

King Solomon's Table: A Culinary Exploration of Jewish Cooking from Around the World: A Cookbook

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From the James Beard Award-winning, much-loved cookbook author and authority: a definitive compendium of Jewish recipes from around the globe and across the ages.

Driven by a passion for discovery, the biblical King Solomon is said to have sent emissaries on land and sea to all corners of the ancient world, initiating a mass cross-pollination of culinary cultures that continues to bear fruit today. With Solomon's appetites and explorations in mind, in these pages Joan Nathan—"the queen of American Jewish cooking" (Houston Chronicle)—gathers together more than 170 recipes, from Israel to Italy to India and beyond.

Here are classics like Yemenite Chicken Soup with Dill, Cilantro, and Parsley; Slow-Cooked Brisket with Red Wine, Vinegar, and Mustard; and Apple Kuchen as well as contemporary riffs on traditional dishes such as Smoky Shakshuka with Tomatoes, Peppers, and Eggplant; Double-Lemon Roast Chicken; and Roman Ricotta Cheese Crostata. Here, too, are an array of dishes from the world over, from Socca (Chickpea Pancakes with Fennel, Onion, and Rosemary) and Sri Lankan Breakfast Buns with Onion Confit to Spanakit (Georgian Spinach Salad with Walnuts and Cilantro) and Keftes Garaz (Syrian Meatballs with Cherries and Tamarind).

Gorgeously illustrated and filled with fascinating historical details, personal histories, and delectable recipes, King Solomon's Table showcases the dazzling diversity of a culinary tradition more than three thousand years old.

JOAN NATHAN is the author of numerous cookbooks, including *Jewish Cooking in America* and *The New American Cooking*, both of which won the James Beard Award and the IACP Award for best cookbook of the year. She was the host of the nationally syndicated PBS television series *Jewish Cooking in America* with Joan Nathan, based on the book. A frequent contributor to *The New York Times*, *Tablet* magazine, and other publications, Nathan is the recipient of numerous awards, including James Beard's Who's Who of Food and Beverage in America, Les Dames d'Escoffier's Grande Dame Award, and Food Arts magazine's Silver Spoon Award, and she received an honorary doctorate from the Spertus Institute of Jewish Culture in Chicago. She was Guest Curator of Food Culture USA for the 2005 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, and a founding member of Les Dames d'Escoffier, and appointed to the Kitchen Cabinet of the National Museum of American History. Born in Providence, Rhode Island, Nathan graduated from the University of Michigan with a master's degree in French literature and earned a master's in public administration from Harvard University. For three years she lived in Israel, where she worked for Mayor Teddy Kollek of Jerusalem. In 1974, working for Mayor Abraham Beame in New York, she cofounded the Ninth Avenue Food Festival. The mother of three grown children, Nathan lives in Washington, D.C., and on Martha's Vineyard with her husband, Allan Gerson. Aranygaluska, Hungarian Golden Pull-Apart Cake with Walnuts and Apricot Jam

Yield: about 8 to 10 servings

1 tablespoon active dry yeast

1 cup (235 ml) warm milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (100 grams) sugar, plus 2 tablespoons

4 large eggs
Zest of 1 orange
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup plus 4 tablespoons (2½ sticks/282 grams) unsalted butter, at room temperature, divided
4½ cups (600 grams) unbleached all-purpose flour (about)
1 teaspoon salt
1½ cups (180 grams) ground walnuts
6 tablespoons (83 grams) brown sugar
½ teaspoon cinnamon
3 tablespoons cake or butter cookie crumbs
½ cup (150 grams) apricot or plum jam

Aranygaluska, also called golden dumpling cake, butter puffs, and monkey bread, has been extolled by Jewish immigrants from Hungary for years. I first noticed a recipe for the cake in George Lang's *The Cuisine of Hungary* from 1971. Aranygaluska probably started as a rich cake, like the German Dampfnudeln (see my *Jewish Cooking in America*) served with fish or soup on Fridays, when no meat was allowed for Catholics. Jews who separated meat from dairy in their diet would serve it with a fish or nonmeat soup.

Agnes Sanders, who grew up under Communism in Miskolc, Hungary, kindly showed me how she makes aranygaluska in her kitchen on New York's Upper West Side. "It wasn't bad growing up during the Communist [period] in Hungary," she told me. "Everyone was equally poor but we could go anywhere." When her mother died, her father, fearful that she would not marry a Jew, sent her to Detroit to live with an uncle in 1965. Everyone else in her family had died in the Nazi concentration camps.

