. Each has its own unique aroma and identifiable tinge, and we like playing around with them in flavoring many of our dishes. We particularly like Urfa chile, dark purple and almost musky in flavor; Aleppo chile, burgundy color and fruity; or the more general Kirmizi biber, literally translating from Turkish as “red pepper,” which is easier to find and covers a range of Turkish products. Look for all of them in Middle Eastern and Turkish shops, or online. If you can’t get them, use regular chile flakes with a tiny amount of smoked paprika.

Put the yogurt, 6 tablespoons / 90 ml of the olive oil, the garlic, and ⅔ cup / 100 g of the peas in a food processor. Blitz to a uniform pale green sauce and transfer to a large mixing bowl.

Cook the pasta in plenty of salted boiling water until al dente. As the pasta cooks, heat the remaining olive oil in a small frying pan over medium heat. Add the pine nuts and chile flakes and fry for 4 minutes, until the nuts are golden and the oil is deep red. Also, heat the remaining peas in some boiling water, then drain.

Drain the cooked pasta into a colander, shake well to get rid of the water, and add the pasta gradually to the yogurt sauce; adding it all at once may cause the yogurt to split. Add the warm peas, basil, feta, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon white pepper. Toss gently, transfer to individual bowls, and spoon over the pine nuts and their oil.

Mejadra

This ancient dish, popular throughout the Arab world, is also one of our most loved. The fried onion, with its sweet oiliness and slight crunch, is the secret. When Sami's family would go out on a day trip to Jericho, they would take a large pot of *mejadra* for the picnic. The lentils were divided among small bowls and topped with a spoonful of fresh yogurt sauce. Dessert was a huge watermelon that Sami's dad chilled in a small stream running into the Jordan River.

1¼ cups / 250 g green or brown lentils
4 medium onions
 (1½ lb / 700 g before peeling)
3 tbsp all-purpose flour
 about 1 cup / 250 ml
 sunflower oil
2 tsp cumin seeds
1½ tbsp coriander seeds
1 cup / 200 g basmati rice
2 tbsp olive oil
½ tsp ground turmeric
1½ tsp ground allspice
1½ tsp ground cinnamon
1 tsp sugar
1½ cups / 350 ml water
 salt and freshly ground black pepper

The two of us can spend many pointless hours discussing what makes the best comfort food and why, but never seem to reach any kind of serious conclusion. Mejadra, however, is where the dispute ends. When served alongside Yogurt with cucumber (PAGE 299) or just plain Greek yogurt, the sweetly spiced rice and lentils strewn with soft fried onion is as comforting as it gets in Jerusalem. It is best served warm but is also fine at room temperature.

Place the lentils in a small saucepan, cover with plenty of water, bring to a boil, and cook for 12 to 15 minutes, until the lentils have softened but still have a little bite. Drain and set aside.

Peel the onions and slice thinly. Place on a large flat plate, sprinkle with the flour and 1 teaspoon salt, and mix well with your hands. Heat the sunflower oil in a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan placed over high heat. Make sure the oil is hot by throwing in a small piece of onion; it should sizzle vigorously. Reduce the heat to medium-high and carefully (it may spit!) add one-third of the sliced onion. Fry for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring occasionally with a slotted spoon, until the onion takes on a nice golden brown color and turns crispy (adjust the temperature so the onion doesn't fry too quickly and burn). Use the spoon to transfer the onion to a colander lined with paper towels and sprinkle with a little more salt. Do the same with the other two batches of onion; add a little extra oil if needed.

Wipe the saucepan in which you fried the onion clean and put in the cumin and coriander seeds. Place over medium heat and toast the seeds for a minute or two. Add the rice, olive oil, turmeric, allspice, cinnamon, sugar, ½ teaspoon salt, and plenty of black pepper. Stir to coat the rice with the oil and then add the cooked lentils and the water. Bring to a boil, cover with a lid, and simmer over very low heat for 15 minutes.

Remove from the heat, lift off the lid, and quickly cover the pan with a clean tea towel. Seal tightly with the lid and set aside for 10 minutes.

Finally, add half the fried onion to the rice and lentils and stir gently with a fork. Pile the mixture in a shallow serving bowl and top with the rest of the onion.

Burnt eggplant & mograbieh soup

5 small eggplants
 (about 2½ lb / 1.2 kg
 in total)
 sunflower oil, for frying
 1 onion, sliced
 (about 1 cup / 125 g
 in total)
 1 tbsp cumin seeds,
 freshly ground
 1½ tsp tomato paste
 2 large tomatoes
 (12 oz / 350 g in total),
 skinned and diced
 1½ cups / 350 ml chicken
 or vegetable stock
 1⅔ cups / 400 ml water
 4 cloves garlic, crushed
 2½ tsp sugar
 2 tbsp freshly squeezed
 lemon juice
 ⅓ cup / 100 g mograbieh,
 or alternative, such as
 maftoul, fregola, or giant
 couscous (see page 139)
 2 tbsp shredded basil,
 or 1 tbsp chopped dill,
 optional
 salt and freshly ground
 black pepper

Mograbieh, and to a lesser degree maftoul, are available from some Middle Eastern groceries and online (SEE MORE ON MOGRABIEH AND MAFTOUL ON PAGE 139). Giant or Israeli couscous are widely available and so is fregola, the Sardinian equivalent. Whichever you choose for making this wonderfully hefty soup, check the package for cooking times, making sure the little pasta balls are just al dente. Follow the soup with something light, like the Fava bean kuku (PAGE 39) or Panfried mackerel with golden beet and orange salsa (PAGE 222).

