

DIASPORA KITCHENS
in San Diego

**An Archive of
Intergenerational Storytelling Through Food**

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Diaspora Kitchens

The Diaspora Kitchen Forum in City Heights, San Diego, documents and shares cultural food stories across generations.

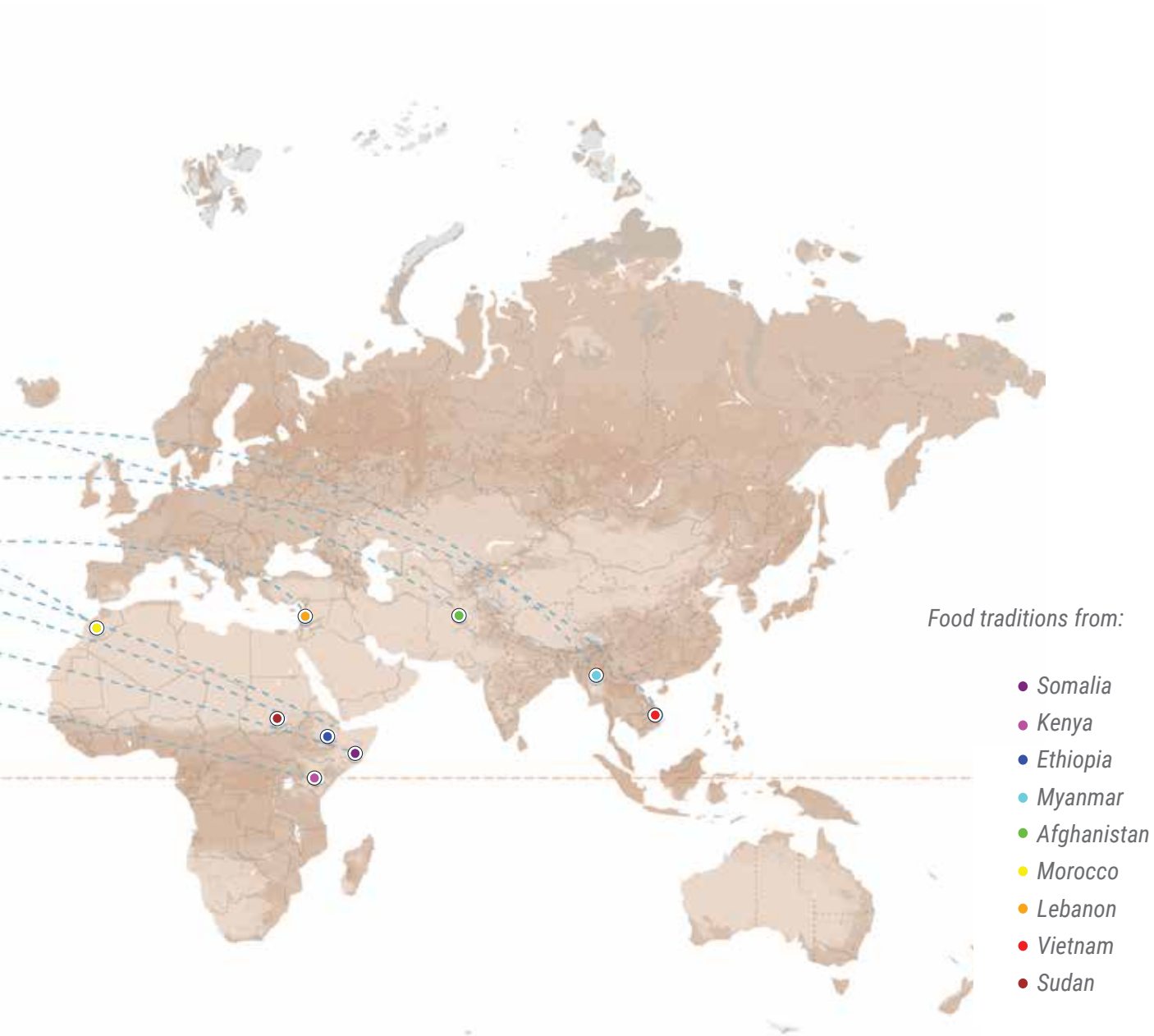
Participants chose a cultural dish they prepare at home and shared its significance and preparation process, including adaptations since relocating to San Diego. Instead of a traditional cookbook, the project compiles these interviews into an archive, illustrating how these dishes are passed down and enjoyed. Each story is accompanied by images chosen by the participants, reflecting their cultural heritage. These images were used to create tablecloths for the culminating public event, *Diaspora Kitchens* where the food stories were shared with the local community.

The forum features nine women from *Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lebanon, Morocco, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and Vietnam*, all residing in San Diego. and either live in City Heights or use it as a space for cultural activities or grocery shopping.

Developed in partnership with *Noun Abdelaziz, a community organizer and health researcher* and *San Diego-based artist MR Barnadas*, this project was initiated in September 2023 and finalized in June 2024. The project's purpose was to foster cultural exchange and community engagement with a focus on refugee and immigrant populations.

To the City of San Diego





Glossary:

Diaspora: The dispersion of any people from their original homeland. Often refers to communities of people living outside their shared country of origin or ancestry but maintaining active connections with it.

Intergenerational Storytelling: The practice of passing down stories, traditions, and practices from one generation to another within a family or community.

Iftar: The meal eaten by Muslims after sunset during Ramadan to break their daily fast.

Ramadan: The ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community.

Ugali: A type of maize flour porridge made in Africa. It is also known as sima, posho, or sadza, among other names.

Sukuma Wiki: A Kenyan dish made of collard greens (similar to kale) sautéed with onions and tomatoes. The name means “to push the week” in Swahili, referring to its affordability and availability.

Doro Wat: A spicy Ethiopian chicken stew made with berbere spice mix and hard-boiled eggs, traditionally served with injera (a type of flatbread).

Gomen: An Ethiopian dish made from collard greens or kale, often spiced with ginger, garlic, and onions.

Takapaw: A traditional Karen dish from Myanmar, consisting of rice porridge with meat and greens.

Mantu: Afghan dumplings filled with minced beef or lamb, onions, and spices, usually topped with yogurt and a tomato-based sauce.

Shorbat Harira: A Moroccan soup made from tomatoes, lentils, chickpeas, and meat, typically seasoned with a mix of spices and fresh herbs.

Kuusa: A dish from Lebanon typically made with zucchini, potatoes, and eggs, often served for breakfast or lunch.

Molokhia: A traditional Middle Eastern and North African dish made from jute leaves, often cooked with chicken or beef broth.

Bot-Nem Seasoning: A Vietnamese seasoning powder made from a blend of spices and herbs.

Berberere: A spice mixture essential to Ethiopian cuisine, consisting of chili peppers, garlic, ginger, basil, and other spices.

Royco: A popular seasoning blend in East Africa made from a mix of salt, starch, vegetable fats, and various spices, commonly used to enhance the flavor of soups and stews.

Ras el Hanout: A complex spice blend from Morocco, meaning “head of the shop,” implying it is a mixture of the best spices the shop has to offer. It can contain anywhere from 10 to 30 different spices.

Pho: A Vietnamese soup consisting of broth, rice noodles, herbs, and meat, usually beef or chicken.

Nước Mắm: Traditional Vietnamese fish sauce made from fermented fish, usually anchovies, and salt.

Chayote: A type of squash, also known as vegetable pear or mirliton, commonly used in Latin American and Asian cuisines.

Injera: A sourdough flatbread with a slightly spongy texture, traditionally made out of teff flour, and a staple in Ethiopian cuisine.

Korerima: Ethiopian cardamom, a spice similar to regular cardamom but with a distinct flavor used in Ethiopian and Eritrean cuisines.

Kisra: A traditional Sudanese flatbread made from sorghum flour, similar to Ethiopian injera but is white and thinner.

Cilantro: Also known as coriander, it is an herb commonly used in various cuisines worldwide, both fresh and dried.

Sambusa: A fried or baked pastry with a savory filling, such as spiced potatoes, onions, peas, or lentils, and sometimes ground meat.