Agnes's version of aranygaluska, learned in this country, was not as rich as I remembered it. I have tweaked her recipe here and there, adding ingredients like vanilla to the cake. I also add a chocolate alternative to the nuts, called kuchembuchem (one of those marvelous made-up Yiddish rhyming names), often made with leftover babka dough. Try one or both versions.

1. Dissolve the yeast in the warm milk in the bowl of a standing mixer equipped with a paddle attachment. Add ¼ cup of the sugar, the eggs, orange zest, vanilla, and 1 stick of butter. Gradually add the flour and salt, beating until mixed. Cover the bowl and leave for an hour, or until the dough has about doubled in size.
2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and butter a 10-inch round pan with some of the second stick of butter.
3. Melt what is left of the second stick of butter plus the remaining half stick and put it in a small bowl. In a separate bowl, mix the walnuts, brown sugar, remaining white sugar, cinnamon, and the cake or cookie crumbs.
4. Roll the dough into a 2-inch-thick circle. Using a 1-inch cookie or biscuit

cutter, cut circles of dough. Dip the circles first in the butter, then in the nut mixture and set in the pan, almost touching each other. After a layer is completed, spoon on dollops of jam. Make a second layer, filling in the holes with dough, then jam, continuing and rerolling until the dough is used up, ending with the walnut topping but not the jam. Bake in the oven for 35 to 40 minutes, or until golden brown and set. Leave in the pan for a few minutes, then turn onto a plate and serve warm. You can either cut the cake or pull the sections apart. Serve for a sweet breakfast treat, or as a dessert, served with good vanilla or rum raisin ice cream.

Note You can substitute 1/4 cup good-quality unsweetened cocoa and 3/4 cup sugar for the nut topping. Then, after dipping the rounds in butter, dip them in the chocolate-sugar mixture and proceed as above. Substitute the jam with Nutella or another chocolate spread.

Sometimes if serving aranygaluska for breakfast for a family gathering, I mold the cake and refrigerate it overnight. The next morning, while my guests are still sleeping, I bake it for them to pull apart when they wake up. Yum!

Hummus with Preserved Lemon and Cumin

At mealtime, Boaz said to her [Ruth], "Come over here and partake of the meal, and dip your morsel in the vinegar."

--Ruth 2:14

Yield: about 4 cups, or 6-8 servings

2 cups (400 grams) dried chickpeas (or 4 cups canned or presoaked chickpeas; see page 10)

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup (225 ml) tahina

1 whole preserved lemon, seeds removed (see page 11)

3 tablespoons preserved lemon liquid from jar

4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, or to taste

2 cloves garlic, or to taste

1 teaspoon salt, or to taste

Freshly ground pepper to taste

1 teaspoon ground cumin, or to taste

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

2 tablespoons pine nuts Dash of paprika or sumac

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley or cilantro

The use of the word "vinegar" may be misleading in the above mention of hummus, from the book of Ruth, written almost three thousand years ago. Most translations interpret the

word chamootz to mean "vinegar" (as it does in contemporary Hebrew). However, according to the Israeli author Meir Shalev, the Hebrew letters chet, mem, and zadek are the root letters of both the words chamootz and chimtza, which in biblical Hebrew means "chickpeas."

"In biblical Hebrew, there were no vowels, so words were more confusing," Meir told me, and added, "Anyway, if Boaz served his workers pita dipped in vinegar instead of something more substantial like hummus, they wouldn't have been very happy."

Hummus, meaning "chickpea" as well as "chickpea dip" in Arabic and modern Hebrew, is one of the oldest and most beloved dishes known to mankind. Originating in Mesopotamia, it is essential to the cuisine of the Middle East, served for breakfast, lunch, and dinner there for thousands of years. People never seem to tire of eating and discussing this ancient protein-rich paste.

Today, cooks soak and prepare dried chickpeas, often standing over large iron pots for hours until the beans fully soften. Early on, they learned to grind sesame seeds, which came from China to Mesopotamia, into a thick paste called tahina, which was stirred into the softened beans with some olive oil, garlic, a little salt, and pepper. This simple, sacred mix provided poor people their protein for the day, and the arrival of lemons from China added a dash of flavor that perfected this comfort dish of the Fertile Crescent.

In the 1960s, when Americans were traveling throughout the Middle East, they often came back with the taste of garlicky hummus on their breath. And with the advent of the food processor in the early 1970s, it was easy to prepare. In those days, you could only get hummus in mom-and-pop Middle Eastern stores in neighborhoods catering to immigrants, such as Sahadi's in Brooklyn. Today, every grocery store has dozens of varieties.

