



Salata (Salad)

The Afghan salad, "Sa-laa-ta", is a simple combination of fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and fresh mint chopped into small pieces. Add some salt and mix well. The traditional Afghan salad makes a delicious supplement to the food. Afghan salad is eaten WITH the food not before or after the meal.

- 2-3 tomatoes (finely chopped)
- 1 red onion (finely chopped)
- 5-10 sprigs of fresh mint (finely chopped)
- 1 cucumber (peeled and finely chopped)
- Juice of 1 lemon (optional)
- Salt (to taste)

Quarma Sabzi (Spinach)

1 package of frozen spinach or 2 cups fresh chopped Spinach
2-3 tablespoons of oil
½ onion (finely chopped)
1 tablespoon of holba
2-3 tablespoon coriander
1 teaspoon turmeric
½ cup chopped gundana (or leeks)
½ cup chopped cilantro
1 jalapeno pepper
¼ cup black eyed beans
½ teaspoon dill
2-3 cloves of garlic (minced)
1 teaspoon ginger (fresh grated or ground)
Salt and pepper to taste
1-1 ½ cup of water

1. Heat the oil on medium high heat and caramelize the onions until light golden brown.
2. Add the water, black eyed beans, salt, and pepper. Cover the pot and cook for 10 minutes.
3. Lower the heat and add the spinach, cilantro, and gundana, along with the coriander, turmeric, dill, garlic, whole jalapeno pepper, holba, and ginger. Stir.
4. Cover the pot and cook on medium low for 10-15 minutes. Cook until the water has reduced and the oil has surfaced to the top.
5. Serve with Chalau.

Quarma Lubia (Kidney Beans)

This is my aunt Khurshaid's favorite dish and her creation.

1 can of red kidney beans
½ onion (finely chopped)
2-3 tablespoons of oil
2-3 tablespoon coriander
Salt (to taste)
Ground red chili pepper to taste
1 teaspoon turmeric
3-4 cloves of garlic (minced)
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1-2 tablespoons tomato sauce
Crushed dried mint (optional)
1-2 cups of water

1. Drain and rinse the kidney beans and set aside.
2. Heat the oil on medium high heat and caramelize the onions until light golden brown.
3. Add the beans, water, coriander, salt, pepper, turmeric, garlic, cumin, and tomato sauce. Stir.
4. Cover the pot and cook on medium heat for about 15-20 minutes. Cook until the water has reduced and the oil has surfaced to the top.
5. Once ready, mix in crushed dried mint (optional but tastes good with it).
6. Serve with Chalau.

Cherry Quarma

2-3 tablespoons of oil
1 pound fresh pitted cherries
2 tablespoons of sugar
1 medium onion (sliced)
Salt (to taste)
1-2 jalapeno peppers
½ teaspoon of chili powder
1-2 cardamom seeds (whole)
1 teaspoon ginger (fresh grated or ground)
2-3 cups of water

1. In a medium pot, heat the oil and sauté the onion until golden brown.
2. Add the water and bring to a boil.
3. Add the cherries, ginger, sugar, cardamom seeds, whole jalapeno peppers, and chili powder to the quarma.
4. Cover the pot and cook for 15-20 minutes on medium low heat. Cook until the water has reduced and the oil has surfaced to the top.
5. Serve with Chalau.

Quarma Seb Taza (Fresh Apples)

2-3 large Granny Smith apples
2-3 tablespoons of oil
1 medium onion (sliced)
Salt (to taste)
Black pepper (to taste)
1-2 jalapeno peppers
1 teaspoon of turmeric
1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 teaspoon ginger (fresh grated or ground)
1-2 tablespoon coriander
2-3 cups of water

1. In a medium pot, heat the oil and sauté the onion until golden brown.
2. Add the water and bring to a boil.
3. Add the minced garlic, turmeric, coriander, ginger, salt, and pepper.
4. Peel and cut the apples into quarters prior to adding to the quarma.
5. Add the tomato paste and whole jalapeno peppers. Stir.
6. Cover the pot and cook for 20 minutes on medium low heat. Cook until the water has reduced and the oil has surfaced to the top.
7. Serve with Chalau.

