



*The
Narjis
Cookbook*

Café Narjis Cookbook

Edited in 2024 by Emily Heaven and Emily Stammers

Printed in the UK

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Foreward

We are immensely proud and excited to introduce you to Café Narjis at Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum and our very first recipe book.

Café Narjis is a social hub offering a warm welcome to all who visit Nottingham Refugee Forum. 'Narjis,' meaning Daffodil in Arabic, was collaboratively chosen by everyone here for its globally understood hopeful connotations.

Among the first flowers of spring, daffodils represent new life, a new start and the end to cold, dark, winter days. Planted in groups wherever there is green space to flourish, daffodils represent community, thriving together.

A dedicated team of friendly volunteers brings with them an inspiring range of expertise and tradition to cook lunch every day for anyone who wants to grab a plate. Contained within these pages is a vibrant collection of mouthwatering dishes, salads, and sweets, reflecting a modest fraction of the truly international culinary diversity celebrated by all at Café Narjis.

The recipes inside this book have been submitted by clients, volunteers and staff, all affiliated with the Nottingham Refugee Forum. You will find recipes from around the world, including Iran, El Salvador, Brazil, Iraq, Palestine, Italy, Zimbabwe, France, and England. There is a selection of vegan, vegetarian, and meat dishes with added helpful tips from the Chefs.

We would also like to take a moment to thank everyone who has contributed to this inspiring collection, bringing food, so firmly ingrained in the heart of every community, from our homes to yours.

Measurement Conversion Charts

The following charts are here to help convert between the various units of measurement throughout the book.

Dry Weights					
Teaspoon (tsp)	Tablespoon (tbsp)	Cup	Gram (g)	Pound (lb)	
3	1	1/16	15	1/32	
6	2	1/8	28	1/16	
12	4	1/4	57	1/8	
18	6	1/3	85	1/5	
24	8	1/2	115	1/4	
48	16	1	230	1/2	
60	20	1 1/4	280	2/3	
72	24	1 1/2	340	3/4	
96	32	2	455	1	

Liquid Volumes			
Teaspoon (tsp)	Tablespoon (tbsp)	Cup	Millilitre (ml)
3	1	1/16	15
6	2	1/18	30
12	4	1/4	60
16	5 1/2	1/3	80
24	8	1/2	120
36	12	3/4	180
48	16	1	240
96	32	2	475
192	64	4	950

Temperature		
Degree Celsius (°C)	Degrees Fahrenheit (°F)	Gas Mark
160	325	3
180	350	4
190	375	5
200	400	6

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Your final flavour profile should be a rich, harmonic balance of the earthiness of veg and beans, the sweetness of tomatoes, and the zinginess of lime, with the salt to hold it all together.

Yesenia's Frijoles Negros

El Salvadoran-Style Black Bean Stew

Serves 4

- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 2 medium white onions, finely chopped
- 1 big green bell pepper (or 2 small), diced
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 cloves of garlic
- 1 tin of plum tomatoes
- 300-500ml of vegetable stock
- 2 tins of black beans
- 1 teaspoon of smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon of ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon of dried oregano
- Salt
- Pepper
- 1 lime

In a medium saucepan, heat the olive oil with the bay leaf. Add the onion and sauté on medium heat for 2 minutes, then add the green pepper and cook, stirring frequently, until they begin to soften.

Smash, crush, or finely chop the garlic and add to the pan with the ground coriander, oregano, smoked paprika, and a pinch of salt and pepper, ensuring all the veg is nicely coated. Cook for another minute or so.

Stir in the black beans and tomato purée and cook for a couple of minutes.

Stir in the tinned tomatoes and smash them up so they resemble roughly chopped tomatoes. (There is much more flavour in tinned plum rather than chopped tomatoes.)

Pour in around 300 ml of veg stock and cook on low-medium heat for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally to avoid sticking. You can mash up some of the beans here with a masher for a thicker, creamier stew. Add more veg stock if you think your stew needs it.

Remove from the heat and squeeze in the juice of half a lime. Salt to taste.

Best Served With

Serve with rice and garnish with a handful of chopped coriander leaves.



Vanessa's Quibebe

Brazilian Rustic Pumpkin Puree

Serves 6

- 1kg pumpkin
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 brown onions
- Pinch of black pepper
- Pinch of salt
- 1 can coconut cream
- Handful of coriander
- 2 tbsp olive oil

Cut the pumpkin into pieces, remove the skin and boil. When soft, strain, mash and set aside.

Chop the onion and garlic, and saute in olive oil until the onions are soft and translucent.

Add the mashed pumpkin and slowly stir in the coconut milk a little bit at a time. The texture should be reasonably thick and not runny - think of the coconut milk as adding to the flavour rather than creating a sauce.

Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Best Served With

Serve with rice and a handful of chopped coriander on top

Mohammad's Adas Polo

Iranian Rice and Lentils

Serves 4

- 1 lb basmati long grain rice
- 1 lb meat or chicken
- 3/4 lb green lentils
- 1/2 lb pitted dates
- 1/4 lb raisins
- 2 medium onions
- 1/3 cup oil
- 1/4 tsp ground saffron
- Salt and pepper

Wash the rice thoroughly and soak in salted lukewarm water, covering the rice by 2 inches for 3 to 4 hours.

