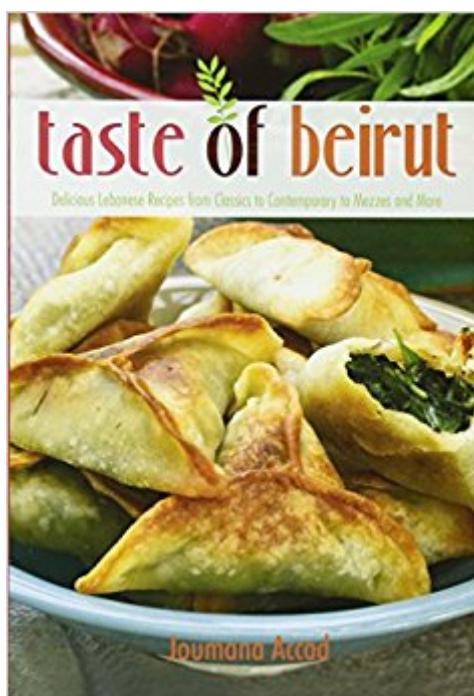


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Taste Of Beirut: 175+ Delicious Lebanese Recipes From Classics To Contemporary To Mezzes And More



Synopsis

Joumana Accad, creator of the blog TasteOfBeirut.com, is a native Lebanese, a trained pastry chef, and professional caterer. In her debut cookbook, *The Taste of Beirut*, she shares her heritage through exquisite food and anecdotes, teaching anyone from newbies to foodies how to master traditional Lebanese cuisine. With over 150 recipes inspired by her Teta (grandmother) in their family's kitchen, Accad captures the fabulous flavors of the Middle East and makes them completely accessible to home cooks. Each recipe features step-by-step instructions, Accad's warm teaching style, and breathtaking color photographs that will make mouths water

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Customer Reviews

Born and raised in Beirut, Joumana Accad left Lebanon for France to finish her high school education, and then moved to the U.S. permanently where she completed her college education. She later attended a course of study in Pastry Arts at El Centro College in Texas, worked in several bakeries and taught Lebanese cuisine at a health food chain. After having lived in the U.S. for 30 years, Joumana moved back to Lebanon for two years to immerse herself in the local cuisine and complete her work on this cookbook.

Introduction Born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, I learned culinary traditions upon the heels of my grandmother (Teta Nabiha), who was in charge of feeding us. She was a true artist, and I would sit by her side and watch her create masterpieces: gossamer dumplings, thin as muslin; kibbeh balls

rolled to a one-eighth-inch wall; meat pies that she'd patiently stretch out, dipping her fingers in olive oil; turnovers, evenly pinched and tightly sealed by hand. She'd do her daily marketing by lowering her straw basket, suspended on a rope and pulley, out the window and down to the market four stories below. From above she would inspect the fresh veggies to make sure they were the proper size and free of soft spots. She'd haggle with the vendors and confer with the butcher and the fishmonger. The rhythms of life in Lebanon were unhurried, meaningful, and steeped in tradition. Food—both the preparation and the consumption—was a celebration of life, something to be savored and enjoyed. The ingredients were always fresh, the vegetables in season, and meat was eaten only once a week or on special occasions. In 1979, I moved to the United States, where I spent the next thirty years. While raising my American children, I attempted the quixotic task of combining my Lebanese heritage with my fast-paced life, wistfully wishing I could somehow make the two worlds mesh. With so very little leisure time, Americans wanted their food to be convenient and eaten in a hurry, which often meant dishes that came fully prepared from the freezer aisle or a drive-thru window. While this might serve a need, the food is often bland and not the best nutritionally. I wanted to pass on the traditions of my homeland, to show that it is possible to eat delicious and nutritious food—without having to spend hours over a stove. Since coming to the United States, the American food scene has grown by leaps and bounds. In this book, I will show you how to bring Lebanese tastes and techniques to your home. My philosophy about cooking exemplifies what I believe is a common thread for Lebanese culinary artists: striving to reach the highest flavor quotient with the smallest number of basic ingredients. Lebanese cuisine is not for the sophisticate; it is for the person who values conviviality above all else. Through easy step-by-step instructions, I will teach you that it is possible for someone with limited time to cook Lebanese-inspired meals—many of them in one hour or less. You will discover a cuisine that is rich and varied, sourced on natural and fresh vegetables and foods. Taste of Beirut will bring the healthful and fabulous flavors of my homeland to your family table.