Takapaw: A dish from Karen culture, Myanmar, typically consisting of rice porridge mixed with vegetables and sometimes meat.

Hoisin Sauce: A thick, fragrant sauce commonly used in Chinese cuisine as a glaze for meat, an addition to stir-fries, or as a dipping sauce.

Sriracha: A type of hot sauce or chili sauce made from a paste of chili peppers, distilled vinegar, garlic, sugar, and salt.

Shoro: A traditional Ethiopian stew made from chickpea or broad bean flour, flavored with spices.

Kabuli Pulao: An Afghan dish consisting of steamed rice mixed with lentils, raisins, carrots, and lamb.

Yogurt: A dairy product produced by bacterial fermentation of milk. Often used as a sauce or side dish in many cuisines.

Perilla: An herb from the mint family, used in Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese cuisines for its flavorful leaves.

Tibes: An Ethiopian dish consisting of sautéed meat, typically beef, lamb, or goat, with onions, garlic, and spices.

Couscous: A North African dish of small steamed balls of crushed durum wheat semolina, traditionally served with a stew spooned on top.

Vermicelli: A type of pasta made from rice, often used in Asian dishes such as spring rolls and pho.

Jute Mallow: Also known as Molokhia, a leafy green vegetable used in Middle Eastern, North African, and East African cuisines.

Food Interviews

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Conducted from February 27, 2024 to June 19, 2024



Diaspora Kitchen Forum Participant - Saadia

6/19/2024

Food Interview

Ethnicity / Region: Somalia, Somali

Presented Food: Shurbo

Part 1: Family Food Story

My favorite meal from home I like to cook is:

A tomato and oats-based soup called Shurbo, I believe it is more well-known in the southern region of Somalia. While it may not be widely known, it is a dish made by my mom's tribe, the Shansii. The best part of this dish is how easy it is to make and how versatile it is. I can remember eating this dish every single Ramadan. From the first to the last, Shurbo was always included in iftar.

I learned to cook this food from:

I would cook this with my mom.

I learned this recipe at age

25

I make this meal for:

Iftar during Ramadan nights for family, guests, and neighbors.

When do you usually enjoy this meal—during regular family dinners or on special occasions? Who do you cook it for?

Whenever we make shurbo, it is during Ramadan, and we prepare it for iftar. We usually make it for whoever is at home that night and for whoever is planning on visiting.

The ingredients in that recipe I substitute when I make it here in San Diego are things like:

I substitute oats for wheat

I made those changes to the recipe because:

Oats are easier to find, but both work.

Part 2: How to Cook the Family Recipe

Shurbo: Ingredients: protein (beef or chicken), oats, tomatoes, onions, garlic, cilantro, curry powder, cumin, cinnamon stick, garlic pepper, lemon pepper, Vegeta (a seasoning blend made from dried vegetables and spices, commonly used to enhance the flavor of soups, stews, and other dishes)

Describe the steps of how you make this recipe at home:

1. Add water to a pot.
2. Put the meat or chicken on the stove to cook.
3. After the meat is cooked, add in the tomato base.
4. Add the spices and oats along with the other ingredients.
5. Wait until all the ingredients cook and the soup becomes thicker.

Any special pots or tools needed to make the dish?

You make it on the stove in one soup pot.

Is this all made at once, or are there steps to do a day ahead or prep overnight?

You don't really need to prep as it is simple to make.

Any parts of the making that are a little tricky?

Making sure the taste is right and adding in the right amount of oats for the right consistency.

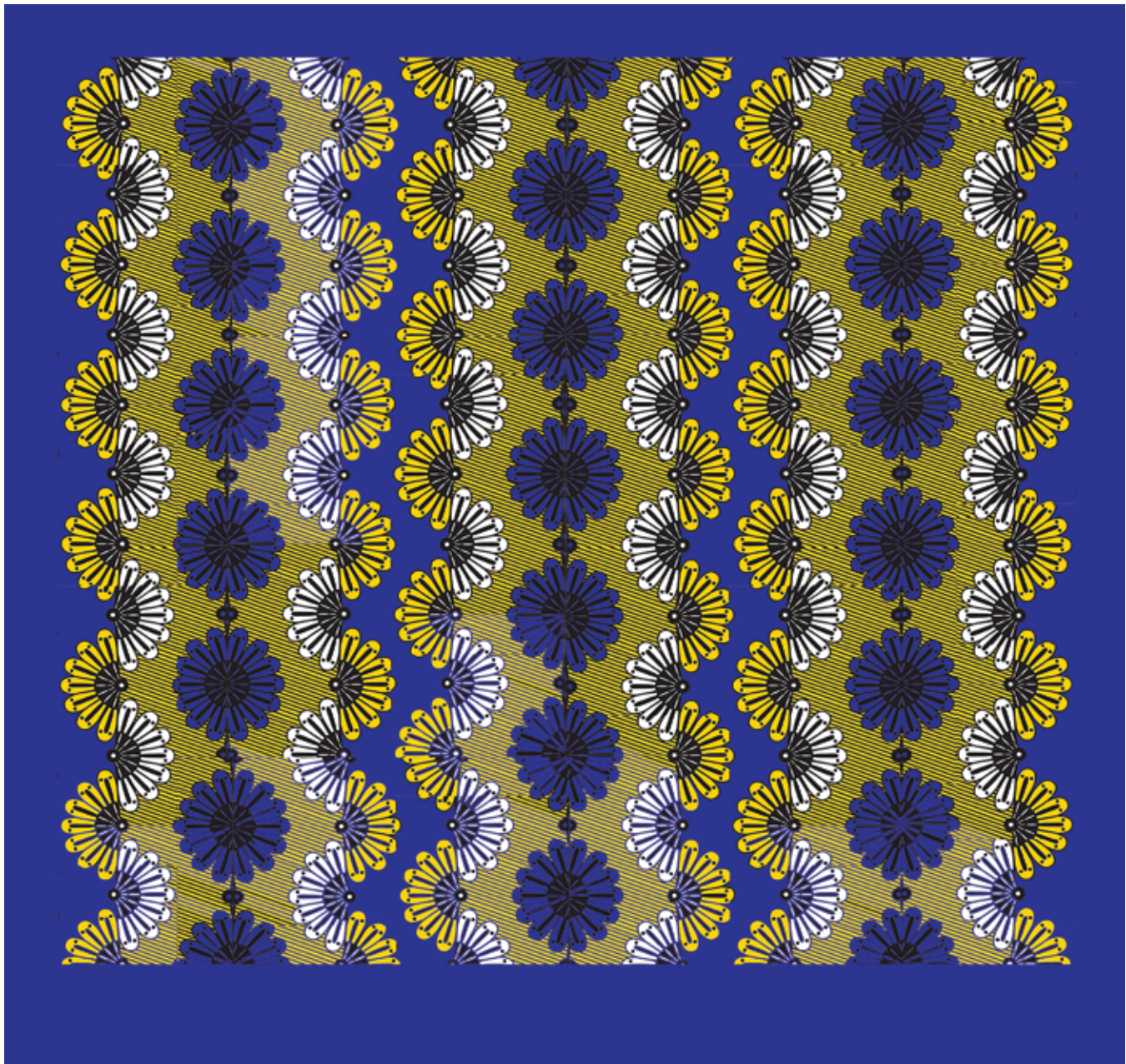
Where do you buy your ingredients? Are there any that are difficult to find?

I get it from my local ethnic stores. All the ingredients are easy to find.









Diaspora Kitchen Forum Participant - **Honey**

3/6/24

Food Interview

Ethnicity / Region: East Kenya / Ethiopia

Presented Food: Ugali / Sukuma

Part 1: Family Food Story

My favorite meal from home I like to cook is:

Ugali and Sukuma is my favorite dish to make and eat, even though my kids did not. We grew up eating Ugali 2-3 times a week. I don't even remember the first time I had Ugali; it was just a meal that was always around. Ugali is made the same in most regions in Kenya. Some people don't add oil and just make it with water. However, I make it a bit softer with some butter, because it can be made really hard in Kenya. Ugali is a white, dough-like dish made with three simple ingredients and can be eaten with any savory dish in Kenya. The dough-like consistency is a filling and well-loved meal in many Kenyan households. Sukuma is a savory, spicy, green stew that we cook with Ugali because they usually pair well together. Sukuma can be eaten in a vegetarian style or you can add meat like beef or goat for extra flavor.

