

MKHABASA



'Syrians are food chauvinists; nothing elsewhere tastes quite like the flavours of your own village, the way your mother cooked them. As the last of my family members contemplates leaving behind our little village, this is my Noah's Ark: a capsule containing the intoxicating taste of home.'

Itab Azzam on her book Syria: Recipes From Home

SMOKED AUBERGINE SALAD

We were given this recipe by Majdoleen from Dara'a; she was very shy and quiet when we worked with her in a theatre workshop but a confident, natural leader in the kitchen. We first realised this when she invited us into her home in the Shatila camp in Beirut, to teach us some of her specialities, and to our surprise she turned out to be both a fantastic cook and a forceful character. We spent a couple of days cooking with her, her three friends and her fourteen-year-old daughter, who was eagerly watching everything to pick up her mum's skills.

The name 'Mkhabasa' derives from the word 'mkhabas', which means 'busy' and is so named because, as Majdoleen said, 'the dish is a crazy mix of ingredients and colours so it looks busy'. We also think it's a great starter to drum up when you are in a rush, because it's so quick yet utterly healthy and delicious.

SERVES 4 AS PART OF A MEZZE

2 medium aubergines
handful of parsley, finely chopped
¼ red, yellow and green pepper, deseeded and finely diced
1 tomato, diced
handful of walnuts, roughly chopped
handful of pomegranate seeds
2 tbsp pomegranate molasses
juice of ½ lemon
salt and pepper; to season
extra virgin olive oil, to serve

Place the aubergines on a naked flame and smoke, turning regularly so that the whole aubergine is charred and wilted. Put in a colander and leave to cool before peeling.

Once peeled, place the aubergine flesh in a bowl, mash with a fork and add the remaining ingredients. Mix everything together, season with salt and pepper and drizzle with olive oil. It couldn't be easier.

Taken from Syria: Recipes From Home by Itab Azzam and Dina Mousawi published by Trapeze in hardback at £20, ebook £10.99

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