Trim the fat off the meat and cut it into small pieces (2-inch cubes), wash and drain.

Slice one onion and fry in a little oil until golden brown. Add the meat, salt and pepper, and cook over low heat for 45 minutes to 1 hour until the meat is well done.

Cut the dates into halves and remove pits, put to one side. Soak the raisins in a covering of warm water for 25 minutes, strain and dry.

Slice the second onion and fry in a little oil until golden. Add raisins and dates and continue to fry for 2 to 3 minutes. Add saffron and mix. Keep warm until the rice is ready.

Boil the lentils with a touch of salt until al-dente. Strain and set aside to mix with the rice later.

In a large saucepan, bring 8 to 12 cups of water to a rapid boil.

Drain the rice and pour it into boiling water. Bring back to boil for 2 to 3 minutes and test to see if the rice is ready. The grains should be firm in the centre and rather soft on the

outside. Strain the rice and rinse with lukewarm water. Toss gently in the strainer.

Bring 1/4 cup water (60 ml) and 2 to 3 tbsp of oil to a rapid boil. Add layers of rice and lentil interchangeably, building the rice and lentil layers up into a dome shape. The last layer should be rice.

Poke 5 or 6 holes through the rice to the bottom with the handle of a spoon. Close the lid. Keep on medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes until rice is steaming. Heat up 1/4 cup of water (60ml) and 2 tbsp of oil and pour over the rice. Wrap the saucepan lid with a clean tablecloth and cover the pan firmly. Reduce heat to low and cook for 45 minutes to an hour.

After removing from heat, place the saucepan in the sink and run cold water under it to cool it down.

To dish up, gently toss the rice and sprinkle lightly in a dish in a symmetrical mound. Spread the mixture of dates and raisins evenly over the rice and complete the dish by spreading the meat on top.

Remove the crispy rice from the bottom of the pan and serve on a separate plate.



Akram's Biryani

Serves 4

Biryani Curry Ingredients

- 800g chicken
- 4 tbsp oil
- Whole garam masala
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 10 cloves
- 6 green cardamom
- 3 inches cinnamon
- 15 kernels of black pepper
- 3 tsp ginger garlic paste
- Salt to taste
- 1 ½ tsp red chilli powder
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1 ½ tsp garam masala powder
- 2 tbsp plain yoghurt
- 1 tbsp brown onion
- 1 cup of tomatoes without skin (180-200g)
- 200 ml water

Rice Boil Ingredients

- 2 cups basmati rice (450g)
- Whole garam masala (spice paste):
- 2 bay leaves
- 5 cloves
- 2" cinnamon
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp aniseed
- 2 tsp salt

Layering Ingredients

- Coriander and green chillies (known as green masala) for rice layering
- 2 pinches of yellow food colouring
- 1/2 fresh lemon
- 3 tsp saffron milk
- 1/3 tsp biryani essence

Top Tips From the Chef

Here are some basic tips to make a tasty biryani that you eat in restaurants. These hacks will help you to create a perfect taste:

- Thinly slice the onion; thick onion slices will not make a tasty curry
- Try to use fresh ginger garlic paste
- Be accurate in using spices
- The best rice to use is basmati
- Be careful when you soak biryani rice. (Don't soak for more than 15 minutes if you are using basmati rice)
- Fully drain the water from the boiling rice before making the biryani layer.
- Rice should be boiled 90% before making the layer. (Never fully boil biryani rice before making layer)
- Before you begin layering, the curry should not be watery. If it is, then cook on high heat.

Step 1: Marination

- In a bowl, add ginger, garlic paste, salt, red chilli powder, turmeric powder and coriander powder.
- Add garam masala powder and yoghurt.
- Finely dice or use a food processor to chop white onion and add to the mix, making a blended paste with the spices.
- Place chicken in the marinade and mix well, massaging the yoghurt and spice mix into the chicken.
- Marinate chicken for 60 minutes.

Step 2: Making Curry

- Heat up the oil in a pan.
- Add whole garam masala. As it starts popping up, place marinated chicken and cook on high heat.
- As the chicken starts releasing water add peeled tomatoes and cook on high heat.
- When oil starts to float on the surface of the tomatoes, add 200 ml of water and cover for 25 minutes to tender chicken on low to medium heat.

Step 3: Boiling Rice

- Soak basmati rice for 1/2 an hour.
- In a spacious pan, add 500 ml water.
- Add whole garam masala and salt.
- Cover for 10 minutes to make the water steamy and aromatic with garam masala flavour.
- Add rice into the hot water and cook until it is 80% done.
- Drain water from the rice and start the layering process.