I learned to cook this food from (family member or another person):

I learned how to make Ugali and Sukuma from my mom. Whenever she made any type of food, she made us sit around her to watch and repeat what she did. Ugali and Sukuma are mostly one-person jobs unless you have guests and need a lot of dough, in which case you can start a few pots. For Sukuma as well, if you have people to help you, it can be easier to get it done. Usually, my mom would assign us days to cook the meal on our own. When my siblings and I learned to make it independently, we would help each other so we could finish making the Sukuma faster. However, it was typically a one-person job.

I learned this recipe at age:

10

I make this meal for:

immediate family mostly but guests always anticipate to see Ugali

When do you usually enjoy this meal—during regular family dinners or on special occasions? Who do you cook it for?

We mostly enjoy this meal as an in-home family dinner. It is not typically served on special occasions like Ramadan and Eid. Instead, it is a regular family meal for the immediate family to enjoy.

The ingredients in that recipe I substitute when I make it here in San Diego are things like:

All of the ingredients in the meal are found locally due to the simplicity of the ingredients. We get water and oil—any oil will work, but I use corn oil—and maize flour. However, when making Sukuma, there is a special spice we use called Royco mix, which is hard to find here. For the longest time, we used De Pollo seasoning as a substitute, but I was able to find Royco on Amazon.

I made those changes to the recipe because:

Same as above

When I eat this meal, I serve this dish on its own or with other foods like:

We usually eat it on its own, but many families serve it with side salads like tomatoes, chilies, and green onion





Part 2: How to Cook the Family Recipe

Describe the steps of how you make this recipe at home:

Ugali: Ingredients: water, oil, fine ground white maize flour

1. Boil water.
2. Add oil to the water.
3. Add maize flour into the water until it becomes thick and dough-like.
4. Mix everything with a wooden spoon and make sure to get rid of any lumps.
5. Mix until the consistency is even and smooth.
6. Lower the heat and let it cook for about five minutes.
7. Take it off the stove and let it cool.

Sukuma: Ingredients: collard greens, onion, tomatoes, salt, oil, ginger/garlic paste, goat meat, Royco seasoning, green chilies

1. Soak the collard greens to wash.
2. Chop the greens into thin shreds.
3. Chop the onions into cubes.
4. Sauté the onions before adding the protein with the garlic.
5. After they both cook and the meat gets tender, add the collard greens with tomatoes.
6. Let the mixture simmer for 10 minutes.
7. Add the Royco seasoning with ginger and salt.
8. Let everything cook for 10 minutes under low heat, then serve.

Any special pots or tools needed to make the dish?

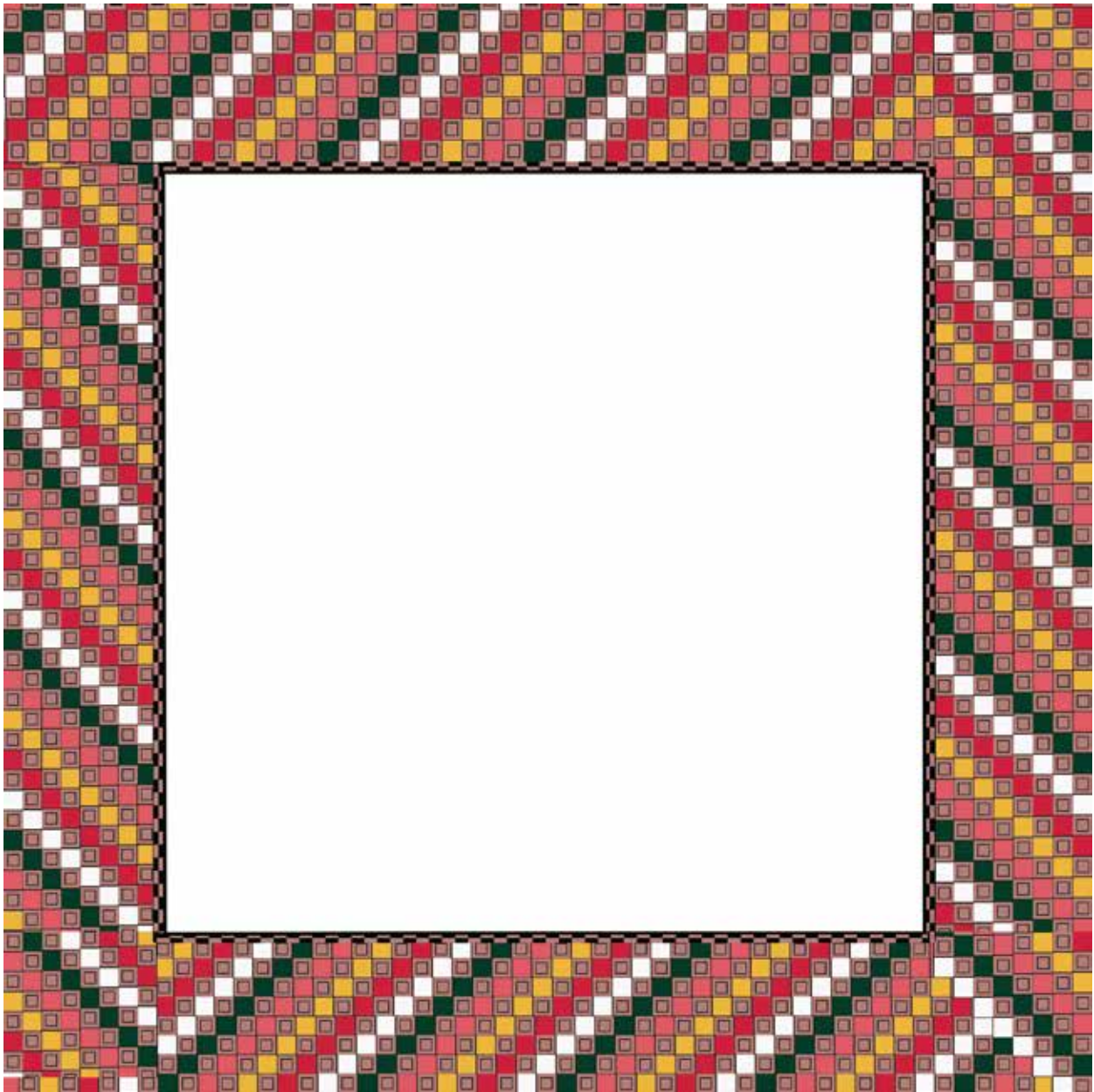
We don't use any special pots or tools when making Sukuma; as long as your pot has a lid, it's good. However, for Ugali, we use a special wooden spoon to stir the dough while it's cooking and to give it shape. Everything is made at once, no need for prep.

Any parts of the making that are a little tricky?

For Ugali, make sure the water boils before adding the oil and flour. Mix it immediately while reducing the heat to low. Keep mixing everything together until it takes shape and transforms from a watery consistency into a bouncy white dough.

Where do you buy your ingredients? Are there any that are difficult to find?

I get most of my ingredients from Food for Less, but for Sukuma, I have to go to the Somali supermarket or an African store.



Diaspora Kitchen Forum Participant -Layla

2/27/24

Food Interview

Ethnicity / Region: Ethiopia

Presented Food: Doroet | Gomen; ዶሮ ወጥ | ጎመን

Part 1: Family Food Story

My favorite meal from home I like to cook is:I grew up in Wulu until I was 13 years old and then moved to the southern parts of Ethiopia. From 5th grade to high school, I lived in the southern parts of the country. Doroet, the national food of Ethiopia, is my favorite meal to cook. I also enjoy tibes (sautéed meat—beef, lamb, or goat—with onions, garlic, and spices) and salata.

