

Middle Eastern Cuisine

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Updated January 2015

printed & distributed by

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about the class

Taught by Rachel Mills

I was raised in a rural Upper Michigan home by a father and mother who grew, harvested, and preserved a massive garden, as well as hunting and fishing for much of our meat. This early education in food led to my interest in cooking. As an English major it didn't take long for my passion for food to appear in my writing.

Summer 2011 I journeyed to Arab Dearborn to conduct interviews for research on my MFA thesis, a series of food essays titled "Around the Table". The time spent in Dearborn, as well as the myriad wonderful pieces of Arab literature featuring food themes that I read, taught me a great respect and appreciation for the role food plays within Middle Eastern communities, both there and across the diaspora. I think there is much to learn from Middle Eastern food traditions: seasonal eating, food as community, emphasis on fresh ingredients, and an understanding that food is more than necessity, it is culture, family, and satisfaction.

Examples of what I call "Narrative Recipes", my creative nonfiction food essays, can be found at MarquetteMagazine.com

pickled turnips (makes 8 ½ pint jars)

The beets will turn the turnips a lovely bright pink. Think you don't like turnips? Let this recipe change your mind.

- 1 C water
- ½ C coarse white sea salt
- 2 ½ C white vinegar
- ½ C red wine vinegar
- 2lb turnips, peeled
- 1 medium beet
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and thinly sliced
- ½ t red pepper flakes (optional)

Combine water, salt, and vinegars in a large bowl.

Thinly slice the garlic and add to the mixture.

Chop turnips & beet into bite-size pieces (no more than a quarter inch thick) and add to the vinegar mixture. Make sure the turnips are covered by the vinegar (you can add more if they aren't fully submerged).

Cover and let sit at room temperature, in a relatively cool place or in the refrigerator until ready to serve.

Storage: The pickles will keep for several weeks in the refrigerator. They'll be rather strong at first, but will mellow after a few days. They should be enjoyed within a six weeks after they're made, as they tend to get less-interesting if they sit too long.

venison kofta

If you have lamb, great. If not, venison is a fantastic substitute in just about any lamb recipe.

- 1 lb ground venison or lamb
- cumin (½- 1 teaspoon)
- coriander (½- 1 teaspoon)
- chopped fresh mint
- several minced garlic cloves
- salt and pepper
- olive oil for brushing
- skewers

Mix together all ingredients—using your hands helps squish everything together well. Roll into oblong balls and thread onto skewers. Cook on the grill 4-6 minutes each side.

Serve with pita and tziki (cucumber yogurt sauce)

roasted potato, tahini & mint (serves 4)

A side dish sustainable in any season and delicious accompanying anything from fish to lamb.

- 8 potatoes cut into bite size chunks
- 4 T tahini
- water to thin
- olive oil
- minced garlic (3-4 cloves)
- ¼ C chopped mint
- salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ t red pepper flakes

Toss the potatoes with olive oil, salt and pepper. Place in a 375° oven to roast for about a half an hour. Meanwhile, whisk together several tablespoons tahini, a dollop of olive oil, garlic, mint, red pepper flakes salt and pepper until like pancake batter. When the potatoes have begun to soften, remove from oven and stir with tahini sauce. Continue to roast until done.

moroccan carrot salad

from <http://www.panningtheglobe.com/2012/11/25/moroccan-raw-carrot-salad>

- 2lb carrots, peeled and shredded in a food processor
- 3 T chopped flat leaf parsley, plus a few sprigs for garnishing
- dressing**
 - ¼ C olive oil
 - ½ C lemon juice (about 1 ½ lemons)
 - 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 - 1 t ground cumin
 - 1 t salt
 - ⅛ t cayenne pepper

Put shredded carrots and chopped parsley in a large bowl

Make dressing Whisk lemon juice and spices. Keep whisking while slowly adding the olive oil to emulsify the ingredients.

Toss dressing with shredded carrots and parsley. Chill for an hour in the fridge and let flavors merge. Enjoy!

Note: This salad can be stored in an airtight container in the fridge for several days.

tziki

(cucumber yogurt sauce)

- 1 C quality Greek Yogurt (Fage is a good brand)
- 4-5 finely minced cloves garlic
- 1 medium crisp cucumber, finely minced or grated
- salt and pepper to taste
- ½ t fresh or dried dill

Mix together all of the ingredients. Let sit in the refrigerator for at least ½ an hour before serving to let the flavors heighten.

harissa

from *Saveur*

Harissa is both delicious and versatile. it can be used with meat, grains or vegetables, as a marinade, for baking, or in soups and stews. Harissa is great for culinary experimentation.

- 8 dried guajillo chiles, stemmed and seeded (about 2 oz.)
- 8 dried new mexico chiles, stemmed and seeded (about 1 ½ oz.)
- ¼ t coriander seeds
- ¼ t cumin seeds
- 1 t dried mint leaves
- 3 T extra-virgin olive oil, plus more as needed
- 1 ½ t kosher salt
- 5 cloves garlic
- juice of 1 lemon

Put chiles into a medium bowl, cover with boiling water, and let sit until softened, about 20 minutes. Heat caraway, coriander, and cumin in an 8” skillet over medium heat. Toast spices, swirling skillet constantly, until very fragrant, about 4 minutes. Transfer spices to a grinder with the mint and grind to a fine powder. Set aside.

Drain chiles and transfer to the bowl of a food processor with the ground spices, olive oil, salt, garlic, and lemon juice. Purée, stopping occasionally to scrape down the sides of the bowl, until the paste is very smooth, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a sterilized 1-pint glass jar and fill with oil until ingredients are submerged by ½”. Refrigerate, topping off with more oil after each use. Harissa paste will keep for up to 3 weeks.