Quarma Gul-e-Karam (Cauliflower)

½ pound of cauliflower
1 medium onion (sliced)
2-3 tablespoons of oil
Salt (to taste)
Black pepper (to taste)
2 cloves of garlic (minced)
¼ cup dal nakhud (soaked in advance)
2-3 tablespoons of tomato paste
1-2 jalapeno peppers
1 teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon ginger (fresh grated or ground)
2-3 tablespoon coriander
1-2 cups of water

1. In a medium pot, heat the oil and sauté the onion until golden brown.
2. Add the water and bring to a boil.
3. Separate the cauliflower crowns and wash thoroughly.
4. Add the cauliflower crowns to the quarma. Add an additional cup of water as needed.
5. Add fresh ginger, turmeric, tomato paste, whole jalapeno peppers, garlic, salt, pepper, and coriander.
6. Cover the pot and cook on medium heat for 10-15 minutes.
7. In a separate pot, cook the dal nakhud with 2 cups of water on medium low heat for 10 minutes.
8. Drain the water once the dal nakhud softens and add to the quarma.
9. Cook for an additional 5 minutes. Cook until the water has reduced and the oil has surfaced to the top.
10. Serve with Chalau.

Quarma Shalghum (Turnips)

1 pound of turnips
1 teaspoon of fresh grated ginger
Salt (to taste)
Black pepper (to taste)
2 cloves of garlic (minced)
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1-2 jalapeno peppers
1 teaspoon turmeric
2-3 tablespoon coriander
3 tablespoons of table sugar
1-2 cups of water

1. Slice the onion.
2. In a medium pot, heat the oil and sauté the onion until golden brown.
3. Add the water and bring to a boil.
4. Wash and peel the turnips. Cut turnips in quarters and add to the onions along with fresh grated ginger, tomato paste, garlic, salt, pepper, turmeric, coriander, whole jalapeno peppers, and sugar.
5. Cover the pot and cook for 15-20 minutes on medium heat. Cook until the water has reduced and the oil has surfaced to the top.
6. Serve with Chalau.

Quarma Zardak (Carrots)

5-6 carrots
2-3 tablespoons of oil
1 medium onion (sliced)
Salt (to taste)
Black pepper (to taste)

2 tablespoons of table sugar
2 cloves of garlic (minced)
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 teaspoon ginger (fresh grated or ground)
1-2 jalapeno peppers
1 teaspoon turmeric
1-2 tablespoon coriander
2-3 cups of water

1. In a medium pot, heat the oil and sauté the onion until golden brown.
2. Add the water and bring to a boil.
3. Peel, cut, and slice the carrots and add to the quarma along with the garlic, sugar, salt, pepper, ginger, tomato paste, turmeric, and coriander.
4. Cover the pot and cook for 20 minutes on medium heat. Cook until the water has reduced and the oil has surfaced to the top.
5. Serve with Chalau.



Banjan Bourani

Kadu Bourani (Pumpkin Dish with Yogurt Sauce)

Kadu Bourani is always a hit with Westerner's at Afghan restaurants. The sugar pie pumpkin makes the best kadu bourani.

1 medium sized pumpkin (cut into thin slices)
1 small onion (diced)
1-2 tablespoon coriander
1 teaspoon turmeric
Salt
3-4 cloves of minced garlic
1 tablespoon sugar
¼ - ½ cup of oil
1-2 jalapeno pepper
1 cup of water
1 cup of yogurt
Crushed dried mint

1. In a deep set skillet heat the oil on high heat.
2. Reduce the heat to medium and sauté the pumpkin slices until lightly browned.
3. Remove the pumpkin from the skillet and set aside.
4. Add the onions to the skillet and sauté the onions until light golden brown.
5. Add the pumpkin back to the skillet along with the coriander, turmeric, salt, 1-2 cloves of minced garlic, sugar, and pepper, and top with ½- ¾ cup of water.
6. Cover the skillet and cook on low for about 10-15 minutes.
7. In a cup, mix the yogurt with 1-2 cloves of minced garlic.
8. In a platter, smear 1-2 tablespoons of yogurt mixture on the bottom.
9. Gently remove the pumpkin and place on the yogurt.
10. Spoon out 3-4 tablespoons of the yogurt mix over the entire pumpkin.
11. Sprinkle crushed dried mint over the yogurt and pumpkin.
12. Serve with warm toasted Afghan bread and additional yogurt if desired.