Step 4: Layering

- Generously brush oil on the bottom to avoid rice sticking.
- Place a layer of rice and pour the chicken curry over it.
- Sprinkle fresh coriander and green chillies on top of the curry.
- Add the 2nd layer of rice.
- Then another layer of chicken curry.
- Now again sprinkle green coriander.
- Cover with the remaining rice.
- Sprinkle red food colour and mix well with the help of a spoon.
- Now squeeze fresh lemon.
- Sprinkle finely chopped white onion.
- Pour a few drops of biryani essence.
- To make it more tempting and aromatic, pour saffron milk (in 3 tsp lukewarm milk, add saffron petals and leave for 1 hour).
- Cover the pan and keep on high heat for 2 minutes.
- After 2 minutes, turn the heat to low to make it steamy and cook on Dum (to slowly cook in a sealed container) for 20 minutes.
- After 20 minutes the biryani will be ready to serve.





Barbara's Hulk Cake

Savoury Party Dish

Serves 6

- 3 eggs
- 300ml double cream
- 250ml full-fat milk
- A pinch of salt
- A handful of baby leaf spinach
- 8 - 10 slices of (stale) white bread
- 50g salted butter + a bit more for greasing the tin
- 100 - 150g grated cheddar (enough to cover the top layer of the cake)

Mix together the eggs, cream and milk in a bowl. Add the salt and spinach, then blend using a hand blender until you have a smooth, liquid green batter.

Grease a 25x25cm tin or pie plate with butter. Tear the bread into small pieces and arrange them chaotically in the baking tin.

Melt the butter and pour it over the bread in the tin. Next, evenly pour the green batter over the bread and use a fork to press the bread into the batter, ensuring it is all submerged. Sprinkle grated cheese on top.

Bake in a preheated oven at 180 °C for 35 minutes.

Top Tips From the Chef

You can enjoy the Hulk Cake warm or cold. It's a fantastic party dish that will disappear quickly, and everyone will be asking you for the recipe.

You can experiment by adding other vegetables to the batter, or make it a traditional sweet bread and butter pudding by substituting salt, cheese, and spinach with sugar, raisins, and cinnamon.

Zanele's Chakalaka

Tomato Based Vegetable Curry (Medium Spice)

Serves 4

- 1 tin of baked beans (400g)
- 2 large carrots, grated
- 1 white onion, cut into half-moons
- 1 red pepper, sliced
- 1 green pepper, sliced
- 1 yellow pepper, sliced
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp ginger paste
- 2 tsp curry powder
- 1 tsp paprika
- All-purpose seasoning or stock cube to taste
- 5ml soy sauce
- 1/2 tsp sugar
- 2 tbsp vegetable or sunflower oil
- Scotch bonnet (optional)

Chop the onions and peppers, then fry together with the garlic and ginger.

Once browned, add all the seasoning.

Stir through the carrots, then immediately add the beans.

Simmer for 4 minutes.

Top Tips From the Chef

The optional scotch bonnet is what makes it for us!



Zanele's Brother-in-Law's Curry

Sweet Potato and Chickpea Curry (hot!)

Serves 4

- 3 medium-sized sweet potatoes, chopped into squares
 - 1 onion
 - 1/2 tin of tomatoes
 - 1 red pepper
 - 1 tin of chickpeas (400g)
 - 2 garlic cloves
 - 1 tsp ginger paste
 - 1 tsp paprika
 - 1 tsp soy sauce
 - 1 tbsp curry powder
 - 1 tsp garam masala
 - 1 tin coconut milk
 - 1 tsp sugar
 - All-purpose seasoning to taste
 - 6-7 cubes of frozen spinach
- Fry the onion until soft.
- Add the garlic, tomatoes, garlic, ginger and all of the seasoning.
- Once the mixture has formed a paste, mix in the sweet potato cubes and red pepper.
- Add the chickpeas along with their water (this will help everything simmer).
- Stir in the spinach, then reduce the heat to low and cover the pot.
- Simmer until the sweet potatoes begin to soften, then add the coconut milk before they are fully cooked.
- Continue simmering until everything is fully cooked.

Jeremy's Balti

Sweet potato and spinach Balti

Serves 4

- 1 large brown onion, diced
- 2 cloves of garlic, crushed and halved
- 1-2 cm cube of ginger, grated
- 6-7 ripe on the vine tomatoes, sliced into quarters
- 3 sweet potatoes, peeled and sliced into half-moons
- 3 large handfuls of fresh spinach
- 70g sultanas
- 1 1/2 tsp garam masala
- 1 tsp medium curry powder
- 2 curry leaves
- 1 tsp mango chutney
- 1/2 tsp chilli powder
- 1 1/2 cups of rice
- 2 generous pinches of salt (one for the curry, one for the rice)
- Sunflower or vegetable oil, generous drizzle

Heat the oil in a wide pan over medium heat until moderately hot. Sweat the onions by frying with the lid on until translucent.

Add all the spices, including the curry leaves. You may need to add some water to keep the onions moist and ensure that there is still movement in the pan and prevent the spices from sticking.