Start by burning three of the eggplants. To do this, follow the instructions for Burnt eggplant with garlic, lemon, and pomegranate seeds (PAGE 79).

Cut the remaining eggplants into ⅔-inch / 1.5cm dice. Heat about ⅔ cup / 150 ml oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. When it is hot, add the eggplant dice. Fry for 10 to 15 minutes, stirring often, until colored all over; add a little more oil if needed so there is always some oil in the pan. Remove the eggplant, place in a colander to drain, and sprinkle with salt.

Make sure you have about 1 tablespoon oil left in the pan, then add the onion and cumin and sauté for about 7 minutes, stirring often. Add the tomato paste and cook for another minute before adding the tomatoes, stock, water, garlic, sugar, lemon juice, 1½ teaspoons salt, and some black pepper. Simmer gently for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring a small saucepan of salted water to a boil and add the mograbieh or alternative. Cook until al dente; this will vary according to brand but should take 15 to 18 minutes (check the packet). Drain and refresh under cold water.

Transfer the burnt eggplant flesh to the soup and blitz to a smooth liquid with a handheld blender. Add the mograbieh and fried eggplant, keeping some to garnish at the end, and simmer for another 2 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve hot, with the reserved mograbieh and fried eggplant on top and garnished with basil or dill, if you like.

Stuffed artichokes with peas & dill

14 oz / 400 g leeks,
trimmed and cut into
1/4-inch / 0.5cm slices
9 oz / 250 g ground beef
1 large free-range egg
1 tsp ground allspice
1 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tsp dried mint
12 medium globe
artichokes or thawed
frozen artichoke
bottoms (see
introduction)
6 tbsp / 90 ml freshly
squeezed lemon juice,
plus juice of 1/2 lemon if
using fresh artichokes
1/3 cup / 80 ml olive oil
all-purpose flour, for
coating the artichokes
about 2 cups / 500 ml
chicken or vegetable
stock
1 1/3 cups / 200 g frozen
peas
1/3 oz / 10 g dill, coarsely
chopped
salt and freshly ground
black pepper

Thrifty Jerusalem cooks make good use of the abundance of spring vegetables and preserve fava beans, young vine leaves, and artichokes at the height of their season. The artichokes are trimmed and their hearts are frozen, ready to be used when needed (SEE PAGE 41). Increasingly, though, prepared frozen artichoke bottoms are available in supermarkets and they are pretty good. Look for them in Middle Eastern stores and you will save yourself a lot of work. Serve these as a main course with Basmati rice and orzo (PAGE 103).

Blanch the leeks in boiling water for 5 minutes. Drain, refresh, and squeeze out the water.

Coarsely chop the leeks and place in a mixing bowl along with the meat, egg, spices, mint, 1 teaspoon salt, and plenty of pepper. Stir well.

If you are using fresh artichokes, prepare a bowl with water and the juice of 1/2 lemon. Remove the stalk from the artichoke and pull off the tough outer leaves. Once you reach the softer, pale leaves, use a large sharp knife to cut across the flower so that you are left with the bottom quarter. Use a small, sharp knife or a vegetable peeler to remove the outer layers of the artichoke until the base, or bottom, is exposed. Scrape out the hairy "choke" and put the base in the acidulated water. Discard the rest, then repeat with the other artichokes.

Put 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a saucepan wide enough to hold the artichokes lying flat and heat over medium heat. Fill each artichoke bottom with 1 to 2 tablespoons of the beef mixture, pressing the filling in. Gently roll the bottoms in some flour, coating lightly and shaking off the excess. Fry in the hot oil for 1 1/2 minutes on each side. Wipe the pan clean and return the artichokes to the pan, arranging them flat and snugly side by side.

Mix the stock, lemon juice, and the remaining oil and season generously with salt and pepper. Ladle spoonfuls of the liquid over the artichokes until they are almost, but not completely, submerged; you may not need all the liquid. Place a piece of parchment paper over the artichokes, cover the pan with a lid, and simmer over low heat for 1 hour. When they're ready, only about 4 tablespoons liquid should remain. If necessary, remove the lid and paper and reduce the sauce. Set the pan aside until the artichokes are just warm or at room temperature.

When ready to serve, blanch the peas for 2 minutes. Drain and add them and the dill to the pan with the artichokes, season to taste, and mix everything together gently.