

RAMADAN

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If you do not have a grill, then by all means broil the eggplant. You will not be unhappy. You just won't be in the same state of transcendent bliss that comes from cooking the eggplant on a grill.

I stayed in the Middle East for my next iftar dish, mujadarrah, which is lentils and rice with fried onions.

This is the most comforting of comfort foods. Though it is made up of only four simple ingredients, plus salt and pepper, the way they combine together is just stunning.

Mere lentils and rice, while perfectly acceptable for a dish, is a little dull. But fried onions bring unexpected depth to the flavor, along with the irresistible sweetness that comes from a long, slow caramelization.

It takes a long time to properly brown onions, but the results are spectacular. I made a double batch so I could keep some in the refrigerator until needed. Besides, the house is going to smell like onions every time you do it, anyway, so you may as well make more than you need.

The fourth and final ingredient of mujadarrah is yogurt (browned onions are made from onions and olive oil, but I'm counting it as a single ingredient). The creamy tanginess of the yogurt cuts through the umami-heavy undertones of the other ingredients. It is a masterful stroke that brings cohesion to the dish.

I've seen recipes that say the use of yogurt is optional. Don't listen to them.

I headed to Southeast Asia for my next iftar dish, potato bread patties, which come to us from a food blogger in Pakistan.

These delightful little packets are a quick way to make samosas, those stuffed fried appetizers that are a must at any restaurant serving the food from India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The filling is the familiar potato stuffing that can be found in samosas; it's what makes the flatbread aloo paratha so good.

Plain mashed potatoes are highly spiced with coriander, cumin, turmeric and a tangy spice mixture called chaat masala (I bought it at an international food store; if you don't want to go to the trouble you can do without it).

Into the mixture also go onion, garlic, mint, peas, lemon juice and cilantro. No single ingredient stands out; it is the singular combination of all the tastes mashed together that provides the signature note.

What makes these patties stand out is the wrapping. Instead of a dough you make yourself, then knead and then let rest for an hour, this dish uses plain old sandwich bread. You just roll it flat, place

some filling in the middle and fold it over into a triangle. Dip it in egg, dredge it through breadcrumbs and fry it in hot oil.

Voilà. You've got yourself a potato bread patty.

I saved a main course for last, Sticky Malaysian Chicken With Pineapple Salad. Once again, the warming, comforting flavors belie how easy it is to make.

This dish has two parts — three if you count the chicken, but that's just chicken.

The first part is the glaze for the chicken. It is a mixture of honey, soy sauce, garlic and ginger, with sesame oil, fish sauce and a chile for heat. It all comes together in a food processor in a matter of minutes.

While the glaze-covered chicken is cooking in the oven, you can make the second part of the dish, the pineapple salad. This is a remarkably refreshing concoction of pineapple, cucumber, red onion and lime juice.

The sprightly salad is a lovely contrast to the chicken, but to be honest, either part of the dish would be great on its own.

And for iftar? Nothing could be better.

BABA GHANOUSH

Yield: 6 servings

- 2 (1-pound) eggplants, halved lengthwise
1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
3 tablespoons tahini
2 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 cup plain, full-fat yogurt
Salt and pepper, to taste
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 cup pomegranate seeds, see notes

Mint leaves, for garnish, optional
Notes: Pomegranate seeds are harder to find than they used to be. I bought mine at Whole Foods. They are a lovely addition to this recipe but are not essential. —If you do not have a grill, skip to step 2.

1. Prepare a fire in a grill. When coals are hot, prick eggplant skins all over with a fork or knife and cook on grate, turning once, until cut side is just beginning to lightly blacken and skin is charred. Let cool. Skip to step 3.

2. If you do not have a grill, heat broiler to high; prick eggplant skins with a knife or fork and place on a baking sheet on the top rack of your oven. Broil, flipping once, until the cut side is just beginning to blacken and the skin is charred. Let cool.