Once the spices have evenly covered the onions, add in the grated ginger, crushed garlic and diced tomatoes. Stir together over medium to high heat and allow the tomatoes to begin breaking down. Cover the mix with a generous pinch of salt.

Cover the pan with a lid and let it simmer for 5 minutes, allowing the tomatoes to break down further.

Mix in the sliced sweet potatoes, then add a cup of water and bring to a medium simmer for 5 minutes.

Add the sultanas and mango chutney, ensuring the sweet potatoes are fully submerged, adding water as needed.

Cover the pan with the lid and cook for 15-20 minutes.

While the curry is stewing, prepare the basmati rice. Add the rice to a pan with

double the amount of cold water and a large pinch of salt. Bring to a boil over medium heat, then reduce the heat and let the rice cook until most of the liquid has been absorbed. When there are just a few bubbles of water popping through the rice, turn off the heat and let the rice steam until ready to serve.

Return to the curry and place all the spinach leaves on top. Close the lid and steam the leaves for 3 minutes until wilted, then stir them in.

Top Tips From the Chef

This sweet and easy curry was my Dad's favourite go-to mid-week dinner; and always a crowd-pleaser! You can substitute the sweet potato for diced chicken if you'd like!

Serve the dish with additional mango chutney as an option! It also goes well with toasted poppadoms and fresh coriander.



Zina's Iraqi Kabob

Grilled Skewers

Serves 6

- 5lb ground beef
- Bundle of fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 1 medium tomato, finely chopped
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- Salt and pepper
- Long metal skewers

Add the diced onions, parsley, tomato, salt, and pepper to the minced meat. Slowly crumble the meat with your fingers to incorporate the meat and vegetables. Be careful not to over mix.

Mould the mixture around the skewers by pressing the meat together, while lengthening it along the skewer. Each kabob should be around 16 cm long. Once the kabob is formed, slowly slide the meat off the skewer and onto a plate. Repeat until you have used all of the meat.

Heat the grill to about 200°C. Cook the kabobs for about four minutes on each side. You do not want to overcook your meat.

Around 1kg makes around 12 kebabs and it should serve 6 people.

Zina's Mkhlama Lahm

Iraqi Eggs with Lamb and Tomatoes

Serves 4

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 lb ground lamb
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- Handful of fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tsp yellow curry powder
- 2 tomatoes (small, on the vine) cored and chopped
- 4 eggs
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- Red chilli flakes (for garnish)

Sauté the onions until they are golden brown, then add freshly diced tomatoes.

Add minced meat, stirring and breaking it up into small pieces and cook until browned about 3-4 minutes.

Make 4 wells in the mixture and crack an egg into each one. Cook until the egg whites are set and the yolks are still runny.

Season with salt and garnish with chilli flakes.

Best Served With

Serve with naan or flatbread.

Eve's Grandma's Chicken Soup

Eastern European Soup

Serves 6

- One whole chicken
- Bag of carrots
- Whole celery (buy a leafy one if possible)
- Large white onion thinly sliced (retain skin)
- Chicken / veg stock cube and/or salt and pepper

Boil fresh water in a large pan.

Chop onion, carrots, and celery to your preferred size.

When the water is boiling, add the chopped onion, carrots, celery, and chicken.

Clean the onion skin and add it to the pot (this gives the soup a golden colour).

Add the stock cube and seasoning to the boiling stock.

Bring the heat down to a simmer, cover the pan with a lid, and leave it for approximately 90 minutes.

After simmering, remove the skin and bones from the chicken carcass and strain out the onion skin from the broth.

The soup can be eaten immediately, or for enhanced flavour, it can be cooled in the fridge overnight. A layer of chicken fat may form on top, which can be removed if desired or left to melt back into the soup when reheated.

Additional seasoning can be added before serving to adjust to personal taste.

A typical recipe from Eastern Europe, particularly those associated with refugees from pogroms and Nazi persecution, often reflects the ingredients and culinary traditions of the regions these refugees came from. Do try it if you're ill, it's miraculous!

Top Tips From the Chef

This soup is delicious served with vermicelli or any small pasta pieces, as well as kneidlach (small dumplings made with matzo meal mixed into beaten egg/s with salt and pepper).

Also tasty with pearl barley and sprinkle of dill.

YOUR Café

Blue & MAGNOLIA / CREAM

This is a nice
friends who has kept

• Don't worry about anything and

Rashallah

Wish you all the very best in "your life"

New Tables
& chairs
Separate tables

New sofas

ce cafe. We love all our
ep thing, their best to make our feel at home

more. Because we are on
Gods hands.

• Tomorrow

Rez and Sahar's Lubia Polo

Persian Green Bean Rice

Serves 10

- 2 cups (washed) of basmati rice
- 500g green beans
- 1 brown onion, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, diced
- 2 cups of protein/soya chunks
- 100 grams of tomato paste or purée
- 3 tbsp oil

Spices

- 1 heaped tsp of turmeric
- A pinch of saffron threads (optional but recommended)
- Salt and pepper
- 1 1/2 tsp of advieh (also known as Persian 7 spice: a mixture of ground cumin, cinnamon, nutmeg and cardamom)

Make the green bean mixture:

Trim the ends off the green beans, then cut them into 1-2 cm length pieces.

