

Taste of **JORDAN**



صحتن و عافيتن



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Sahtain wa Afiyah is a term used by Jordanians when a meal is served. It literally means *"I wish you health and wellbeing"* and is used to encourage guests to heartily enjoy their food.

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Food helps us tell the story of Jordan. Explore the souks, with their aromas of cardamom, cumin and za'atar, and you'll be breathing in hundreds of years of history from the days when Jordan was a vital stage on the spice routes from China and India.



Sit down with the Bedouin in their desert tents, drink camel's milk and eat the national dish mansaf, and you'll learn how people have survived for centuries in a harsh landscape. It matters little where people are from, or what language they speak. In Jordan, food is the word on everybody's lips. All are welcome to join the discussion.



Mezze

A spread to defy all other spreads, mezze is a delicious combination of hummus, mutabbal, mohammarra, and many other different types of foods that can be dipped with bread. Not only is it suitable for vegetarians, but, it is healthy, delicious, and gives you such a wide variety, that you probably won't need a main dish (but you'll have it anyway).

You won't go to an Arabic restaurant in Jordan without starting your meal with it, and you wouldn't want to!



Brotherhood of mansaf

Jordan is multicultural, but if there's one thing that unites everybody, it's mansaf - a rich and plentiful melange of rice, lamb and rehydrated yoghurt, that is served in every special occasion. Such is mansaf's significance and popularity, it's considered to be the national dish. Yet it has its roots in Bedouin culture, and is emblematic of survival and hospitality in some harsh desert conditions.

To really experience the magic of mansaf, you must head for the desert.

The Bedouins traditionally eat mansaf with the right hand, keeping the left hand firmly behind the back. They dig in standing up around a large platter -

but you need not be standing up for too long. Mansaf is a notoriously heavy dish, so where better to kick back and recover than flat-out under the timeless canopy of desert stars?



Unearthing zarb

As ancient and traditional cooking practices go, the zarb is perhaps the most dramatic. It consists of lamb or chicken, sometimes herbs and vegetables, which have been buried in an oven with hot coals beneath the desert sands. When it's time for the meat to resurface, the sand is brushed away, the lid comes off, and the glorious slow-roasted fragrances billow into the air. While a few things have changed in the preparation of this delicious dish, the lamb still falls off the bone just as it would have hundreds of years ago.





Eating with locals

In a small house, in a very friendly village called Rasoun in the city of Ajlun, sitting with a woman who has set up a table in the middle of her living room, getting ready to teach her guests how to make some of the wonderful Jordanian meals. You must roll up your sleeves, because you get to help!

This village is filled with a variety of greens and vegetables, so of course the first meal you learn how to make is one that even some Jordanians don't know about; cha'acheel. Alongside this strangely wonderful dish, she teaches you how to make mojadara, sabanekh, freekeh soup and motabbal.

This is only one example of numerous local homes you can visit in Jordan to experience the wonders of its hospitality.





Back to school

If there's a downside to Jordanian cuisine, it's having to leave it behind at the end of your trip. If you learn how it's made, however, you can take it with you wherever you go.

Sign up for sessions in cookery schools from Amman to Petra, and you'll get far more than a recipe for an appetizer like baba ghanoush , main dishes like maqloubeh and sumptuous recipes from all over the Levant, but also to learn more about food culture and family life in Jordan.

This is an excellent opportunity to make friends, local and tourists alike, whilst gaining invaluable Jordanian cooking skills.

Galayet Bandora

Imagine you are coming to a country without knowing any of the cultural traditions and practices. Zikra initiative is an exchange program bridging communities together through exchanging resources and skills leaving you with a positive Zikra (memory) of Jordan, where you can learn all about these cultures and traditions through many programs, one of which is learning how to make Galayet bandora.



