

FOOD FEATURE

A WORLD OF FLAVOR: WHAT'S HOT IN 2015

BY ANGELA SHELF
MEDEARIS AND GINA
HARLOW
THE KITCHEN DIVA

Unlike yoga pants, white trainers and fake fur, the food we eat might be considered more classic than trendy. The fact is, we all need to eat. Basic and vital as it seems though, food, like fashion, is not without its fads.

More than a succession of fads, however, is the history behind what and how we eat. In this column we've talked about the how and why of certain foods we've grown up eating, and other foods we've grown to love. Now, more than ever, our cuisine choices reflect our vast multicultural population and the willingness of many of us to try something new. Even children, known for their fussy palates, are trying more complex flavors like macaroni and cheese with truffle oil — probably due to their forward-eating parents.

In 2015, there is a high-pitched buzz about food. Heat and spice will be hot, a trend that has been growing steadily and now is predicted to explode. Ethnic cuisines from all over the world, with a focus on new and exotic flavors, will take the stage.

Is it because we are just bored and want something else for dinner? Or is it because we now work and live with people from all over the world and, like people do, we share our food, and in the process discover something new that tastes delicious? It's

probably all these things, and something more. The health of our nation is a growing concern. In our desire to eat for wellness, we've discovered many elements of global cuisines that possess health benefits we need while keeping our diets interesting and tasty.

Also on the rise are recipes highlighting umami vegetables, which exhibit the "fifth taste" that gives food a pleasant, desirable flavor. Our taste buds are naturally attracted to these foods, which include sweet potatoes, mushrooms and nori. This year, try using a Japanese Seven Spice mixture in your recipes or a flavorful Middle Eastern Shawarma Spice Blend.

My recipe for Chicken Shawarma converts what has been a restaurant recipe into a dish that can be prepared at home. The Shawarma spice blend is a cure for taste buds that are tired of the same old chicken dish. It's an adventurous way to kick off a new year.

— Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and the author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is www.divapro.com. To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, Like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Read Gina Harlow's blog about food and gardening at www.peachesandprosciutto.com. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis



SHAWARMA SPICE MIX

Toasting the spices in a dry pan for 1 minute before using them in a recipe enhances the flavors.

- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground oregano or thyme
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

Mix all ingredients together. This spice mix will keep in an airtight container for about 4 weeks. Makes about 1/4 cup.

CHICKEN SHAWARMA

- 1 1/2 pounds thinly cut skinless, boneless chicken breast
- 1 pound thinly cut skinless, bone-

- less chicken thighs
- 1/2 cup lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons tomato sauce
- 4 tablespoons plain, Greek yogurt
- 3 tablespoons white vinegar
- 1 head of garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 1/2 tablespoons Shawarma Spice Mix
- 3 Roma tomatoes, sliced into thick rounds
- 4 pita bread rounds

1. Rinse chicken pieces with cold water, then cut horizontally into thinner cuts of about 1/2 inch (each piece could possibly be split into 2 slices depending on thickness). Place chicken pieces in large bowl.

2. In a blender, mix lemon juice, tomato sauce, yogurt, vinegar, garlic, oil and spice mix. Add the mixture to chicken and mix well. Cover and let marinate in refrigerator at least 4 hours, or overnight.

3. When ready, grill marinated chicken and some sliced tomatoes

using grill pan on stovetop. Heat grill pan and add 2 tablespoons oil. Or alternately, grill using Panini grill or George Foreman grill for about 15 minutes on medium heat. You also can cook the chicken on a barbecue grill. Baking or broiling in the oven will dry out the chicken.

4. Once cooked, allow chicken to cool, and then shred as thinly as possible. Traditionally, the pita bread is spread with Lebanese Garlic paste, or you can use a good-quality mayonnaise mixed with 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder and 1/2 teaspoon of lemon juice.

5. Spread the chicken shreds along diameter of a piece of pita bread. Some restaurants place French fries inside the sandwich. Others add a cabbage and mayo salad, along with salty Middle Eastern cucumber pickles. You can substitute shredded coleslaw and sliced dill pickles, if desired, and grilled or fresh tomatoes. Makes 4 servings.

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KITCHEN DIVA PHOTO

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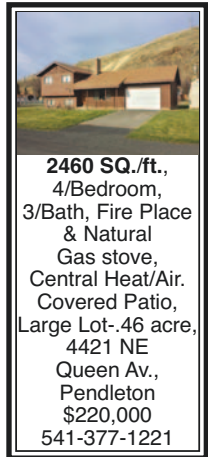
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