In a large pan, cook the chopped onions in oil until translucent. Add the garlic and fry for a couple of minutes. Then add turmeric powder, spices, salt, and pepper.

Add the soya and cook for a few minutes over medium-high heat.

Add the green beans and season, giving it a stir. Stir in the tomato paste and fry for a few minutes. Then add one cup of water and let it simmer with the lid on for roughly 20 minutes over low heat. Add extra water if necessary. The beans should be wet but not watery when ready.

Make rice and layer

Wash and soak the rice. Boil it in a pot with water and 2 tsp of salt, until the rice is par-cooked or al dente. Drain in a colander and rinse under cold water.

Choose a pot that is suitable for the oven. Before starting to layer, add oil to the bottom along with a drizzle of saffron water (optional).

Begin layering by adding a few ladles of cooked rice, then a few ladles of the green bean mixture. Continue layering the rice and green bean mixture until both are finished.

Wrap the lid with a clean kitchen towel and place on top of the pot. Cook on a low heat for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Top Tips From the Chef

- Wash and rinse your rice thoroughly before cooking.
- It's important not to overcook the rice when boiling it.
- Layering plays a crucial role. As you mix the layers of rice, green beans and proteins in the pot, try to do this evenly and gently spread out the green bean mixture to ensure all the rice grains are covered, resulting in a lovely red/orange colour.

Lubia Polo (Loobia Polo), is a Persian dish of green beans and rice. It's a delightful dish of fluffy rice layered with tomato sauce and sliced green beans! It's made with small pieces of beef or lamb meat. We have however made a vegan version of this dish using soya instead.

Traditionally, Lubia Polo is served with a yoghurt and cucumber dip (p37) and a Shirazi salad (p41). This book contains recipes for both.





Mike Cripps'

Roasted Cauliflower, Beluga Lentils and Bulgar Wheat

Serves 4

Roasted Cauliflower:

- One large whole cauliflower
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Beluga Lentils:

- 200g beluga lentils (could also use puy lentils)
- 1 small onion
- 2 stalks celery
- 1 medium carrot
- ½ teaspoon fennel seeds
- 3 bay leaves
- 750ml hot vegetable stock
- Olive oil

Bulgar Wheat:

- 200g coarse brown bulgur wheat
- 500ml hot vegetable stock
- ½ tsp of ground turmeric

Top Tips From the Chef

This is a wonderful healthy combination of whole grains, protein-rich savoury lentils and chewy caramelised cauliflower florets. The creamy tahini dressing packs a nice garlic punch. The cauliflower could also be swapped for pumpkin or butternut squash.

Roasted Cauliflower Florets:

Remove and discard the outer leaves using a small sharp knife to cut them at their base.

Carefully cut each floret away from the main stem.

Large florets can be quartered, while smaller ones can be left whole. Try to keep them all the same size for even roasting.

Use the stalk as well – cut into small chunks.

Place all the florets in a lightly oiled bowl and mix them around by hand so they are all evenly coated with oil. Season generously with salt and pepper.

Roast for 45-50 mins at 160 °C or until soft and nicely browned all over.

The cauliflower will reduce in size quite considerably during roasting. Don't be alarmed to find that the whole cauliflower is reduced to one cup of roasted florets!

Beluga Lentils:

Finely chop the onion, carrot and celery.

Heat a tbsp of olive oil in a large saucepan. Fry the fennel seeds for 15 seconds before adding the chopped onion, carrot, and celery. Season with salt and pepper.

Saute the vegetables for 15-20 mins, stirring regularly until soft. Don't let them burn.

Rinse the lentils then add them to the pot together with the hot stock and bay leaves.

Bring to a boil then turn the heat down very low, cover with a lid and simmer for 40 minutes until the lentils are soft but still have a little bite to them.

When they've cooled slightly you can add a splash of olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Check for salt and adjust if necessary.

Bulgar Wheat:

Rinse the bulgar wheat until the water runs clear, then drain in a sieve.

Put the rinsed and drained bulgar in a medium-sized saucepan, add the hot stock and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and reduce heat very low to a gentle simmer.

Simmer, covered, for 15-20 mins or until all the stock has been absorbed. Do not keep lifting the lid off!

Once all the stock has been absorbed switch off the heat and leave the pan in place with the lid on for another 15 mins

Plating:

For the plating up - start with Bulgar wheat for the base, add the lentils on top of the wheat, then add the cauliflower. Drizzle over a generous amount of the tahini dressing (p38). For the final touch - sprinkle with some Palestinian Zaatar, maybe a few chilli flakes and add the toasted pumpkin seeds for extra crunch and flavour.

Zina's Baba Ghanouj

(Iraqi Style)

- 2 aubergines - medium to large
- Olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 lemon
- Salt
- 1 tbsp of tahini

Cut the aubergines in half horizontally, brush the white flesh with olive oil, place skin-side down on a tray and place under the preheated grill. Chargrill the aubergines until the skin is not only blistery, but properly burnt. This might cause some smoke so make sure you open a window.