Get a date

Walking in between the 15000 palm trees, around the desert areas of Jordan, you would never think that such sweet, succulent fruits would exist around this desert climate. The varieties of dates are endless, from blonde ones, to dark ones, to the almighty Majdool date, which is also considered the king of all dates. The diversity in which you can enjoy this fruit is endless! You can add it to salads, stuff it with almonds, walnuts, dried fruit and you can dip it in chocolate! Even if you have it by itself, it will not disappoint.





Holy olives

Jordan embraces the oldest olive trees dating back to the time of Jesus Christ. For 6,000 years, olive oil has been used for food, medicine and beauty treatments as part of local cultural customs.



Geographically speaking, Jordan's environment gives its olives a well balanced chemical and sensual taste, which makes it a perfect addition to so many otherwise ordinary dishes. You can sprinkle some olive oil to your salad, blend it in with Hummus, Labaneh, or keep it simple by dipping your lovely piece of pita bread in a bowl of fruity, delicious olive oil.

You can't have manakeesh without olive oil. Manakeesh is one of the simplest wonders this region has to offer. Simple dough, sprinkled with some olive oil and some white cheese, or za'atar.





Street eats

To know a city's street food is to know the city, and Amman is no exception. Amid the jumble of traffic-clogged lanes and hills of the old east side, the clamour of daily life is perfumed with enticing aromas. They drift from little shop huddled at the base of apartment buildings, and stalls in souks laden with bounties of seasonal greens; carts piled high with breads and nuts, and holes in the wall dispensing fresh juice with myriad health benefits.

Tables spill out into dead-end alleyways, where creamy hummus, falafel sandwiches and bowls of steaming fowl mdammas (stewed fava beans) are relished. Crowds descend on shawerma dens, where wraps of grilled chicken and lamb are slathered in tahini (sesame seed) sauce. People meet on street corners to sip juice freshly squeezed from bundles of sugar cane outside cramped kiosks.



The sugar rush

We admit it - Jordanians have a sweet tooth. In fact, it would be unthinkable to end a meal in Jordan without some kind of syrupy dessert. It's ingrained in the national psyche, but to find out why, you have to go back in time.



It may have been the natural sugar in dates that gave the ancient Bedouins a taste for all things sweet? But it was the spread of the Ottoman Empire - and Ottoman tastes - that really started the sugar rush in the Levant.

Peek through a sweetshop window and you'll see mountains of baklava beautifully arranged on steel platters. Diamond-shaped pastries and 'burma' rolls; tiny vermicelli bird's nests stuffed with roasted pistachio and drizzled with syrup. Huge orange disks of knafeh are sprinkled with rosewater before being sliced up and packed to go with 'warbat bil ishta' pastries filled with clotted cream.

There are hundreds of varieties of traditional Levantine sweets. But in Jordan, that's not enough. You'll also find French pastries and Italian desserts, Japanese wasabi ice cream and American pie. No matter where it's from, if it's sweet, it's good to eat in Jordan.

No Jordanian meal is complete without a cup of Turkish coffee or Arabic coffee with hints of cardamom that will help you digest the large variety of food that was made especially for you. It's customary in Jordan to be presented with numerous cups of coffee or tea when you are visiting a family, or even if you are visiting a shop!





Food Glossary:

Appetizers:

Arayes: Arabic bread stuffed with minced meat, tomatoes, onions, garlic, lemon, chilli sauce, topped with olive oil and then grilled in the oven.

Baba Ghanoush: Mashed grilled aubergines mixed in with diced tomato cubes and capsicum cubes with chopped parsley, thinly diced onion cubes, pomegranate molasses, salt and lemon juice and garnished with pomegranates.

Msabbaha: Regular pureed hummus with pieces of chickpeas, tahini, lemon and drizzled with olive oil.

Sfeeha: A bread like pastry moulded into circles and topped with minced meat, tomatoes, pine nuts, lemon, tahini, garlic, onions and drizzled



Kubbeh: For meat lovers! This is a ball of bulgar mixed with meat and stuffed with minced meat, pine nuts, onions and sumac.