Kachaloo Bourani (Potatoes)

This dish is sentimental for me because it was the only Afghan dish I knew to cook when I was living away from home.

4-5 potatoes
2-3 tablespoons of oil
1-2 tablespoons of tomato puree
3 cloves of garlic (minced)
1teaspoon of turmeric
1-2 tablespoons coriander
1 teaspoon ginger (fresh grated or ground)
1 cup of yogurt
1 cup of water
1 fresh jalapeno pepper
Salt
Pepper
Crushed dried mint

1. Peel and slice the potatoes thinly (¼ inch).
2. In a frying pan, heat the oil.
3. Turn down the heat to medium and add 2 cloves of minced garlic to the heated oil. Stir for 1-2 minutes.
4. Add the sliced potatoes and stir for 1-2 minutes.
5. Add the tomato puree, turmeric, coriander, ginger, salt, pepper, and whole jalapeno pepper along with 1 cup of water.
6. Cover the pan with a lid and cook for 8-10 minutes on medium heat until the potatoes are cooked.
7. In a separate bowl add 1 cup of yogurt and 1 clove of minced garlic and mix.
8. Smear some yogurt on a platter and place the potato bourani on the yogurt mixture. Top the potatoes with an additional 2-3 tablespoons of the yogurt mixture and sprinkle with crushed dry mint.
9. Serve with warm toasted Afghan bread.



Khajour

Mehwa-e-Tarkada (Dried Fruit drink)

This is a drink made especially for the Afghan New Year's. Since New Year's day is the 1st day of Spring, this drink is analogous to Spring (dried fruit comes back to life after being soaked in water). I look forward to making this drink every Spring as part of my ritual of welcoming Spring back. The drink is very delicious as well as nutritious.

1 lb. of almonds
1 lb. of walnuts
1 package of sinjit (oleaster)*
½ lb. of black raisins
½ lb. of green raisins
½ lb. of dried apricots
3-4 quarts of water
*Found in Afghan Stores

1. In 2 separate bowls, add the almonds and the walnuts. Boil enough water to cover the nuts. Pour the hot boiling water over the nuts, cover the bowls, and allow to soak for 1-2 days on the countertop or in the refrigerator.
2. In a separate large bowl, add the raisins, Sinjit, and the apricots. Add 3-4 quarts of boiling filtered water over the dried fruit and allow to soak for 1-2 days in the refrigerator.
3. After 1-2 days, drain the water from the bowl of almonds. Peel the almonds.
4. After peeling the almonds, mix the almonds with the other fruit mixture. The mix should be soupy by this time and the juice very sweet.
5. You can either peel the walnuts and add to the mix or leave the unpeeled walnuts separate from the mix until ready to serve (the unpeeled walnuts darken the rest of the ingredients if left in to soak so it's best to keep it separate until ready to serve).
6. At the time of serving, add a few spoonfuls of walnuts to the fruit mixture and serve in a cup or bowl with a spoon.



Mewah Tarkada

Chalau (Steamed Basmati Rice)

Chalau is one of the main dishes in Afghan cooking. It is very versatile and can be served with the quarmas and/or fish dishes.

2 cups of white basmati rice
2-3 tablespoons of vegetable oil
Salt
6-8 cups of water for rice to cook in
1 clean kitchen cloth big enough to cover the lid

1. Wash the rice thoroughly until the water runs clear, drain and add fresh water to cover rice.
2. Add salt (1-2 tablespoons) and let soak for at least 30 minutes to several hours.
3. In a deep-dish pot, fill midway with water.
4. Add 2-3 tablespoons of salt and bring to a boil.
5. Take $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water from the pot and set aside.
6. Drain the rice and add to the boiling water.
7. Stir the rice until it comes to a boil.
8. Check the grains for softness on the outside but the core should be a little hard. If it overcooks, it becomes sticky and mushy. It should not boil for more than 5 minutes.
9. Once the right consistency is reached, drain the rice in a colander and put back into pot.
10. Add the cup of reserved water to the rice.
11. Add oil.
12. Mix and bring to a mound.
13. Put several holes in the mound with the end of the spoon.
14. Put the lid in the cloth and wrap the lid in the cloth. Overlap the cloth corners over the lid. Place the lid on the pot (see picture illustration).
15. Turn the heat on high until steam comes out from under the lid.