Take the aubergine out of the oven and once cooled, peel away the skin and put the remaining in a food processor with garlic and tahini.

Add seasoning to taste.

Best Served With

Baba Ghanouj is usually eaten with pitta bread and served as a starter or side dish. It would compliment Zina's Iraqi Kabob (p24)



Ali Reza's Garlic Yoghurt Sauce

A Café Narjis Staple Dressing

- 500g yoghurt
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- Handful of fresh mint, finely chopped
- 1 lemon, juiced
- Salt to taste
- Pomegranate (optional)

Peel and crush the garlic. Add a pinch of salt while doing this as it helps to bring out the juices and will carry the flavour better throughout the sauce.

Add everything into a bowl and mix well.

Optional step: stir through 3 tbsp pomegranate seeds for an extra sweet and zingy pop. These can also be used as a garnish to the sauce and for whatever savoury dish you are making.

Top Tips From the Chef

A beloved addition to a wide range of mouth-watering rice dishes and stews served across Persia and often makes an appearance in Café Narjis in this form or something similar. It complements dishes such as Adas Polo (p12) and Lubia Polo (p30), both of which are featured recipes in this book.



Mike Cripps' Tahini Dressing

Serves 4

- 100g tahini
- Cold water
- 30g olive oil
- Lemon juice or cider vinegar
- 1 clove crushed garlic (or 1 tsp garlic powder)
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- Salt and sugar

Add the tahini to a mixing bowl.

Using a hand whisk, gradually whisk in cold water until the tahini has thinned out to a thin creamy consistency.

Whisk in the olive oil.

Season to taste with lemon juice or cider vinegar.

Add salt, a pinch of sugar and the garlic and cumin.

Adjust all the above until it tastes good and has a creamy pouring consistency.





Persian Tomato and Cucumber Salad

A Cafe Narjis Daily Favourite

Serves 6

- 6 salad tomatoes (or an equivalent quantity of cherry tomatoes)
- 1 cucumber
- Handful of fresh coriander leaves
- ½ a lemon
- 1 tbsp of olive oil
- Salt
- Pepper

Dice the tomatoes into roughly 3cm cubes and add to a large mixing bowl.

Top and tail the cucumber and chop it in half. Slice both halves lengthways, scrape out the pulp with a tsp, then dice into the same size cubes as the tomatoes. Add to the mixing bowl.

Roughly chop the fresh coriander leaves and add them to the bowl, along with a generous squeeze of lemon, olive oil, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Mix well.

Taste the balance of lemon and salt - add a little more of either if required.

Serve alone as a starter, as an accompaniment to a hot meal, or with an array of fresh flatbreads, hot sides, salads, dips and pickles as part of a mezze-style platter.

Mahan's Iranian Salad

Serves 4

- 2 medium cucumbers
- 2 large tomatoes
- ½ a large onion
- 1 tsp dried mint powder
- 1/2 tsp lemon juice or verjuice (sour grape extract or juice)
- 1/2 tsp salt

First, chop the tomatoes and cucumber into small pieces, and chop the onions as finely as possible, then add a pinch of salt, black pepper and dried mint powder.

After mixing all these together, add lemon juice or verjuice (sour grape extract or juice).



Hamish's Carrot Salad

Gujarati Style

Serves 4

- 250g carrot, peeled and grated
- A couple of shallots or small red onions, finely diced
- A couple of garlic cloves, crushed and/or finely chopped with a pinch of salt
- A thick thumb of ginger, peeled and grated
- A generous squeeze of fresh lemon
- Fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped
- ½ tsp of sugar
- 1 tsp of toasted sesame oil
- 1 tsp of sesame seeds
- 1 tsp of cumin seeds
- ½ tsp of salt

Top Tips From The Chef

This is essentially a take on the traditional Gujarati carrot salad and is a phenomenally fragrant powerhouse. I was shown this by the best chef I've ever worked with and I'm potentially giving away a highly guarded trade secret here, but I think everyone deserves to be introduced to what is, in my opinion, nothing short of a paradigm-shifting experience. Don't worry about scaling this up and making too much - it improves as it ages and you will get through it.

Put grated carrot, shallots, garlic and ginger in a mixing bowl and mix well. It helps to use your hands and give it all a bit of a light squeeze as you go - this breaks down the ingredients and releases their juices helping the flavours to fuse.

Dry fry the sesame seeds until they start to pop. Put to one side and repeat with the cumin seeds. Be careful not to leave them frying for too long as they will burn and make the final dish bitter. Lightly pound with a pestle and mortar (or roughly chop with a knife).

Add sesame seeds, cumin seeds and the rest of the ingredients to the mixing bowl. Mix again and give another good squeeze.

Taste and balance the salt, sugar and lemon.