Doroet is a saucy, spicy chicken stew with onions and ginger, cooked very well. We used to cook the chicken from scratch; we would catch the chicken, cut it up, and clean it with water and lemon to get rid of the smell.

I learned to cook this food from (family member or another person):

I liked to cook with my mom and sister-in-law. Since I was a child, I always took over and cooked. I would slaughter the goat with my family, clean the stomach, and cook it. We had to cut it fresh. We cooked together as a family. We would prepare everything right away to have it ready for lunch. We chopped the onions and meat and shared a meal together.

I learned this recipe at age:

10

I make this meal for:

My family

**When do you usually enjoy this meal—during regular family dinners or on special occasions?
Who do you cook it for?**

Doroet is usually made for Eid and other holidays. I prefer not to cook it during Ramadan because it can be a heavy meal. It is often cooked for family friends; for example, if someone has a baby or you visit an injured person, we make them Doroet. We make it for mothers because it has a lot of protein, as we cook it with chicken and eggs, plus it's very respected and helps with healing. The chili-like berbere (a traditional Ethiopian spice blend) helps produce more milk for the baby. If you want to impress your guests, you make them Doroet.

The ingredients in that recipe I substitute when I make it here in San Diego are things like:

First of all, we sometimes ship spices from back home (e.g., Kororima) because it does not grow in the States. Also, chicken, lamb, and goat are fresher back home. Here, the meat is more frozen and has more preservatives, which changes the taste of the food and makes it less fresh and flavorful. When the meat is fresh, it has its own distinct flavor. The chicken back home cooks slower because it is more natural, but here in the States, the meat cooks a lot faster. I never tried to substitute Kororima because I get it sent from back home, but the closest spice to it is cardamom. I also changed the pot I use when I cook Doroet. Back home, we use pots made out of clay, but here I use regular pots, which do not retain heat for as long.

I made those changes to the recipe because:

I would not substitute it because it would alter the taste. I don't know if my kids will notice a difference in the future if they use a substitution, as they might not care or be interested in eating my food, so it might not make a difference for them. But it will make a difference for me, since I grew up with these foods.

When I eat this meal, I serve this dish on its own or with other foods like:

Doroet can be eaten by itself, but we usually cook it with other things on the side. I serve it with collard greens, Shoro (a traditional stew made from chickpea or broad bean flour, flavored with spices), lentils, and salata (a simple, fresh vegetable salad). We eat Doroet with injera, which is a pancake-like bread used to scoop the stew. Yogurt is also added on the side to make it milder.





Part 2: How to Cook the Family Recipe

Describe the steps of how you make this recipe at home:

Gomen: Ingredients: kale, collard greens, onions, green chili, peppers, garlic paste, oil, salt, pepper

1. Sauté onions and garlic together with the oil.
2. Cut the kale and collard greens into shreds.
3. Add the collard greens and kale to the onions and garlic.
4. Add pepper and salt.
5. Add green chili and lower the heat until everything is soft and cooked.

Doro Wat: Ingredients: chicken, onions, lemon, berbere, black pepper, salt, eggs, garlic, ginger, ginger paste, cumin, oil

1. Wash chicken with lemon and hot water. Boil the eggs on the side.
2. While the chicken is boiling, sauté onions separately in oil until brown.
3. Add berbere powder and the rest of the spices.
4. Once mixed, add the tomato paste.
5. Add the chicken to the sauce.
6. Add some water and let the chicken cook with the sauce until it is partially cooked and the base is thick.
7. Add the boiled eggs, ensuring you remove the shells first.
8. Let everything cook for another 20 minutes under low heat, then serve.

Any special pots or tools needed to make the dish?

A medium-sized pot and a wooden bowl and smasher for the garlic and spices.

Is this all made at once, or are there steps to do a day ahead or prep overnight?

Everything is made at once and fresh.

Any parts of the making that are a little tricky?

When cooking the chicken, since it's less fresh in the States, make sure to add the chicken last, about 20-25 minutes before the food is done cooking, to prevent it from getting mushy. If using fresh chicken, wash it with water and lemon. If using frozen chicken, over-prepping can impact the quality of the meat.

Where do you buy your ingredients? Are there any that are difficult to find?

I get my ingredients from an Ethiopian store and market because berbere, korerima, and shoro cannot be found in regular grocery stores. I can't always find fresh and good-tasting produce, so we just buy whatever is available from the grocery stores.





Diaspora Kitchen Forum Participant -Lulu

6/1/24

Food Interview

Ethnicity / Region: Karen Culture/ Myanmar

Presented Food: Takapaw; တက်ပာပု

Part 1: Family Food Story

My favorite meal from home I like to cook is:

Takapaw, is a traditional Karen dish. This dish originated from a time when our great-great-grandparents had to flee from danger and had very little rice to share. Takapaw porridge was created as a meal with lots of veggies that could be shared and made with minimal rice.

I learned to cook this food from (family member or another person):

From my aunt

I learned this recipe at age:

25

I make this meal for:

My immediate family mostly but also friends

When do you usually enjoy this meal—Who do you cook it for?

It is a regular meal; lunch and dinner

The ingredients in that recipe I substitute when I make it here in San Diego are:

Substituted Ingredients

Canned bamboo -Instead of fresh bamboo that could be harvested outside

Regular mustard greens- Instead of flowering mustard greens

Sometimes available at Vietnamese stores

Young (trailing) squash vines (pumpkin, zucchini, chayote)

Bitter gourd vine



Items Not Available

Snails with shells from the river – can only get frozen snails without shells.

Home-raised fresh organic chicken – substituted with frozen chicken here.

Dried fish – special order required for a specific type.

Pothwedaw in Burmese is known as Hsu Poke Kyi. The feathery shoots are picked before becoming tough and thorny and are known for their distinct flavor.

I made those changes to the recipe because:

Because of availability. Instead of the typical range of options, I changed the vegetables to primarily bamboo, oyster mushrooms, and mustard greens.

When I eat this meal, I serve this dish on its own or with other foods like:

Meat: *Fried Fish, Pork, or Chicken; Any type of dried meat, including beef and fish*

Served with: White rice, Chile paste

Homemade chili paste: *fresh red and green Thai chiles, garlic, and onion.*

(To make: Roast and mix the chiles, garlic, and onion. Add salt and chicken powder. Add cilantro to the mixture before serving.)



Part 2: How to Cook the Family Recipe

Takapaw: Ingredients: rice, vegetable oil, chicken powder (available at Vietnamese stores, halal if needed for friends who eat halal), garlic, spring onion (or shallot if not available), lemongrass, galangal, meat options (chicken, fish, pork, or any kind of dried meat, including beef), ground black pepper, optional: Thai basil.

Describe the steps of how you make this recipe at home:

1. Boil water with the rice in the pot and stir.
2. While the rice is cooking, start cutting all the vegetables for the dish.
3. Fry the dried fish in oil until it starts to smell good, then add the turmeric.
4. Mix the fried fish, turmeric, and all the vegetables with the rice.
5. Cook until everything is ready.

Any special pots or tools needed to make the dish?

Any type of pot can be used, depending on the amount you are cooking.

Is this all made at once, or are there steps to do a day ahead or prep overnight?

Takapaw is made all at once. The chile paste can be made once a week and frozen for later use.

Any parts of the making that are a little tricky?

