

Boston University
Presents



Iraq

With Nawal Nasrallah

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Menu

1. Basic flat bread with 2 variations (bread with cheese and herbs, and bread with meat mixture).
2. Black-eyed peas salad.
3. Hummus (middle-eastern dip).
4. Iraqi Burger.
5. Yogurt drink.
6. Dessert.

Recipes:

Basic Flat Bread

3 tablespoons dry yeast

9 cups warm water (it should feel comfortably warm to the dipped finger)

5 pounds (20 cups) flour (for example: 12 cups white bread flour, 7 cups whole wheat flour, and 1 cup wheat bran)

2 tablespoons salt, preferably sea salt

A little semolina or wheat bran for sprinkling on work surface

Preheat oven to 500 degrees F.

1. In a medium bowl, mix dry yeast and warm water. Stir with a spoon, and set aside at a warm place for 5 minutes.
2. Meanwhile put measured flours and wheat germ in a big deep container. I use a plastic container 10 inches in diameter and 5 to 6 inches deep. Mix in salt.
3. Make a well in the middle, and pour in yeast mixture. Stir liquid into the flour in a circular movement, with a wooden spoon, until all flour is incorporated into liquid.
4. Wet both hands with warm water, and start kneading lightly, wetting the hands every time dough gets too sticky to handle, until dough pulls away from sides of bowl, and is less sticky to handle, about 6 minutes. The finished dough should be soft and look rather wet. This soft consistency will make it easier for the bread to develop those characteristic

bubbles all over the surface. Smooth surface of dough with wet hands. Cover bowl and let rise in a warm draftless place for about 45 minutes. If you are using the same size of container I suggested, the risen dough should come up to its rim and touch the inside of the lid.

5. Fifteen minutes before baking, preheat oven to 500 degrees F. If you have a baking stone put it on lowest shelf of oven as soon as you preheat the oven, otherwise it might crack if you expose it to sudden change of temperature.

If you do not have a stone, put big cookie sheet **upside down** on lowest shelf then you preheat oven to let it heat up. Put second shelf on highest level in the oven.

6. While dough is fermenting, prepare parchment paper. Cut out circles a little bigger than size of bread you are going to bake.

7. After dough has risen, punch it lightly with wet hands. Sprinkle generously two big trays or a big working space with semolina or wheat bran.. Divide dough into 8 parts or 15, and form each into a ball (it does not have to be perfect), and place them on trays or working space. Always handle this dough with wet hands.

8. To flatten breads, put one cut out parchment paper on an inverted tray, and place it on a warm place. My favorite spot is the stovetop. In stead of tray you may use a big piece of hard cardboard, or any flat and solid transferable board.

Put one portion of dough on paper. With moistened fingertips flatten with swift jabs to all directions until a thin disc about 15 inches in diameter is formed (or 9 inches). Let the marks of your fingertips show on the surface. Moisten your fingers as often as you need while doing this. In fact the more moisture the better, for this will create humidity in the oven while baking, which is good for this bread. You might want to keep the disc to rest for 5 minutes, but this is optional.

9. Open the oven door and draw out one third of the lower rack. Transfer flattened dough with the help of tray or hard cardboard, to the level of the lower rack. Swiftly transfer disc with paper by pulling it from the uncovered edges of the paper into the heated stone or inverted pan. If the paper happens to fold or wrinkle while transferring, smooth out folds so that it lays flat.

10. Immediately start working on the second piece, repeating the same procedure. After about 5 minutes of baking, transfer first baking bread to upper shelf, also with the help of the uncovered edges of paper. By now it should have developed bubbles on its face. Put second piece on the stone or inverted pan. Flatten the third piece and get it ready for baking. Repeat the same procedure with the rest of the pieces.