Do's and Don'ts of Lebanese Cooking and Eating

1. Pita bread is served with every meal in Lebanon. Pita bread is served at every single meal, and comes in three sizes: large (for sandwiches), medium (for dips or as a utensil), and cocktail-size. Pita bread in Lebanon is very thin, less than one-sixteenth inch thin. When ready to serve a meal, use kitchen scissors to cut each piece of bread into four triangles, put them back in the plastic bag, tie and fold the bag, and place it on the table to pass around at the next meal. The unused bread can be stored in the back of the refrigerator without risk of drying out. Bread is used as a utensil at the Lebanese table; you can forget forks or spoons—just don't forget the fresh bread! Pita bread freezes well and can be thawed at the

last minute. The bread will warm up gently to room temperature while you set the table and prepare salad. Leftover pita bread is cut into croutons, fried in oil, and drained; most people nowadays prefer it toasted in the oven at 300 degrees F until golden brown. Fried pita-bread croutons are sprinkled on salads (fattoush), as a crunchy layer on all the casseroles (fatteh), as a binding ingredient for veggie side dishes (treedeh), or fried with grilled fish. Toasted pita croutons will keep for a couple of weeks in a tightly closed container in a cupboard.

2. Lemons are used daily. Press fresh lemon juice and keep it in an ice-cube tray in the freezer. Do the same with orange juice or other citrus juice used in cooking tarator sauce (the Lebanese equivalent of mayonnaise) or pudding. Whenever needed, an ice cube of lemon juice can be retrieved easily enough. Lemon juice is used daily in just about everything: salad dressing, sprinkled over soups or stews, when making tarator sauces, and in making mezze items. If time allows, the lemon rind can be grated (first, then press the juice) and stored in a small bag in the freezer with a tablespoon of olive oil, to throw in a soup or stew at the last minute for a boost of flavor.

3. Keep onions on hand. Chop them and sauté them in oil until golden and store in freezer bags with the oil for each dish you are planning to make for the next couple of weeks. Almost every dish requires onions sautéed in olive oil until soft or golden, therefore, having the equivalent of three bags will amply take care of the weekly meals.

4. Use fresh garlic cloves. There is a huge difference in flavor (and nutritional benefits) between fresh and old garlic, so I'd recommend local or at least domestic garlic as opposed to imported. Peel a few garlic cloves; if there is a green shoot, remove it and discard it (the garlic is old). Keep the peeled cloves in a closed jar in the fridge to use when needed. I also like to keep a garlic mortar handy to make garlic paste, which can go into salad dressing, stews, soups, yogurt cheese dips, side dishes, or anything you have cooking on your stove.

5. Fresh herbs are best. Cilantro and parsley are 'blessed' in the Lebanese mindset. Cilantro gives flavor to veggies, stews, and soups. Parsley is the main component of tabbouleh salad and is sprinkled on just about everything else. When possible, use Lebanese parsley, which is delicate, flat-leaved, and silky. So-called Italian parsley is too thick, so I'd recommend organic Italian parsley as a substitute. Wash, dry one or two bunches of each, and keep in a sealed container covered with a kitchen towel. Toss in cilantro pesto at the last minute to add flavor or use it to liven up chicken wings, shrimp, fish, or other chicken dishes. Try it on cubed potatoes, carrots, or taro (or any veggie for that matter). Use it for soups, stews, bean stews, lentils, and in mulukhieh. To save time, make a dozen portions of cilantro pesto and freeze them in an ice-cube tray or in small freezer bags.

6. Keep extra-virgin olive oil in a cruet, always on the table. I'd recommend one imported from Lebanon with a Fair Trade emblem on the bottle. Lebanese farmers drink a sip of the olive oil to make sure it is fit for consumption. If the taste is bitter

or too peppery, it is probably bad. Believed to give you superhuman strength and immunity, olive oil is added to yogurt cheese (labneh) in the morning, salad or baked potato, soup or stews, on zaatar spice mix – in short, at every meal every single day of a Lebanese person's life. Olive oil has a mythical aura in the Lebanese folk mindset, as a proverb says, 'Drink your olive oil and break through the wall' (kol zeit w-entah el-heyt).

7. Simplify your spice rack. Traditional Lebanese cooking uses these main spices easily found in your grocery store: cinnamon, allspice (Jamaican pepper), black pepper, white pepper, and nutmeg. There is no need to stock your pantry with a plethora of spices unless you are planning a specific pastry or dish. In Lebanese cuisine, cinnamon is used for savory cooking, and rarely for sweet baking.

8. Incorporate olives into every meal. Olives are called the 'sheikh of the table' (sheikh el-sofrah) for a reason, as they are served for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. At breakfast, olives are served with yogurt cheese, sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, and fresh mint leaves. At lunch, the meal will start with one nestled in a tiny piece of pita bread, just to open the appetite. At dinner, they accompany a sliver of hard cheese, like a kashkaval or halloumi, with a side of green beans in tomato stew (loobyeh bel-zeit), for a light and frugal dinner. As the saying goes, 'Bread and olives is the best life can offer' (khobz wzeitoon, ahsan maykoon). Lebanese folks have always believed that frugal living off the earth's bounty, in this case, the olive trees and the wheat fields (bulgur), are sufficient for one's good health and happiness.

9. Tahini is another very important flavoring in the Lebanese kitchen. Consumed daily, tahini provides 20 percent of the calcium requirement in the Lebanese diet. I'd highly recommend a good Lebanese brand, and that you keep one in the cupboard at all times. Tahini is the main component of tarator sauce, hummus (in all its variations), and tuna tagen or kibbeh. Tarator is made in a jiffy with lemon juice and garlic paste, and can dress any cooked seasonal veggie with a pleasant result (potato, green beans, chard, beets, cauliflower, and eggplant).