Nosheen's Pakoras

Vegan Onion and Potato Pakoras

Makes: 4-5

- 1 1/2 medium sized brown onion, thinly sliced
- 2 green chillies, finely chopped
- 1 small potato, finely cut into small cubes
- 1/2 cup coriander, leaves chopped finely
- 1/2 tsp garlic and ginger paste
- 1 cup gram flour
- 1 tbsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/4 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp salt (or as needed)
- 1/4 tsp chilli powder
- 1/4 tsp turmeric powder
- 1/4 cup water
- Oil to deep fry the pakoras

Wash and chop onions, place into a large mixing bowl.

Add the chopped chillies, potatoes and coriander to the mixing bowl along with the garlic and ginger paste and mix well.

Add 1 cup gram flour, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, salt, chilli powder and turmeric powder

Slowly add the water and keep mixing to form a thick batter. If the batter is too runny add more gram flour. Alternatively if it's too thick, sprinkle in more water.

Before frying, mix in the baking powder.

Heat the oil in a large pan to deep fry the pakoras.

Once the oil is hot, scoop the batter with a spoon and drop it in the hot oil.

Deep fry the pakoras on low-medium flame till they are golden brown on all sides.

Once cooked, take the pakoras out and place on baking paper to drain excess oil.

Best Served With

Serve hot with chutney or sauce of your choice, enjoy!

Juliette's Auntie Vi's (pronounced like eye) Cheese Scones

Makes: 4-6

- 227g self raising flour
- Pinch of powdered mustard
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- 28g butter
- 113g cheese (28g for sprinkling)
- 142ml milk (can be off milk)

Measure out the self-raising flour adding a pinch of cayenne pepper and a pinch of powdered mustard.

Rub in the butter, add 85g cheese, and bring together with the milk. Be careful not to overwork the dough - simply bring all ingredients together until combined.

Roll out the dough and cut it out into circles, sprinkle the remaining cheese on top.

Preheat the oven to 200 °C and bake for 8 mins. Cook for more time if needed.

Serve with blackcurrant jam.

We often have scones on Sunday afternoons when you have used all the food in the fridge and you want a light supper sitting together in front of the TV.

Halima's Magic Dough

Used in the pizza oven in the Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum garden!

- 1 cup (240ml) warm milk
- 1 tbsp yeast
- 1 tbsp sucre (sugar)
- 1/2 cup (120ml) of oil
- 4 cups (480g) of all purpose flour
- Pinch of salt
- Grated cheese, or a filling of your choice
- 1 egg white
- Sesame seeds

Mix wet ingredients and leave to sit for 10 min, allowing the yeast to activate.

Mix the dry ingredients into the wet with a spoon until all the flour comes away from the sides of the bowl.

Tip the mixture onto a floured surface. Knead for 5-10 mins or until smooth and elastic.

Lightly oil a clean bowl, add the dough, cover it with cling film, and leave it to rise for 1 hour.

Once the dough has risen, tip it out, knock out the air by lightly kneading, and divide it into equal parts. Heat the oven to 180 °C. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface into a circle about 15 cm in diameter.

Add a cheese mixture to the middle of the circles, close firmly, and leave it to rise again for about 20 minutes. Brush it with egg wash, sprinkle with sesame seeds, and bake until golden.

Top Tips From the Chef

This dough can also be used for pizza, flatbreads and many other dough based recipes - that's why it's magic!



Charlie's Tiramisu

Serves 6

- 5 egg yolks
- 5 tbsp sugar
- 500g mascarpone cheese
- 1 standard packet of Savoiardi biscuits (around 200g)
- 400ml strong coffee/espresso
- 1 tbsp sweet marsala wine (optional)
- Cocoa powder to sprinkle

Whisk the egg yolks together with the sugar, until thoroughly combined. The mixture should look creamy and airy and may start forming little bubbles. It is important to get as much air as possible into the mixture.

Gently fold the mascarpone cheese into the mixture. Be careful not to lose the air whisked into the mixture in step 1, and don't over mix.

Add sweet marsala wine to the mixture.

In a serving dish, start layering the tiramisu. Place a layer of Savoiardi biscuits that have been quickly soaked in the coffee, followed by a layer of the mascarpone cream. Repeat. Usually, there is enough mixture for two layers of biscuits and cream.

Place the tiramisu in the fridge for 3 hours minimum, covered with cling film.

Take the tiramisu from the fridge, sprinkle it with cocoa powder on the top and serve.

Top Tips From the Chef

When soaking the Savoiardi biscuits in the coffee, do not oversoak. A very quick dip in and out (1 or 2 seconds) is enough, otherwise, there will be too much liquid in the tiramisu. The Savoiardi biscuits may still feel hard but don't be tempted to soak them longer. The biscuits will soften with the cream when the tiramisu is resting in the fridge.



Ophélie's Molten Chocolate Cake

Gâteau au Chocolat Fondant

Serves 6-8

- 200g of baking unsweetened/dark chocolate
- 200g of unsalted butter
- 150g caster sugar
- 1 tbsp flour
- 5 eggs
- 1 pinch of salt

Preheat your fan oven to 190°C while you prepare the batter.