11. Have ready, a big wicker tray or rack. As soon as the first bread on the upper shelf is nicely browned, especially the bubbly parts, in about 4 to 5 minutes, take it out of the oven. Peel paper off the baked bread, and put it in wicker basket or rack. Reuse parchment paper if it is still in good condition. Avoid stacking finished breads while still

hot, as this will cause the attractive bubbles to deflate. You can do this when they cool off.

The whole procedure should go fast because each bread would take less than 10 minutes to bake. Keep breads in plastic bags to prevent them from drying out. Freeze for future use any amount you cannot consume in 2 or 3 days. To heat frozen bread, put in the oven at 350 degrees F. for 5 to 7 minutes or until hot. It will taste as fresh as newly baked bread.

Variations on Iraqi Flat Bread

From the basic recipe above, you can make the following assortment of breads. Be creative and make your own variations.

Bread with Herbs and Cheese

(Makes two big breads)

Make delicious aromatic bread by mixing the following ingredients with the dough before flattening it on parchment paper. The amount given is enough for making 2 large breads. After punching the dough as directed in step 7, add the following to what equals two portions of dough:

1 ½ cups shredded mozzarella cheese

½ cup crumbled feta cheese

1 cup chopped parsley

1 cup chopped mint or basil

Mix well. Incorporate into dough, then divide into two portions (or more if smaller breads are desired). Prepare and bake bread as directed above.

Spicy Bread with Meat and Vegetables

(Makes 4 big breads)

To make this delicious bread, mix the following ingredients with **half** the fermented dough, divide it into 4 portions, and bake, following the same procedure, except that this bread will take a little longer to bake to allow meat to cook well.

Traditionally fat meat is used. A lighter touch is given here by replacing it with olive oil. (Omit meat if you want to make it vegetarian.)

1 1/2 pounds lean ground beef

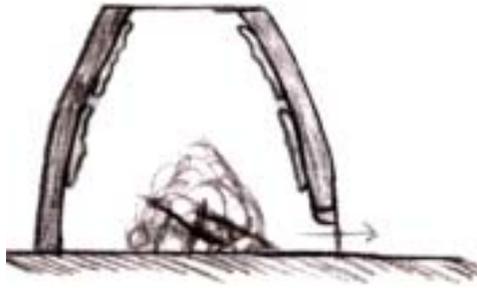
2 cups parsley, chopped

2 medium onions, chopped

2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

- 1 tablespoon garam masala (mix of spices available at middle-eastern stores)**
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin; whole seeds may also be used**
- 1 teaspoon curry powder**
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder, or to taste**
- 3 tablespoons olive oil**



The domed clay oven usually used to bake this basic bread
(*tannour*)

Black-eyed Peas Salad

Easy and healthy.

- One 15-ounce canned black-eyed peas, drained
- 1/2 cup chopped green onion, or regular onion
- 2 medium tomatoes
- 1 cup chopped parsley
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh mint
- 1 medium carrot, grated
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons vinegar or lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon chili pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper.
- 2 eggs boiled, for garnish

Combine all ingredients in a big bowl, and garnish with wedges of boiled eggs.

Hummus

Although it is readily available in stores, both fresh and canned, the homemade *hummus* is definitely much tastier and cheaper. Whole chickpeas can be used, but skinned split variety gives a creamier texture, and cooks much faster. Canned cooked chickpeas may be substituted if you want to make *hummus* in just five minutes.

1 1/2 cups yellow split chickpeas, picked over and washed, (will make 3 cups mashed chickpeas); or two 15-ounce cans cooked whole chickpeas, drained, reserve liquid

2 to 3 garlic cloves, grated

1/2 cup fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon salt, use less salt if using canned chickpeas

1/2 to 3/4 cup *tahini* (see Glossary)

For garnish: olive oil, olives, chopped parsley, chili powder, sliced tomato, some whole cooked chickpeas, (optional)

1. (Note: Although split chickpeas do not need to be soaked, doing so for 30 minutes will cut down cooking time considerably.) In a medium pot cover chickpeas by about 3 1/2 cups of cold water. Bring to a quick boil, skimming if needed. Lower heat to low, and let simmer, partially covered, 40 to 45 minutes, or until chickpeas look mushy, and most of the liquid has evaporated. Do not drain. Let cool **completely**. Mixture will look watery when hot, but it will be firmer when cold.