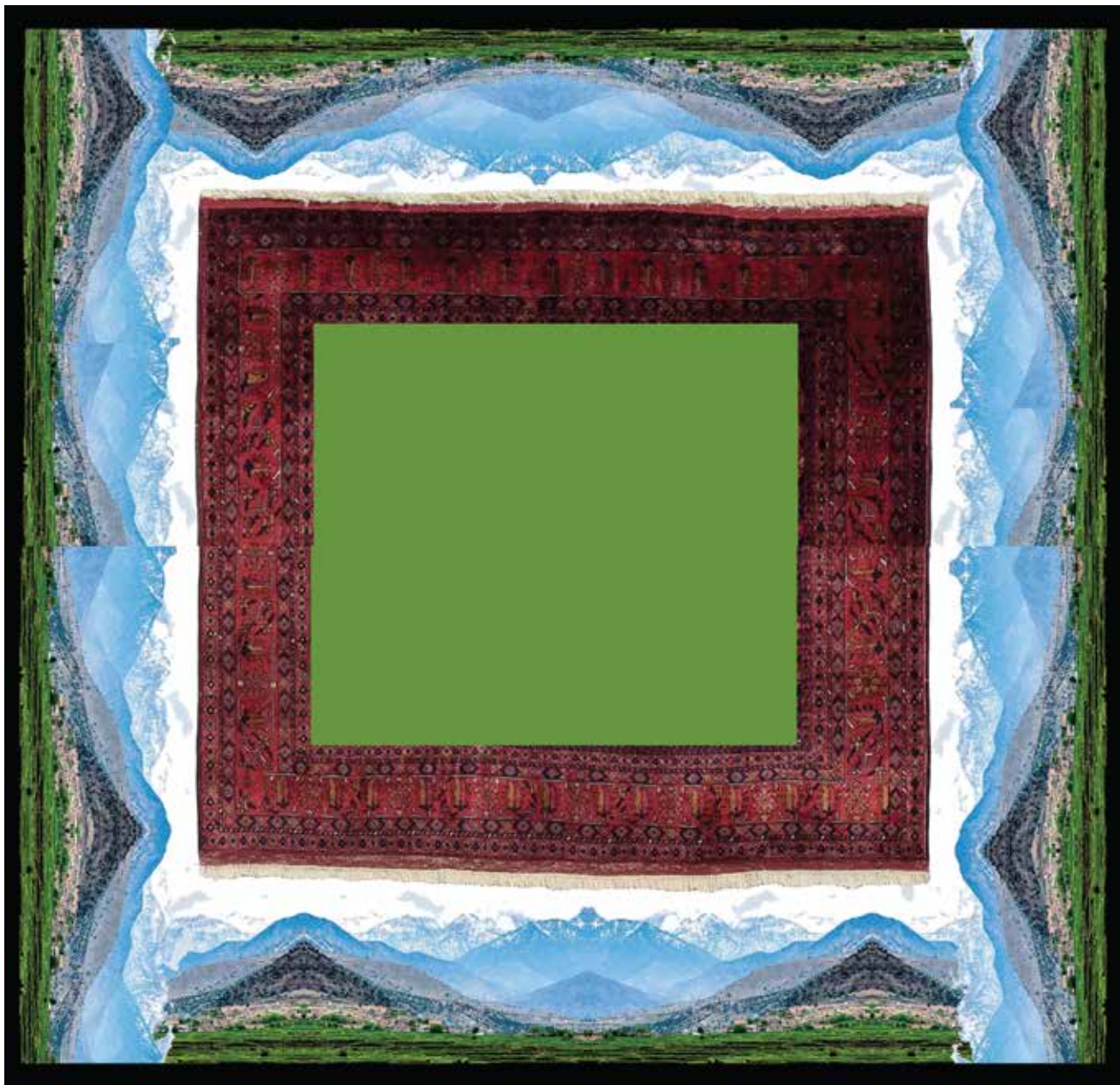
The dish takes about an hour to cook. Continuous stirring is required during cooking, similar to making porridge.

Where do you buy your ingredients? Are there any that are difficult to find?

Ingredients can be found at some Asian supermarkets. Minh Huong Supermarket and other Vietnamese markets have the basic ingredients. Some items might be special orders or seasonal, such as young squash vines or dried fish.







Diaspora Kitchen Forum Participant - Mastoorah

4/24/2024

Food Interview

Ethnicity / Region: South Afghanistan, Kandahar

Presented Food: Mantu; وټنم

Part 1: Family Food Story

My favorite meal from home I like to cook is:

Mantu, a beef-filled dumpling covered with yogurt, lentils, and a hint of sprinkled mint leaves. It is my favorite dish to make because it is a staple in Afghanistan, especially for holidays, weddings, and celebrations. The main delicacy of this dish is its flavor; it is a savory, soft, and creamy dish. The ground beef balances out the freshness of the yogurt on top and the fluffiness of the dumplings. This traditional dish is sold in almost every restaurant in Afghanistan and is well-known in every household.

I learned to cook this food from (family member or another person):

I learned to cook this meal from my mother, along with all the other recipes I know. My older sister's marriage marked the beginning of my cooking lessons. We started with simple salads to get comfortable with the knife and tools, then moved on to more complex dishes like okra, rice, and curry. It was a slow build-up to learning Mantu, which is a more difficult meal to prepare due to the intricate spice levels and layered steps involved.

I learned this recipe at age:

15

I make this meal for:

Friends, relatives, and special guests.



When do you usually enjoy this meal—during regular family dinners or on special occasions? Who do you cook it for?

Mantu is usually the first dish to be finished during parties and special occasions because it is such a big hit. It is most often made for Eid, weddings, parties, and other special gatherings.

The ingredients in that recipe I substitute when I make it here in San Diego are things like:

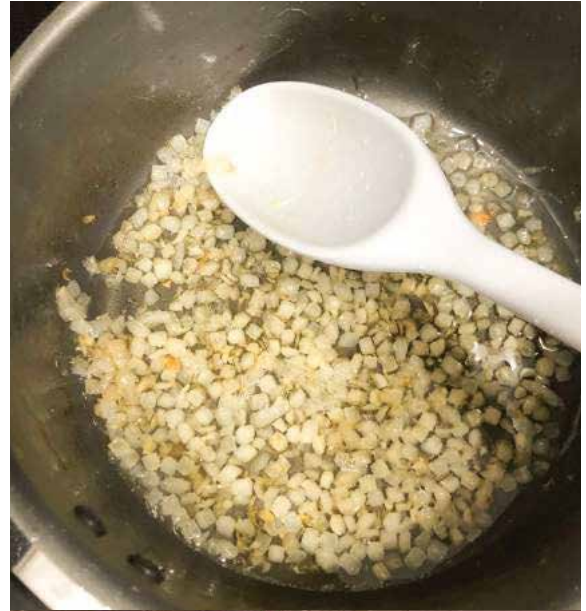
The dumplings back home are usually wrapped manually by hand, but in the States, many families substitute this step with pre-wrapped wonton dumplings for convenience. Homemade dumplings have a different level of freshness compared to the frozen variety.

I made those changes to the recipe because:

Out of convenience and time.

When I eat this meal, I serve this dish on its own or with other foods like:

Mantu does not require any side dishes; however, in many households in Afghanistan, it is often served with a rice dish called Kabuli Pulao (*rice with meat, carrots, raisins, and spices, garnished with nuts*).



Part 2: How to Cook the Family Recipe

Mantu: *Ingredients*

Filling: minced beef or lamb, chopped onions, grated garlic, curry powder, salt, pepper, olive oil

Yellow Split Pea Tomato Sauce: yellow split peas (soaked and cooked until soft), ground cumin, ground coriander seeds, curry powder, tomato sauce, dried mint, olive oil

Garnish: Plain yogurt, Fresh coriander leaves

Describe the steps of how you make this recipe at home:

Prepare the filling:

1. In a pot, add a little olive oil and cook the meat.
2. Add grated garlic, half of the chopped onions, salt, pepper, and curry powder to the meat.
3. Stir until everything is cooked and spices are fully combined.
4. Turn off the stove and add some more chopped onions, mix in, and put the filling aside to cool.

Prepare the yellow split pea curry:

5. Boil the soaked split peas in water until soft. Drain and set aside.
6. In a small pot, heat some olive oil, add some chopped onions, and fry until light golden.
7. Add grated garlic to the cooked onions and stir for one minute.
8. Add the tomato sauce, salt, cumin, coriander powder, and curry powder.
9. Cook until the sauce thickens, then add the cooked split peas and stir to combine. Set aside.

Assemble the Mantu:

10. Place a spoonful of the meat filling in the center of each dough circle.
11. Fold and pinch the edges to seal the dumplings.