10. Yogurt and labneh. Yogurt is essential in a Lebanese kitchen. Labneh, which is yogurt cheese, can be made overnight by simply draining the yogurt and adding salt. Yogurt is uncooked for salad or served as a side dish with bulgur pilafs or kebabs, or as a simple meal with plain rice to help cure a tummy ache. Yogurt is cooked as a soup or a stew. It is one of the layers in many casseroles, or is made into a sauce with meat chunks or kibbeh balls. It can be made with either cow's or goat's milk. Goat yogurt is considered finer, more stable to cook with, and much healthier. Ideally, a small dairy farm would supply the yogurt, which could be perpetually remade at home. Making yogurt is easy and does not require a special tool, machine, or skill.

11. Legumes. Legumes (chickpeas, white beans, yellow fava beans, lentils) can be bought canned, rinsed, and reheated in fresh water, or bought dried, soaked overnight, cooked until soft, and stored in freezer bags with one cup of cooking water in one-meal servings. Grab a bag from the

freezer when needed and make hummus on the spur of the moment or add to a stew. 12. Meats and poultry. Cook ground meat ahead of time with onions and spices. Earmark each bag for one meal. Freeze and grab it later when needed to stuff kibbeh or veggies, or for rice and spiced meat. 13. Lamb confit. If you are cooking with lamb, store all the residual lamb fat and lamb bits in the freezer in small bags, tightly sealed. Use it to fry eggs sunny-side-up (beyd bel-awarma) in the morning. Simply melt the lamb fat in a skillet over medium heat, slide the eggs into the pan, and fry until the whites are set. Season to taste and serve with pita bread. Another use for lamb fat: Add it to the kibbeh stuffing instead of meat; this is the method used in the rural areas to make do when meat is scarce. A tiny bit of lamb fat can replace lamb confit. Lamb confit was made every fall to stock up the larder. It was kept in jars to use throughout the year to flavor stews, soups, kibbeh, or fried eggs. This is an easy and practical alternative. 14. Nuts are essential. Stock up on pine nuts, almonds, pistachios, walnuts, and sesame seeds. Store them in the fridge or freezer. Boil the almonds or pistachios in separate pans for a couple of minutes, drain on paper towels, and peel when they have cooled, then airdry and store. Sesame seeds can be dry-roasted in a skillet over gentle heat for about thirty minutes until golden, then cooled and stored. All nuts should be kept in small freezer bags. When nuts are used in a recipe, always fry the peeled nuts in a bit of butter or oil until caramel-colored. ©2014 Joumana Accad All rights reserved. Reprinted from Taste of Beirut: 175+ Delicious Lebanese Recipes from Classics to Contemporary to Mezzes and More. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the written permission of the publisher. Publisher: Health Communications, Inc., 3201 SW 15th Street, Deerfield Beach, FL 33442.

The author tries to make many of the Lebanese food recipes as simple as possible but in the intent let many important parts behind. An example is Kesheck, never explains what it is or how it is made. There are much better books on Lebanese cooking.

A beautiful cookbook, with lovely photos. For those of us new to Lebanese cooking, Joumana has included a Do's and Don't guide of Lebanese cooking. Included is an explanation of many of the ingredients needed. Recipe directions are concise and well presented with amazing photos of the dishes. I so far have made the roasted cauliflower and potato sandwich and the Lebanese chicken wings. Both delicious. Next I am planning to make the Pumpkin kibbeh and Red pepper and walnut dip. The book has so many favorite recipes and many excellent ones new to me. This cookbook is a treasure! I hope this author continues to share her love of Lebanese cooking, I have learned a

lot from this wonderful cookbook.

Expected a book with more basics of Lebanese cooking. Not crazy about some of the recipes and thought some very familiar dishes were excluded, e.g. meat fatire.

I have purchased a number of Lebanese recipe books over the past few years in the hope that I might trace back to some of the dishes that my grandmothers used to make and they fell short of my expectations in some ways. However, Joumana Accad's book: Taste of Beirut, took me straight to the recipes that I had been searching for, with well-defined methods and a wonderful storyline.

Thank you and Sagtein to those who prepare these delicious meals! Cathy Guichard Johannesburg, South Africa

I love this book and the Lebanese cuisine. This book comes in hard copy, and is truly beautiful inside and out... And the recipes are very refreshing and delicious.- Ghada Nadia Chmeissani

When I was little, my mom used to cook all Lebanese food, growing up she wanted me to learn and never did, finding this book, not only brings me back the flavor, the texture of the food but my mom's memories, all the recipes are absolutely delicious

Easy to follow for another who was unfamiliar with Lebanese cooking and who likes precise directions. I tend to cook with "glugs" and "til your little finger can stay until the count of 10".

Good

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