Falahiyyeh Salad: A salad with history, created by farmer's (farmer's salads) a long time ago consisting of tomatoes, onions, garlic olive oil and lemon.





Lentil soup: Pureed lentils, often cooked with other pureed carrots, potatoes and onions with cumin, salt and pepper. (Best served with a twist of lemon and fried bread).

Freekeh soup: smoked green wheat, cooked in chicken broth, onions and small pieces of chicken.

Fattet hummus: Hummus with pieces of pita bread, tahini and

yoghurt, often mixed with pine nuts and almonds.

Fattoush: A regular salad with a secret mix of ingredients (the secret is in the fried pita bread, sumac, and verve).

Foul: Dried fava beans cooked and mashed with olive oil, lemon, chilli and tomatoes.

Galayet bandoura: Translates to to-

mato in a pan. It is diced tomatoes, onions, garlic sprinkled with a mix of herbs and spices and cooked with olive oil.

Magali: A dish of a variety of vegetables (cauliflower, zucchini and eggplants) fried with olive oil and sprinkled with lots of sumac.

Motabbal: A puree like mix of roasted aubergines with tahini paste, olive oil and lemon juice.

Sabanekh: It translates to spinach, but is often referred to as pastries stuffed with a mixture of onions, sumac and spinach leaves and lemon juice.



Labaneh: Pasteurized yoghurt.

Yalangee: Grape leaves stuffed with rice, rolled into little fingers and cooked with lemon juice, olive oil and potatoes.

Za'tar: Similar to sabanekh, but translates to thyme, it is a pastry stuffed with a mixture of thyme leaves and white cheese.



Main Meals:



Cha'acheel: A local dish found only around the Rasoun area in Ajloun made of green leaves called loof with anti-cancer properties. The loof is sautéed with onions and made into balls by adding flour and eggs. It is then cooked with a yoghurt sauce called labaniyyeh.

Msakhan: traditional taboun bread soaked in olive oil, and then topped with caramelized onions, sumac and pine nuts served with roasted chicken.

Stuffed Lamb: A whole lamb cooked in the oven stuffed with rice, pine

nuts and minced meat.

Oozy: A rice dish, cooked with minced meat and a variety of spices, topped with carrots, peas, nuts and grilled chicken.

Kofta: Minced beef or lamb ground with spices and onions and grilled to perfection.





Warak Dawali: Grape leaves stuffed with meat and rice, and then rolled into little fingers cooked in beef stock with layers of beef cutlets and tomato slices.

Sayyadieh: Rice cooked with caramelized onions, an array of spices ranging from ginger to paprika, and topped with seared fish (grilled, baked, fried or cooked with the rice.)

Shawerma: Chicken, beef or lamb grilled on a vertical metal skewer, shredded and served in pita bread, or shrak bread and topped with tahini, pickles, tomatoes and onions.

Sorar: Rice cooked with chicken or meat and peas, carrots, almonds and pine nuts, and a range of spices (cardamom, turmeric, cumin, salt and pepper) then stuffed in a thin layer of puff pastry.

Mjadarra: A rice dish, cooked with lentils, onions and cumin, topped with caramelized onions.







Desserts:

Knafeh: A sweet pastry soaked in rose-water syrup, made with layers of shredded dough on top of akkawi cheese and fresh cream, topped with a sprinkle of pistachio nuts.



Baklava: a rich, sweet pastry made out of puff pastry, filled with pistachios and drenched in sweet honey or syrup.

Ma'moul: Samolina pastry mixed with milk, shortening and butter, filled with dates, pistachios or walnuts.

Um Ali: A type of bread pudding cooked with raisins, dates, nuts, rose water, milk and heavy cream.



Other:

Sumac: Ground auburn-red berry with a slightly acidic flavour.

Arabic coffee: An aromatic blend of coffee made with ground cardamom, it is rich and often made sweet.

Za'atar: ground thyme mixed with sesame seeds, sumac and salt.



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