Steam the Mantu:

12. Place the mantu in a greased steamer basket.

13. Steam for 30-40 minutes until the dough is cooked through.

Any special pots or tools needed to make the dish?

Steamer

Is this all made at once, or are there steps to do a day ahead or prep overnight?

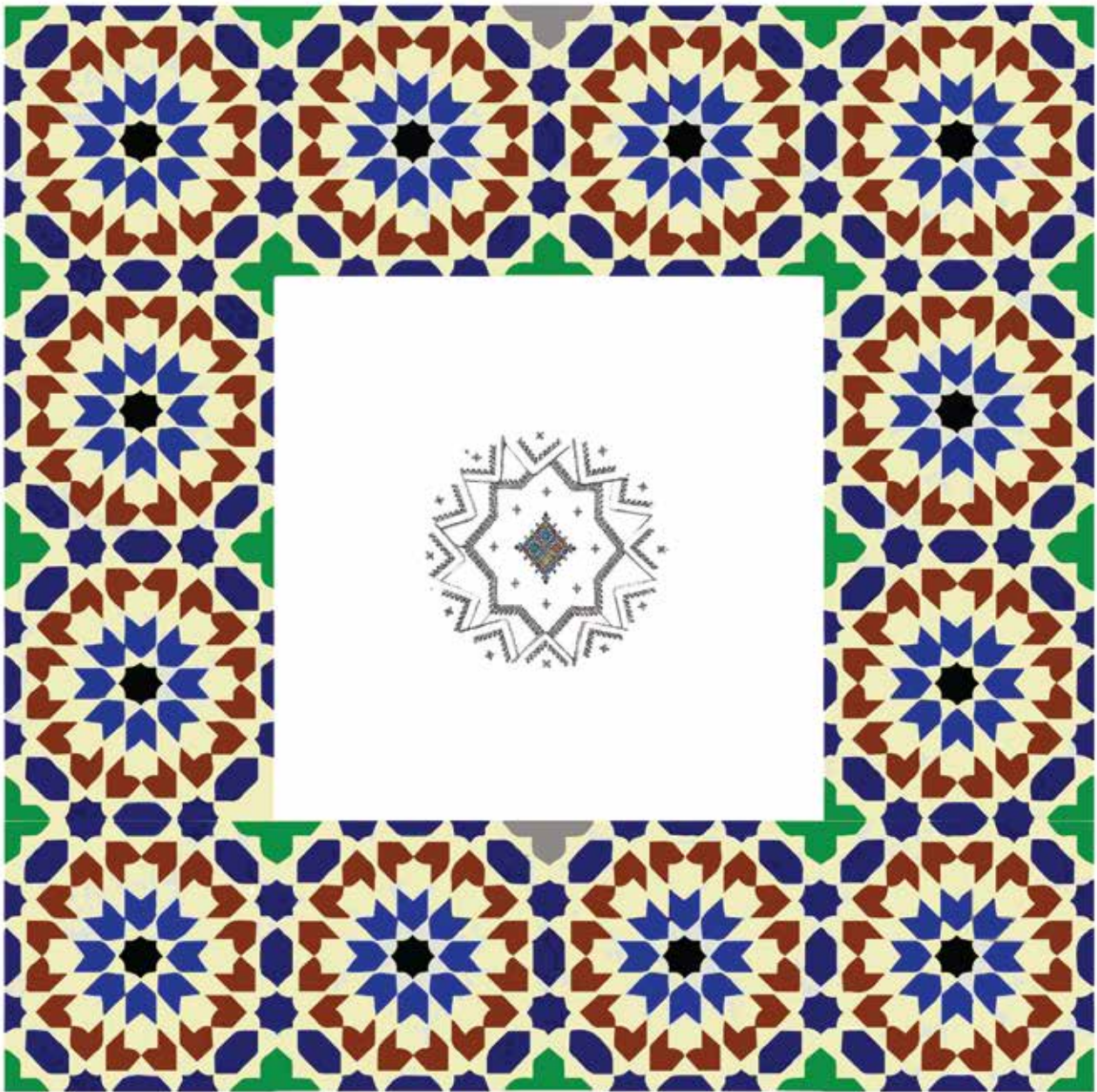
The yellow split peas should be soaked overnight. Everything else, I usually cook all at once.

Any parts of the making that are a little tricky?

For some people it is a bit tricky to wrap the dumplings. You can make whatever shape or style you are comfortable with. With experience you can become an expert!

Where do you buy your ingredients? Are there any that are difficult to find?

All ingredients are usually accessible at any local store.



Diaspora Kitchen Forum Participant -Nadia

3/2/24

Food Interview

Ethnicity / Region: North Central Morocco, Fez

Presented Food: Shorbat Harira ةبروش

Part 1: Family Food Story

My favorite meal from home I like to cook is:

Shorbat Harira is my favorite meal to make; even my kids always ask me to make it. It reminds us of our childhood, and the taste is really good. In Morocco, during Maghrib time of prayer, no one is outside because everyone is making Harira for dinner and people are together.

You are with family, with God, and the doors are closed, quieting the outside. Harira is home, it's tradition. When we cooked it, it took time, but we did it with love. We brought together families and also cleansed our bodies and souls during Ramadan.

The historical context of the word Harira is when something requires a lot of steps and a lot of ingredients. Folktales used to say that when there is a lot of argument or mixed issues within the culture, people would call that Hairia, so the meal's name came from the term "mixed items or conflict".

I learned to cook this food from (family member or another person):

I learned this from my mom, and everyone always made this dish in the neighborhood. They sometimes had different recipes, like neighbors in a different city might add eggs or have a different take, so we learned from each other. When I was younger, I was given the veggies to clean and was shown everything step by step. The meal took 2 hours to make, so it took a while to learn it. But my mom assisted me as I was growing up and learning how to make Harira.

I learned this recipe at age:

14



I make this meal for:

Family, guests, and neighbors

When do you usually enjoy this meal—during regular family dinners or on special occasions? Who do you cook it for?

Harira is usually made occasionally, but it is mandatory for Ramadan, especially with family, because it is a deep Moroccan tradition that brings a relaxing energy. It tastes exceptionally good during Ramadan, more than at any other time.

The ingredients in that recipe I substitute when I make it here in San Diego are things like:

First, I had to account for the celery, because it was not as fresh as it was back home. In Morocco, the leaves are smaller and have a stronger smell. I chose Harira because many of the ingredients are universal and can be found anywhere. Ras el Hanout is a spice often used by Moroccans and is sometimes labeled as “7 spices,” but it is still not the same. Ras el Hanout is a traditional Moroccan spice blend that translates to “head of the shop,” implying that it is a mixture of the best spices the shop has to offer. It is a complex blend of spices that can vary greatly from one vendor to another, often containing anywhere from 10 to 30 different spices.

I made those changes to the recipe because:

I made the changes to the recipe because many of the ingredients could not be found here in the States. Although there are similar items, they could never compare to those from back home.

When I eat this meal, I serve this dish on its own or with other foods like:

I prefer to eat Harira on its own, but during Ramadan, we make sweet sambusa to go with it or have figs. It is important during Ramadan to start your meal with Harira because the warm liquid is better for your stomach after a long day of fasting. We eat Harira with sweet foods on the side to balance out the salt when we break our fast and to regulate our sugar levels after a long day without food.



Part 2: How to Cook the Family Recipe

Shorbat Harira: *Ingredients: canned chickpeas, one medium-sized chopped onion, celery, water, ginger paste, turmeric, salt, tomatoes, cilantro, couscous, vermicelli pasta, flour, egg, tomato paste, protein (optional), parsley*

Describe the steps of how you make this recipe at home:

1. Add canned chickpeas to a pot.
 2. Cut onions and celery, and add them to the pot.
 3. Add water to the mixture.
 4. Put salt, ginger paste, black pepper, and turmeric into the pot.
 5. Blend tomatoes and cilantro in a blender.
 6. Mix well and add the tomato-cilantro blend into the pot.
 7. Add a big spoon of tomato paste and let everything boil.
 8. In a separate bowl, mix flour with water until it's watery but a little thick.
 9. Pour the flour paste into the pot and mix well.
 10. Add vermicelli pasta to the pot and stir.
 11. Add any choice of protein, if desired.
 12. Optionally, whip up eggs and add them to the pot.
 13. Mix everything with a wooden spatula and let it cook.
 14. Blend cilantro, parsley, and celery with some water.
 15. Add this mixture to the pot as the last step.
- Let everything cook together until the ingredients are nice and soft, then serve.