16. After steam comes out from under the lid, turn the heat to low and cook for about 20 minutes.

17. Take out the rice and serve with any quarma.

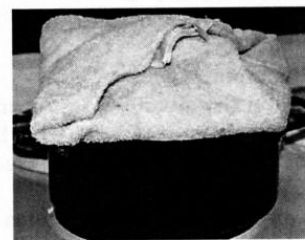
*Note: This dish becomes easier with practice. To reheat left-over chalau, add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and heat the rice on medium low heat in a covered pot.



Step 1: Put lid on large towel



Step 2: Wrap towel over lid



Step 3: Cover rice with wrapped lid



Shoula

Brown Rice Shoula

This shoula can be made with brown basmati rice or plain brown rice. I use a pressure cooker to speed up the cooking process. You can put any vegetables you desire such as carrots, peas, broccoli, kidney beans, garbanzo beans, etc. I use a frozen vegetable mix that has all of those vegetables in it but fresh vegetables are another option. The dish is great for adults and children. For babies, you can puree the shoula further prior to feeding.

- 2 cups brown rice
- 1 onion (sliced)
- 3-4 tablespoons of oil
- 1-2 potatoes (peeled and chopped in small chunks)
- 1-2 cups frozen vegetable mix
- 1 chicken breast (optional)
- 2-3 cloves of garlic (minced)
- 2-3 tablespoons coriander
- 1 teaspoon turmeric

- ¼ teaspoon cumin
- ¼ teaspoon dill (optional)
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1-2 tablespoons tomato paste (optional)
- Salt
- Pepper
- Water

1. In a pressure cooker, heat the oil and caramelize the onions to golden brown.
2. Wash and cut the chicken breasts in small chunks (optional).
3. Add the chicken to the rice and stir until the chicken becomes white (optional).
4. Add the potatoes, frozen vegetable mix, garlic, coriander, ginger, turmeric, salt, pepper, dill, cumin, tomato paste.
5. Add the rice and mix all the ingredients together.
6. Add 2-3 cups of water (water should be 2-3 inches above the rice mixture).
7. Fasten the pressure cooker lid and allow to cook on high heat for about 15 minutes (7-10 minutes total after the pressure cooker begins to "hiss").
8. Allow the pressure to release prior to opening the lid.
9. Mix the ingredients together and serve.

*Rice can burn easily so make sure you are paying attention to when the hissing begins and cook no longer than 10 minutes after that.

If not using a pressure cooker, cook the rice in a covered pot for about 20-30 minutes prior to adding the vegetables and spices. Cover the pot and allow to cook for an additional 10-15 minutes on medium low heat.

Kulcha-e-Khatayee (Almond cookies)



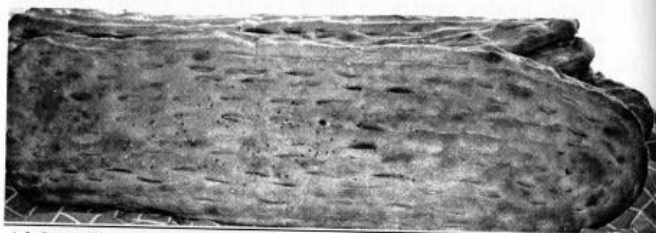
The recipe for these cookies was kindly given to me by my aunt Faiza and uncle Hafiz. I first tasted these cookies while visiting with my cousin Harrier and instantly fell in love with the taste. The texture of the cookies is dry and crumbly but the taste is delicious.

- 5 cups all purpose flour
- 2 ½ cups sugar
- 2 cups oil
- 1 cup dry milk
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cardamom
- 1 cup whole almonds
- 3-4 tablespoons of water (as needed)

1. In a deep bowl, mix the flour, oil, sugar, cardamom, baking soda, and dry milk. Use an electric mixer to really mix the dough well.
2. Knead the dough with your hands really well until all the ingredients are soft and well mixed. If needed, add 1-2 tablespoons of water and mix well.
3. Cover the bowl with a towel or plate and allow to sit for 15-20 minutes.
4. Preheat the oven to 350°.
5. Take out a small piece of dough and make walnut size balls. Do this with all the dough.
6. Press your thumb in the center of each ball while holding the ball in your hands, supporting the sides of the ball.
7. Place one almond in the center of the ball and place the ball in a flat cookie sheet. Continue this process with the rest of the dough balls.
8. Place the cookie sheet in the oven for 8-10 minutes. *(If left in the oven too long the cookies will become hard).
9. After 10 minutes, take out the cookies from the oven and allow to cool for 10-15 minutes.
10. Serve with tea.