Because I met my husband in Jerusalem, we requested hummus at our wedding in 1974 and had to give the caterer a recipe for the dip. One guest who had never tasted this before told me my recipe, with its hint of that exotic spice cumin, was so good I could sell it to Zabar's. I didn't heed the call but others did, and now hummus is marketed around the world. Even with all the brands sold today-and some are very good-I prefer to make my own. Try it for yourself; you will see how good it tastes, especially with the preserved lemon and the cumin.

1. If using canned chickpeas, skip the following step.
2. Put the dried chickpeas in a large bowl with cold water to cover and soak overnight. The next day, drain and rinse them, then put them with the baking soda in a large heavy pot with enough cold water to cover by about 3 inches. Bring to a boil, skimming off the scum that accumulates. Simmer, partially covered, for 1 to 1½ hours, or until the chickpeas are soft and the skin begins to separate, adding more water if needed.
3. Drain the chickpeas (dried or canned), reserving about 1½ cups (355 ml) of the cooking liquid or water. In a food processor fitted with a steel blade, process the chickpeas with the tahina, preserved lemon and its liquid, lemon juice, garlic, salt, pepper, cumin, and at least 1½ cup (120 ml) of the reserved cooking liquid. If the hummus is too thick, add

more reserved cooking liquid or water until you have a creamy paste-like consistency.

4. Heat a frying pan and add 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Spread the pine nuts in the pan and stir-fry, browning on all sides.

5. To serve, transfer the hummus to a large, flat plate, and, with the back of a spoon, make a slight depression in the center. Drizzle the remaining olive oil and sprinkle pine nuts, paprika or sumac, and parsley or cilantro over the surface.

6. Serve with cut-up raw vegetables or warm pita cut into wedges.

Note Leftover hummus tends to thicken; just add some water to make it the right consistency. After a few days, freeze any uneaten hummus. Otherwise, with no preservatives, the dip will spoil. Baking soda just helps the chickpeas cook faster and breaks them down. And remember to add a little cumin, which is said to prevent gas.

Favism-Why Israelis Make Hummus and Falafel Out of Chickpeas

When Chaim Sheba, an Austrian-born geneticist, came to Israel, he noticed that some soldiers of Mediterranean origins came down with a blood disorder after eating fava beans or even, in some cases, after walking in a field with the fava beans in the springtime and smelling their pollen. This hereditary disorder, which causes people to have abdominal pains and vomiting, resulting from the rapid break-down of red blood cells, was discovered in 450 b.c.e. by Pythagoras, who warned about this favism, the dangers of eating fava beans for some people. Today, thanks to Dr. Sheba and others, we know more about this enzymatic disease. For that reason, Israeli cooks decided to put only chickpeas in their falafel and hummus.

Keftes Garaz, Syrian Meatballs with Cherries and Tamarind

Ostian meat balls-Offell² ostienses: Prepare the meat in this manner: clean the meat [of bones, sinews, etc.]. Scrape it as thin as a skin [and shape it]. Crush pepper, lovage, cumin, caraway, silphium, one laurel berry, moistened with broth; in a square dish place the meat balls and the spices where they remain in pickling for two or three days, covered crosswise with twigs. Then place them in the oven [to be roasted], when done take the finished meat balls out. Crush pepper, lovage, with the broth, add a little raisin wine to sweeten. Cook it, thicken with roux, immerse the balls in the sauce and serve.

-Apicius, De re Coquinaria (Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome), first century c.e.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

Meatballs

- ² cup (50 grams) pine nuts
- 1 large sweet onion, diced (about 1² cups/350 grams)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

2 pounds (907 grams) ground beef
2 cloves garlic, minced
½ teaspoon ground Aleppo or Marash pepper
½ teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon ground allspice
½ teaspoon cinnamon
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon tamarind concentrate
2 teaspoons tomato paste or ketchup
½ cup breadcrumbs, fresh

Sauce

½ cup (59 ml) olive oil
1 ½ onions, diced (1 1/3 cups/165 grams)
1 ½ tablespoons tamarind concentrate
2 cups (440 grams) pitted sour cherries or frozen dark red cherries
2 cups (440 grams) dried cherries
Juice of 2 lemons
1 ½ teaspoons ground allspice
Salt and pepper
1 ½ cups (355 ml) beef stock
1 ½ cups (355 ml) red wine
2 tablespoons chopped parsley or cilantro

One of the great gifts of the Syrian Jews to gastronomy is this meatball dish. Flavored with tamarind sauce and dried and frozen sour cherries, this sweet and sour keftes meatball recipe has been handed down for five generations in the family of Melanie Franco Nussdorf, a Washington lawyer who loves to cook the dishes of her ancestors, from Aleppo. We can tell that Melanie's family recipe has been updated over the years, as it contains tomato paste, a relatively recent addition to Old World cooking. If you cannot find sour cherries, frozen Bing or dark sweet cherries will work just fine.