3. Scoop eggplant out of its skin with a large spoon, and set aside. Place lemon juice, tahini and garlic in a food processor; let sit 10 minutes. Add the reserved eggplant, yogurt, salt and pepper, and pulse until slightly smooth. Transfer to a shallow dish. Make a well on the surface and drizzle with oil. Garnish with pomegranate seeds and mint.

Per serving: 165 calories; 15 g fat; 3 g saturated fat; 3 mg cholesterol; 4 g protein; 7 g carbohydrate; 3 g sugar; 2 g fiber; 403 mg sodium; 40 mg calcium

— Adapted from a recipe in Saveur

LENTILS AND RICE WITH FRIED ONIONS (MUJADARRAH)

Yield: 4 servings

- 1/4 cup olive oil
1 large white onion, sliced into rings
1 1/3 cups green lentils
3/4 cup uncooked long-grain white rice
Salt and pepper to taste
1/2 cup plain yogurt

1. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Stir in the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until they turn a rich mahogany brown, about 45 minutes to 1 hour or longer. Do not allow to turn black; this will make them bitter. Browned onions can be kept in an airtight container in the refrigerator for several days or can be frozen for several months.

2. Place lentils in a medium saucepan and cover with 1 1/2 inches of lightly salted water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer about 15 minutes.

3. Add rice and enough water to cover by 1/2 inch or a little more. Add at least 1/4 teaspoon salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil, cover and turn heat to low. Simmer 15 to 20 minutes, until rice and lentils are tender. Let sit off the heat, covered, at least 5 minutes.

4. Add 1/2 of the onions and stir with a fork to mix well and fluff rice. Taste and season if necessary. To serve, top with remaining onions and yogurt on each portion.

Per serving: 460 calories; 10 g fat; 2 g saturated fat; 5 mg cholesterol; 22 g protein; 73 g carbohydrate; 4 g sugar; 8 g fiber; 167 mg sodium; 76 mg calcium

— Recipe by Melissa Mueller, via allrecipes.com

POTATO BREAD PATTIES

Yield: 8 servings (32 patties)

- 2 medium potatoes
1 tablespoon oil
1 small onion, chopped
Salt
1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
1/2 teaspoon crushed red chiles, or to taste
1/4 teaspoon coriander
1/2 teaspoon crushed cumin seeds (or dried cumin)
Pinch of turmeric
1/4 teaspoon chaat masala, see note

1 green chile
6 mint leaves, finely chopped
1/4 cup frozen peas
Juice of 1/2 lemon
1 tablespoon cilantro leaves, chopped
32 slices sandwich bread
Oil for deep frying
4 eggs, beaten
3 cups breadcrumbs

Note: Chaat masala is a spice mixture. It is available at international food markets. If you can't find it, you can leave it out.

1. Peel potatoes and cut them into quarters. Place in boiling water and cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and mash.

2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and salt to taste, and cook until translucent, about 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook 30 seconds.

3. Add crushed red chiles, coriander, cumin, turmeric and chaat



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Lentils and Rice with Fried Onions (Mujadarrah), Wednesday, March 16, 2022.

masala, and stir until combined. Add mashed potatoes, green chile, mint and peas, and stir until mixed well. Add lemon juice and cilantro and mix well. Remove from heat.

4. Remove crusts from bread and roll each slice with a rolling pin until thin. Place a heaping teaspoon of filling in middle of one slice. Lightly wet edges of the bread all the way around with water, fold one corner over to meet the opposite corner and form a triangle. Press sides together to seal. Repeat with remaining slices and filling.

5. Pour oil 1 1/2 inches deep in a large pot and bring to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. While it is heating, place eggs in 1 bowl and breadcrumbs in another. Dip each triangle first into eggs to coat, then into breadcrumbs to coat; remove to a plate. Fry triangles in oil a few at a time, without crowding, until golden brown on both sides. Remove to a platter lined with paper towels to drain.