2. If using **blender** or **food processor**, put cooled chickpeas or canned variety in a blender or food processor, and purée for a minute or two. If canned chickpeas look rather dry, add about 1/4 cup of the reserved liquid. Add garlic, lemon juice, salt and *tahini*. Blend for a few more minutes or until mixture looks smooth, lighter in color, and of spreading consistency. If it looks rather dry, add a little of the reserved liquid or just plain cold water. Check for salt and lemon juice. Chill at least one hour before serving.

3. **If making hummus by hand** (This method is not recommended for whole canned chickpeas, since the masher is not strong enough to mash skins of chickpeas), mash chickpeas with a potato masher until smooth. Add garlic, lemon juice, salt and *tahini*. Mix well with a wooden spoon, wire whisker, or an electric mixer until smooth, lighter in color, and of spreading consistency. Chill at least 1 hour before serving.

4. To serve, spread *hummus* on a plate in a layer about 1-inch thick. Smooth surface with back of spoon, making trenches as you do so. Pour a little olive oil in trenches, sprinkle with chili, and decorate with parsley, tomato slices and whole cooked chickpeas, if wished. Serve with warm flat bread. Romaine lettuce leaves can also be used as garnish and as scoops.

Under refrigeration *Hummus* will keep well for 4 to 5 days. Garnish the amount needed just before serving.

Iraqi Burgers

(Makes about 26 small patties)

1 pound lean ground meat
1 1/2 medium onions (about 1 cup) finely chopped
1 medium tomato (about 3/4 cup) finely chopped
3/4 cup finely chopped parsley
2 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon curry powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon garam masala
1/2 teaspoon chili powder, or to taste
1/2 cup water

1 cup flour
1 teaspoon baking powder

Oil for frying

For garnish: sumac, slices of onion and tomatoes, chopped parsley.

1. In a big bowl, mix meat, onion, tomato, parsley, eggs, salt, pepper, curry powder, cumin, garam masala, chili, and water.
2. Add flour and baking powder. Knead lightly with the fingers of one hand for a few minutes. The final dough is to be a little on the soft side in consistency. Add a little more flour if needed. This dough is easier to handle with wet hands.
3. Heat about 1/2-inch deep oil in a medium pan. With wet hands take a piece of the dough, size of golf ball. Put on the palm of one hand, and with the other form it into an oblong patty, about 3 1/2 inches long and 1/3- inch thick (they do not have to be even in shape). Carefully slide the piece to hot oil the moment you finish shaping it. Let them cook until golden brown, turn once to brown on both sides. Remember to wet your hands while handling this meat dough to prevent it from sticking to your fingers. Drain fried pieces on white paper towels put in a colander to prevent them from getting soggy. These burgers cook very fast; the whole process of frying wouldn't take more than 15 minutes.
4. Make into sandwiches with slices of tomatoes, onion, and chopped parsley. Sprinkle with sumac for a lovely tart touch.

Yogurt Drink

To make one glass of this drink, dilute yogurt, any kind will do, with cold water, in the ratio of 1 part yogurt to 3 parts water. Add a pinch of salt if using plain yogurt. Whisk to create foam. Serve with a few cubes of ice, and garnish with a sprig of mint. Serve immediately, otherwise water will separate from yogurt. If this happens, give it a stir or a whisk before serving.

The First Drinking "Straw" in History

Due to the way beer was fermented in ancient Mesopotamian, it came with sediments which were removed by strainers and funnels. The most elaborate examples of such devices were found in the royal tombs of Ur. In order to get rid of the remaining sediments, they used to drink beer through filtering tubes. Thus, driven by necessity, they invented the first drinking "straw" in history.