Any special pots or tools needed to make the dish?

I did not use any special tools for this recipe from back home, making it more accessible for people to make anywhere. However, a pressure cooker is very important in every household in Morocco because this meal takes a long time to make and cook smoothly.

Is this all made at once, or are there steps to do a day ahead or prep overnight?

If the chickpeas are raw and not canned, they must be soaked the night before so they are ready to be cooked the next day. However, canned chickpeas work too.



Any parts of the making that are a little tricky?

When you add flour to the liquid, make sure you stir the Harira as you pour it in so it doesn't get stuck or burnt. I would advise people to work on their technique when making Harira because it takes time and attention to make it right.

Where do you buy your ingredients? Are there any that are difficult to find?

I don't find challenges for Harira because many of the ingredients are easy to find and universal to many regions. I go to the Asian market, the Arab store, or a regular supermarket.



Diaspora Kitchen Forum Participant -Randa

5/19/24

Food Interview

Ethnicity / Region: South Central Lebanon, Katermaya village

Presented Food: Kuusa with eggs; كوسا بالبيض

Part 1: Family Food Story

My favorite meal from home I like to cook is:

Kuusa and Batata with eggs is my favorite dish at home, and my husband makes it all the time. This starchy, veggie-rich savory omelet is usually eaten for breakfast or lunch in Lebanon.

It is a very old Lebanese dish that everyone knows about, from Beirut to Katermaya, and it is usually eaten with bread. The potatoes and zucchini are fried separately, then added to the pan with the eggs, to create a rich and filling flavor.

I learned to cook this food from (family member or another person):

I learned this recipe from my mother in Lebanon when I was younger. I watched how she made the dish from scratch and helped with putting the recipes together until I finally learned to make it on my own.

I learned this recipe at age:

15

I make this meal for:

close family only

When do you usually enjoy this meal—during regular family dinners or on special occasions? Who do you cook it for?

It is an everyday meal that is not served at big special events but rather at small family lunches and breakfasts because it is a meal of convenience.



The ingredients in that recipe I substitute when I make it here in San Diego are things like:

I substitute fresh sweet peppers with any available black peppers because sweet peppers are not available in the States and are usually shipped from Lebanon.

I made those changes to the recipe because:

Of items not available in the states

When I eat this meal, I serve this dish on its own or with other foods like:

For me, we usually eat it on its own, but many families eat it with salads on the side like tomatoes, chillies, and green onions. The Kuusa and eggs are served on its own and eaten with pita bread for breakfast or lunch.



Part 2: How to Cook the Family Recipe

Kuusa with Eggs: *Ingredients: potatoes, zucchini, olive oil, canola oil, eggs, salt, pepper*

Describe the steps of how you make this recipe at home:

1. Add some canola oil to a pan.
2. Add chopped zucchinis into the pan and fry until cooked.
3. Remove the zucchini and add the chopped potatoes into the oil.
4. Cook the potatoes until brown and soft. Set aside the zucchini and potatoes.
5. Add some olive oil into a clean pan and start cooking the eggs.
6. While cooking the eggs, add the zucchini and chopped potatoes.
7. Mix everything together with some salt and pepper.
8. Once the eggs, zucchini, and potatoes are cooked together, turn off the heat and serve.

Any special pots or tools needed to make the dish?

No special pots or tools

Is this all made at once, or are there steps to do a day ahead or prep overnight?

It does not require overnight prep, everything is made at once

Where do you buy your ingredients? Are there any that are difficult to find?

Any market can have these ingredients available





Diaspora Kitchen Forum Participant -Vy

4/20/2024

Food Interview

Ethnicity / Region: South Vietnam, Saigon (ho-chi-minh city)

Presented Food: Spring rolls; Gỏi cuốn

Part 1: Family Food Story

My favorite meal from home I like to cook is:

My family moved from North Vietnam to the South, and my favorite meal growing up was Vietnamese Pho. My family even had a restaurant in Vietnam making varieties of pho using different meats. Pho takes a long time to make, so I chose to make spring rolls because they are more accommodating to others and more accessible.

My favorite form of spring rolls is shrimp and pork—a mixture of protein and noodles wrapped in rice paper. Rice paper is very valuable to Vietnamese people. Nước mắm is a traditional Vietnamese fish sauce made from fermented fish, usually anchovies, and salt, mainly used in the North. In the South, spring rolls are mainly eaten with peanut sauce. Each family has a unique way of making their spring roll sauce; some are sweet, salty, spicy, crunchy, or smooth.

I learned to cook this food from (family member or another person):

I learned to make this meal as an appetizer in Vietnam when I was 15 years old. The food prep depends on the size of the kitchen, but it is usually the moms and older daughters who do the prep, such as preparing the noodles, pork, and shrimp. The assembling aspect of making a spring roll is a collective activity, but the prep work is mainly done by the moms and older daughters.

I learned this recipe at age:

15

I make this meal for:

Family



When do you usually enjoy this meal—during regular family dinners or on special occasions? Who do you cook it for?

Spring rolls are usually made on weekends when people can come together and collaborate to assemble them after the prep is done. They are more of a special appetizer than other recipes in Vietnam due to the different forms and varieties of rice used (noodles and rice paper). They are especially made during holidays because there is a larger gathering of people to participate and make the meal together.

The ingredients in that recipe I substitute when I make it here in San Diego are things like:

In terms of the actual ingredients in spring rolls, it is easy to find them because City Heights has good access to Asian foods. However, the recipes back home are more authentic and from the source, rather than being canned and shipped across the world. The foods are much fresher when made in Vietnam. This is especially noticeable with the protein foods, which taste frozen in the States. In Vietnam, fishermen and farmers can directly deliver fresh ingredients to your house.

I made those changes to the recipe because:

To compensate for the lack of freshness, I wash all the meat with salt and hot water and boil it a couple of times to bring out the flavors more, since it's less fresh. I also add more salt and use bot nem, a seasoning powder made from a blend of spices and herbs, to enhance the flavor of the proteins.

When I eat this meal, I serve this dish on its own or with other foods like:

Spring rolls can be eaten with anything, but it is more common to eat them before a noodle dish that comes right after. It is also common to match the spring roll proteins with the proteins in the noodle dish (Vietnamese noodle soups like pho or banh-canh) that follows. For example, if the spring rolls have shrimp, then the noodle dish will also have shrimp.



Recording 2: How to Cook the Family Recipe

Spring Rolls: *Ingredients: garlic, shallots, white onion, salt, cooking wine, sugar, bot-nem seasoning, shrimp (fresh from the seafood aisle, with shells and heads on), pork thigh or leg, vermicelli noodles, mint, basil, lettuce, perilla, bean sprouts, chives, rice paper, creamy peanut butter, hoisin sauce, sriracha, white vinegar, peanuts*

Describe the steps of how you make this recipe at home:

1. Get ingredients ahead of time so they are fresh and ready.
2. Cut up garlic, shallots, and white onion.
3. Clean the protein by washing it with salt and water 2-3 times; Separate the shrimp and the pork.
4. Boil pork with garlic, shallots, and white onion.
5. Boil shrimp in cooking wine with garlic, shallots, and white onion.
6. Add salt, sugar, and bot-nem seasoning to the boiling pots.
7. Boil vermicelli noodles.
8. Wash, pluck, and cut the vegetables into a size suitable for wrapping.
9. Set up the stations with the rice paper, which you dip in a little bit of water for use, so everyone can make their own roll.