Per serving: 600 calories; 13 g fat; 3 g saturated fat; 93 mg cholesterol; 20 g protein; 98 g carbohydrate; 11 g sugar; 7 g fiber; 1,211 mg sodium; 267 mg calcium

— Recipe by yesicancook.pk

STICKY MALAYSIAN CHICKEN WITH PINEAPPLE SALAD

Yield: 4 to 5 servings

- For the glaze and chicken
3 garlic cloves, peeled
1 (1 1/4-inch) piece ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped
1/3 cup runny honey
1/3 cup light soy sauce or tamarind
1 red chile (remove seeds if you prefer it less hot)
2 tablespoons sesame oil
2 tablespoons fish sauce
2 pounds chicken thighs
2 pounds chicken legs
1 tablespoon sesame seeds, toasted



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Baba Ghanoush served with pita, Wednesday, March 16, 2022.

- For the pineapple salad
1 cucumber
1/2 small pineapple, see note
1 small red onion
1 lime, juiced
1 pinch salt

Note: You can use fresh pineapple that has already been cored, or even canned pineapple if you wish.

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.

2. To make the glaze: In a food processor, blend garlic, ginger, honey, soy sauce, chile, sesame oil and fish sauce until fairly smooth. Place the chicken pieces in a large roasting pan along with the glaze, tossing them well to coat. Roast for 45 minutes, remove from the oven and sprinkle with the toasted sesame seeds.

3. To make the salad: Halve the cucumber lengthwise; remove seeds with a spoon and discard the seeds. Slice each piece lengthwise, then slice on an angle and put in a large bowl. Chop the pineapple into small cubes and add to the bowl. Peel and thinly slice the onion. Add to bowl along with the lime juice.

4. Taste salad just before serving; add salt if necessary.

Per serving (based on 5): 310 calories; 11 g fat; 2 g saturated fat; 102 mg cholesterol; 25 g protein; 31 g carbohydrate; 24 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 1,600 mg sodium; 53 mg calcium

— Slightly adapted from a recipe by Rachel Khoo, via food52.com

MAMMEN

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The last movie advertised for the Star Theatre was in August of 1929. The movie was "It Can Be Done" starring Glenn Tryon. Well, someone thought that "something" could be done, and done quickly, because The Observer reported on Sept. 30, 1929, that "The razing of the Star theater to make way for the construction of a modern, specially built theater is progressing rapidly." The someones who were in charge at this time

were Joseph Meyers and a young man of 23 years of age by the name of Francis Gruelich.

By Nov. 4, 1929, it was reported that decorators had started working at the Granada and would be finished in a week or two and the tile setters were beginning their work. The Granada opened on Nov. 16. That Saturday matinee was at 1:30 featuring the movie "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney" starring Norma Shearer, Basil Rathbone and Hedda Hopper. Everyone was anxious to see the new Granada, the second theater in La

Grande — the Arcade being the first — showing these new talking moving pictures. It was no wonder that during the evening the line for the ticket booth went halfway up the block.

The building had been remodeled with a Spanish theme and had lost most of its original uniqueness. The exterior was now buff stucco topped with red tile and there were two doors at the front. The interior, according to The Observer, "was beautifully furnished and decorated following the Spanish theme." Colors of crimson and gold were found in

the rich carpeting, comfortable and carefully arranged seats, and gorgeous drapes.

The Granada underwent another remodel in 1952 adding 800 staggered seats, cry rooms and a 20-foot by 15-foot veneer plastic screen. At that time it was the "largest and most modern theater in eastern Oregon" according to The Observer. In 1974 it again became necessary to update the Granada with new technology and decor and at this time the current triplex came into being.

The Gruelich name has long been associated

with the theater business in La Grande, starting with Francis's father John. The third and fourth generations of the Gruelich family are still associated with the Granada.

Keep looking up! Enjoy!

Ginny Mammen has lived in La Grande for more than 50 years and enjoys sharing her interest in the history of people, places and buildings.

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