Afghan Bread

When we were new immigrants to the United States, my mom and aunts made Afghan bread weekly. At the time they didn't have the luxury of using a Kitchen Aide mixer to knead the dough, so the process was physically draining. Thankfully today Afghan bread or the dough to make the bread is readily available in most Afghan grocery stores that sell bread. If you don't live near an Afghan grocery store, you can make your own bread using the recipe below.



Afghan Bread

- 5-7 cups of warm water
- 5 cups all purpose flour
- 2 cups of whole wheat flour
- ½-1 tablespoons of salt
- 1 packets of dry yeast
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- ½ cup of vegetable oil
- 1-2 tablespoons sesame seeds (optional)
- 1-2 tablespoons sia dana (caraway seeds) (optional)
- 3-4 cookie sheet pans

Sheer Birinj

- 1 cup long grain rice (Birinj-e-luk)
- 8-10 cups of water
- 2-2 ½ cups of milk
- 2 cups of sugar
- ½ teaspoon of cardamom
- 1 tablespoon of rosewater

1. Thoroughly wash the rice and soak for at least an hour.
2. In a deep pot add water and bring to a boil.
3. Drain the water from the rice and put the rice in the boiling water. Cook the rice on medium low heat for about 40-50 minutes or until the rice kernels are really soft.
4. Lower the heat to low, add the milk and sugar, and stir constantly.
5. Add rosewater and cardamom and boil for another 1-2 minutes. Stir constantly to make sure the bottom of the pot doesn't stick. The consistency should not be too runny or too thick.

1. In a large bowl or mixer, mix the wheat flour to the all purpose flour along with the salt, dry yeast, sugar, and oil.
2. Add the water gradually while kneading the dough until the dough is soft yet firm in consistency. Knead dough for 15 minutes consistently.
3. Leave kneaded dough covered for 1 hour, or until the dough has risen.
4. Remove the dough from the bowl and make dough balls the size of saucer plates. Cover the dough balls with a towel or plate for 10-15 minutes.
5. Preheat the oven to 500° degrees.
6. Brush some oil on the cookie sheets.
7. Take the dough balls and stretch the dough across the cookie sheet.
8. Using a butter knife, make 4-5 slashes in the stretched dough to release the trapped air when the dough is baking.
9. Sprinkle sesame seeds and /or sia dana and put the cookie sheets in the oven. Bake until the bread is golden brown.
10. Remove the bread from the oven and brush a little bit of oil on top of bread (optional step).
11. Remove the bread from the cookie sheet and put it on an oven rack to cool.
12. Serve the bread warm.

*To store bread, cut up in small squares and put in plastic storage bags. Bread can be stored in the freezer for several months if wrapped well in freezer bags.

6. Once the sheer birinj is cooked, take it out of the pot and place in glass containers. Set aside to cool.
7. Once cool, serve with tea.

Firnee

- 4 cups of milk
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup cornstarch
- ½ cup slivered almonds (optional)
- ½ to 1 teaspoon ground cardamom
- ¼ teaspoon saffron threads (optional)
- ¼ cup finely chopped pistachio nuts (optional)
- 2 teaspoons of rosewater

1. Put all but ½ cup of milk into a medium size sauce pan.
2. Take the remaining ½ cup of milk and mix with ½ cup of cornstarch.
3. Add the milk and cornstarch mix into the pan with the rest of the milk.
4. Over medium heat, stir the mixture constantly until mixture begins to thicken (about 10-15 minutes).
5. (Optional) Add almonds and keep stirring until mixture thickens and bubbles. Use a whisk if mixture becomes lumpy.
6. Add cardamom and rosewater and stir. Cook on low heat for 10 minutes, allowing the firnee to simmer gently. Stir occasionally.
7. Pour into platter, spreading evenly. Sprinkle pistachio nuts and cardamom on top and around the edge of the firnee.