Melt the chocolate and butter using a bowl over a pan of water or a microwave.

Sieve the sugar into the melted chocolate and butter mixture, and allow it to cool.

Stir in the eggs, one at a time using a wooden spoon. Then, sieve in the flour and a pinch of salt.

Mix the ingredients until the batter is smooth. Pour the batter into a 20cm diameter cake tin.

Bake in the oven for 22 minutes. The cake should have slightly softened in the centre.

Once baked, get the cake out of the oven and remove quickly from the tin. Allow to cool.

Best Served With

Custard or vanilla ice cream for a classic French dessert! This molten chocolate cake is even better the next day.

Alex's Spiced Loaf

Banana & Blueberry

Serves 6

- 225g plain flour
- 1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 225g soft light brown sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 115ml sunflower oil
- 2 very ripe bananas
- 150g blueberries
- 4 tbsp sunflower seeds (optional)
- 2 eggs

Preheat the oven to 180°C and line a loaf tin with baking paper. Alternatively, you could use muffin cases.

Weigh the flour, bicarbonate of soda, sugar, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg into a large bowl. Stir to combine.

Peel the bananas and mash.

Measure the oil in a jug.

Crack the eggs into a bowl/mug and beat. Make a well in the dry ingredients and add the mashed banana, blueberries, beaten eggs and sunflower oil. Fold the mixture with a spatula until combined.

Pour the mixture into the prepared loaf tin and bake for 45 minutes. Before baking, you can optionally add sunflower seeds to the top of the cake.

Cool the cake on a cooling rack and enjoy!

Top Tips From the Chef

Sometimes the cake can cook faster on top than in the middle. If this happens, carefully place tin foil over the top of the cake and continue baking. Test with a skewer to ensure the cake is baked through.



Lizzie Haines' Hilbeh

Palestinian Fenugreek cake

Serves: 8

Cake:

- 2 tablespoons fenugreek seeds, soaked overnight in water (refresh the water a couple of times to reduce any bitterness)
- 300g medium or coarse semolina
- 60g plain flour
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon nigella seeds
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon fast action yeast
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric
- 20-30 pine nuts or blanched almonds
- 1 quantity sugar syrup, cooled to room temperature

Sugar Syrup:

- 400g caster sugar
- Squeeze of lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon orange blossom water
- ½ teaspoon rosewater

In a pan, combine the caster sugar, lemon juice and 350ml of water. Simmer on a low heat until slightly thickened, approximately 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and add the flower waters.

Put the fenugreek seeds into a pan with 475ml water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 20-25 minutes until the seeds are tender. Strain, reserving the cooking water.

In a large bowl, combine all remaining ingredients, excluding the nuts and syrup, and mix until it resembles wet sand.

Add the strained fenugreek seeds and 250ml of the reserved cooking water and mix to a soft dough.

Wet your hands and spread the dough into a greased dish (around 20x30cm or a circular dish about 28cm), smoothing out the surface. Cut diamond shapes into the surface and into each place a pine nut or almond. Set aside to rest and rise (a little) for an hour.

Bake at 200 °C for about 20 minutes. While the cake is still warm, pour over the syrup. Cool completely before serving.

Keep for about 5 days at room temperature, or 2 weeks in the fridge.

This recipe from Palestine is very delicious, but it is also used as an aid to digestion, and it is given to new mothers to help their milk come in.



Our Community Garden

Home to pizza parties, lunches, cookouts and educational workshops, our community garden is a gem nested in St Ann's allotments and the green heart of the Nottingham Refugee Forum. The garden was transformed and restored in 2021 when our incredible team of volunteers created paths and vegetable patches and crafted a beautiful outdoor space.

Volunteers take the lead in planning and maintaining this beautiful garden in all weathers. The group has various backgrounds; some have gardening or farming knowledge and expertise, while others are keen to learn brand new skills. Our garden is a place for refugees to share and develop gardening techniques and learn about growing food. We grow amongst other things tomatoes, raspberries, strawberries, pears, potatoes, squash, courgettes, chives, mint, beans, peas, blueberries and pumpkins.

Dedicated wild areas have been left untouched to protect incredible environmental diversity from insects to birds, bats and badgers. These spaces also provide essential corridors for wildlife to enter the garden visible in those dragonflies, frogs, and ducks who visit our ponds. The garden and its peaceful patio have become a social place to access nature, have a cup of tea and build friendships. Being outdoors and active is a great way to improve people's mental health and general well-being. We love holding workshops and activities, especially in the summer, such as willow weaving, building bug hotels, painting stones and mint tasting sessions.

We can't talk about the garden without picturing food, this is where we grow vegetables but it is also a peaceful space to eat lunch, host parties and share a delicious meal. Our Café and Garden are two peas in a pod, from sitting in our Café enjoying the freshly picked flowers on the tables, to spotting our Chefs picking herbs for our meals just outside the front door, one cannot function without the other! If the gardeners are in, the signs will be out so please come for a visit everyone is welcome!



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