Sauce:

In a saucepan, mix together a tablespoon of peanut butter, sriracha, two tablespoons of hoisin sauce, a little bit of white vinegar, and a little under a cup of water. Crush up some peanuts and add them to the sauce.

Is this all made at once, or are there steps to do a day ahead or prep overnight?

All the steps happen at once no overnight prep is needed

Any parts of the making that are a little tricky?

When dipping rice paper, make sure to dip it the right amount in water so the texture of the rice paper is not messed up.

Where do you buy your ingredients? Are there any that are difficult to find?

The shrimp and pork can be bought from Costco if you need large servings. You can find everything else, including the proteins, at a local Asian market.







Diaspora Kitchen Forum Participant -Zamzam

4/21/2024

Food Interview

Ethnicity / Region: Kenya, central Nairobi / Sudan

Presented Food: Molokhia; ملوخية

Part 1: Family Food Story

My favorite meal from home I like to cook is:

My favorite dish growing up was sambusa; it was always a dish that brought people together. Sambusa is delicious and versatile, and you can make it with vegetables, meat, or starch. However, I chose molokhia because it is more culturally relevant to my background since sambusas have become a global meal, varying in different cultures and regions.

I thought it was best to make molokhia to represent my Sudanese identity and culture. Molokhia is a dark green stew full of earthy, leafy aromas combined with chicken broth and rich spices. At my house, molokhia is usually made with chicken broth, but this nutritious dish can also be made with beef or vegetable broth.

I learned to cook this food from (family member or another person):

As a child, I didn't like molokhia because it had to grow on my taste buds over time. I learned about molokhia from both my parents, as the dish is cooked in Kenya and Sudan. However, I picked up the Sudanese cooking measures from my dad, who is Sudanese. As a first-generation American, holding on to culture is very important to me, so I am making it a goal to learn and perfect this meal so I can pass these recipes on to my children and future generations.

I learned this recipe roughly around the age of:

10

I make this meal for:

Family



When do you usually enjoy this meal—during regular family dinners or on special occasions? Who do you cook it for?

Molokhia is usually made regularly at home but can also be served on special occasions with family and friends. Since this dish is more of an everyday meal, we typically wouldn't eat it on major holidays.

The ingredients in that recipe I substitute when I make it here in San Diego are things like:

I substituted the fresh Jute leaves for the frozen montana minced molokhia pack.

I made those changes to the recipe because:

Since jute leaves are native to many parts of Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, it's difficult to find them in the U.S. I used the frozen pack from a local halal market to cook the recipe.

When I eat this meal, I serve this dish on its own or with other foods like:

In Sudan, molokhia is usually eaten with kisra, a traditional Sudanese flatbread made with sorghum flour, similar to Ethiopian injera but white and thinner. Sometimes it is also served with white rice. However, in Kenyan culture, people eat it with ugali, a type of cornmeal stirred in a pan with water.



Recording 2: How to Cook the Family Recipe

Molokhia: *Ingredients: Frozen Montana Molokhia pack (Jute Mallow), tomato, tomato paste, broth cube or chicken broth, garlic, onion, coriander, cumin, meat (optional)*

Describe the steps of how you make this recipe at home:

1. Boil about five cups of water on the stove.
2. Add broth cube/s or chicken broth.
3. Once broth is fully mixed, pour the minced Molokhia into the same pot.
4. Add salt and garlic into the Molokhia mixture.
5. Skim the excess bubbles formed on the corner of the pot; allow to boil for five minutes.
6. In a separate pan, add oil and begin to fry diced onion until it becomes brown.
7. Add coriander powder to the pan and stir for about fifty seconds.
8. Add the sautéed onions to the pot with Molokhia and allow it to simmer for three minutes.
9. After mixing the ingredients, the Molokhia is ready.

Any special pots or tools needed to make the dish?

No

Is this all made at once, or are there steps to do a day ahead or prep overnight?

Molokhia is a simple recipe, everything is prepared the day of.

Where do you buy your ingredients? Are there any that are difficult to find?

I already had most of the ingredients at my home so I didn't need to go to the store but I usually buy them from North Park Produce.



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San Diego Refugee Communities Coalition (SDRCC) a network of refugee- and immigrant-led organizations working together to improve health, equity, and opportunities for refugee communities across San Diego County.

The United Women of East Africa Support Team: A San Diego-based nonprofit that provides health services, education, and advocacy for the East African community, particularly women and families. Operating the East African Cultural and Community Center in City Heights, UWEAST offers programs addressing physical, mental, and social health needs, as well as translation, interpretation, and economic empowerment services.

Karen Organization of San Diego (KOSD): A nonprofit organization that supports the educational and social enhancement of refugees from Burma residing in San Diego. The organization primarily serves the Karen ethnic group, along with other ethnic minorities from Burma, such as the Karenni, Burman, Chin, Kachin, and Shan groups. KOSD provides a range of services to help refugees transition to life in the United States, including navigating social service systems, accessing leadership and employment opportunities, and staying connected to their community and culture.

City Heights Plaza Del Sol Community Housing: Located in City Heights with amenities and resident services, supporting local families and community development.

RISE San Diego: A nonprofit organization based in San Diego, California, that focuses on leadership development, civic engagement, and community empowerment, particularly within historically underserved and underrepresented communities. Project support throughout by Annamarie Montecina Till, Leah Goodwin, Dominic Porter.

Far South/Border North: The City of San Diego-led regional collaborative that supports artists and cultural practitioners working in service of the health and well-being of communities in San Diego and Imperial counties. The program partners include Catalyst of San Diego and Imperial Counties, The San Diego Regional Arts and Culture Coalition, and The San Diego Foundation. The working hub supporting the *Diaspora Kitchen Forum* is RISE San Diego. The *Diaspora Kitchen Forum* is funded in part by a California Creative Corps grant from the California Arts Council, a state agency, and with additional support made possible by The Conrad Prebys Foundation. Project support throughout by Michele Silverthorn.

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Noun Abdelaziz As an indigenous first generation Sudanese Egyptian immigrant, coming into the United States as a child was not an easy transition. It meant learning and unlearning everyday, while still holding on to the things that hold you together. Food has played a huge role in maintaining my identity. When all is lost, a warm meal at home always brings us back to our roots, and shows us how the land nurtures our bodies. These recipes and ingredients are not just things we put together, they are stories of how we lived and became life to others.

Through this project, I was able to conduct focus groups and qualitative research interviews with the participants to collect their stories. I'm forever inspired and healed by their resilient food stories, and commitment to their cultures.

MR Barnadas As a U.S. immigrant of a mixed cultural background (mother from Trinidad, father from Peru), born in Canada and raised in the southwestern United States, I've moved 24 times across cities in the U.S. and Canada. These homes have often been outside my cultural diasporas but always connected to those navigating multiple cultures and countries. Besides my brother, I've never met anyone with an identical cultural mix. However, I continue to find traces of home and understanding among those navigating their own evolving migrations. This rich negotiation of places, flavors, and shared tables is where I feel most at home.

Food is migration too. Recipes blend plants, animals, and preparation methods that have traveled across borders at the speed of human movement, cooking, and eating. Each dish carries a path through time, from deep ancestral histories to choices we make today—like unexpectedly adding hot Cheetos, Takis, French fries, hot sauce, kimchi, black pepper, or monk fruit to continue to transform our food.

The hope of the Diaspora Kitchen Project is that we can enjoy and share this cultural richness in San Diego, while continuing to support our shared health and wellness, as we have become one of the most diverse cities in the country.

Endnote

Now, in the first quarter of the 21st century, San Diego has become one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse places in the United States. This diversity is primarily due to the many job opportunities that attract people from around the country and the world, as well as its proximity to and historical ties with Mexico.

According to 2022-2023 Census data, nearly 41% of people in San Diego speak a language other than English at home, almost double the national average of 21.1%.

Additionally, 26.5% of people in San Diego were born in another country, more than double the U.S. average of 13.2%

As we move forward, the Diaspora Kitchen Forum hopes to inspire similar initiatives in other diverse communities, continuing the mission of cultural exchange and support for refugee and immigrant populations.