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and toast the pine nuts by stirring often, in a small dry skillet over medium heat, until lightly brown, about 5 to 10 minutes. Remove to a medium bowl.

2. To make the meatballs: Sauté the onions in the oil in a nonstick frying pan until lightly caramelized, about 20 to 30 minutes.

3. Add the onions to the pine nuts, then add the ground beef, garlic, Aleppo or Marash pepper, cumin, allspice, cinnamon, salt, and pepper. Break the eggs into the bowl and stir in the tamarind and tomato paste or ketchup, mixing gently with your hands until just combined, then add just enough breadcrumbs for the meat to become clammy.

4. Take about 1 ½ tablespoons of meat and slap the beef several times into the center of

the palm of your hand to emulsify. Shape into small meatballs, about 1½ inches in diameter. Put on two rimmed baking sheets and bake for about 20 minutes, or until done but still juicy. You should get about 36 meatballs.

5. While the meatballs are baking, make the sauce: Heat the oil in a medium saucepan set over medium-high heat. Add the onions and sauté until transparent, then add the tamarind, pitted sour or frozen cherries, dried cherries, lemon juice, allspice, salt, pepper, beef stock, and wine. Simmer together for about 20 to 25 minutes, until the sauce is slightly thickened.

6. Mix the meatballs with the sauce and serve, sprinkled with chopped parsley or cilantro, over rice.

Note You can make this dish ahead and freeze if you like. Defrost in the refrigerator overnight, then reheat in a pan, covered, over medium heat until warm.

Tamarind

Tamarind, whose name comes from the Arabic word meaning "date from India," is an ancient sweet and sour fruit that actually originated in Africa but traveled very early to India and throughout the Middle East, then was brought by the Arabs and Jews to Spain and by the Spanish to Latin America. Within Jewish communities, you know a dish has Syrian roots if you find tamarind listed in the ingredients.

Often used the way we use tomatoes today, to add acidity, depth, and sweetness to a sauce, tamarind has been a lovely flavor addition for centuries in Syrian, Persian, Iraqi, Georgian, and Indian Jewish dishes, as well as Sephardic dishes that eventually, in the 1500s, traveled with the Spanish and Portuguese to Mexico, the Caribbean, and other parts of...

Other Books

King Solomon's Carpet, King Solomon's Carpet - a prize-winning crime classic from bestselling author Barbara Vine Winner of the Crime Writers Association Gold Dagger Award 'The tension grows ... an overwhelming sense of foreboding ... when the unravelling takes place, it is brilliantly unexpected and original' The Times Jarvis Stringer lives in a crumbling schoolhouse overlooking a tube line, compiling his obsessive, secret history of London's Underground. His presence and his strange house draw a band of misfits into his orbit: young Alice, who has run away from her husband and baby; Tom, the busker who rescues her; truant Jasper who gets his kicks on the tube; and mysterious Axel, whose dark secret later casts a shadow over all of their lives. Dispossessed and outcast, those who come to inhabit Jarvis's schoolhouse are gradually brought closer together in violent and unforeseen ways by London's forbidding and dangerous Underground ... 'I longed to know what would happen next. Towards the end the tension fairly gets you by the throat' Sunday Express 'Vine arouses a genuine fear that all that is normal is in danger of being lost' Sunday Times King Solomon's Carpet is a modern masterpiece of the crime genre and will leave you gripped from the first page to the last. If you enjoy the novels of P.D. James, Ian Rankin and Scott Turow, you will love this book. Barbara Vine is the pen-name of Ruth Rendell. She has written fifteen novels using this pseudonym, including A Fatal

Inversion and King Solomon's Carpet which both won the Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger Award. Her other books include: A Dark Adapted Eye; The House of Stairs; Gallowglass; Asta's Book; No Night Is Too Long; In the Time of His Prosperity; The Brimstone Wedding; The Chimney Sweeper's Boy; Grasshopper; The Blood Doctor; The Minotaur; The Birthday Present and The Child's Child.

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