



Flavours

# AFGHANISTAN

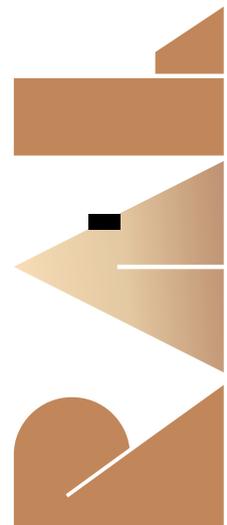
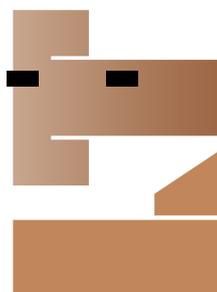
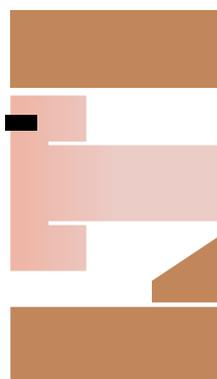
author: Khalil A. Arab

## about me

Khalil A. Arab was born in 1986 in Herat Afghanistan. He finished his primary and secondary education in Herat. During the Taliban regime, Khalil had to quit school and worked various jobs to help his family. Following the overthrow of the Taliban, Khalil returned to school in 2002 and finished Herat Agriculture Vocational High School in 2004. In 2005 he was accepted into University of Jalalabad in which he enrolled only to drop out following a job offer he received from the Americans. Khalil worked as an interpreter/translator for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In June 2010, he fled Afghanistan following a threatening letter he received from the Taliban and eventually settled in Poland as a refugee. In 2011 he enrolled at Jagiellonian University where he was awarded a B.A. and M.A. in Persian philology and a B.A. in American Studies. He is currently a M.A. student of American Studies and a PhD student at the Faculty of Philology. His dissertation is focusing on Human-Animal Relations in Afghan Contemporary Literature. He is actively researching on the issue of refugees/asylum seekers and Immigrants in Europe especially Afghan refugees and asylum seekers. He is an immigrant activist and is involved in various awareness raising projects.

## intro

Afghan cuisine is, like the country itself, diverse with various regions have a number of dishes of their own which is highlighting ethnic, geographical/climate and sub-cultural characteristics of that given region. It is safe to say that it is impossible to call any dish a national dish and part of national cuisine, however there are a number of dishes that are recognized across the country and is loved by many people in regions other than their native ones.



The regional variation makes Afghan cuisine much more interesting and colorful. Generally speaking, Afghan cuisine is mainly based on Afghanistan's main crops, most notably wheat, maize and rice. Like many Southeast and Central Asian countries rice plays an important role in Afghan cuisine and often can be served as the main course in all the regions. In other word, wheat and rice makes up for the most of Afghan staple food.

Meat is an integral part of Afghan cuisine with lamb as the most popular source of meat for all who can afford it and it is followed by veal, beef and chicken. It worth mentioning that a number of very delicious dishes are prepared from unconventional meat sources - that may be otherwise discarded in many other countries - including internal organs. For instance a highly appreciated and very tasty broth is prepared from Kaleh-Pācheh- (literary means head and limbs) of sheep or goat. Legumes of different types such as broad beans and kidney beans, mung bean, black-eyed peas, chickpeas, split peas, lentil, are consumed abundantly across the country. For instance, in Herat as well as in Southern Afghanistan, a special potage is cooked called Gholur - literally means bulgur - due to the fact that the main ingredient is bulgur wheat. Split wheat is cooked along with meat and several other legumes to create a thick potage that is rich with fiber.

Fruits and vegetables are also consumed in great quantity. Spinach, eggplant, okra, squashes (including Pumpkin, Zucchini, Zucchetto, Straightneck squash), are among other vegetables that make up the main ingredients for a variety of mouth-watering dishes. Fruits are mostly consumed fresh and or dry. Fortunately most of the fruits and vegetables are still grown organically and they are accessible only during the harvest season. This seasonal accessibility contributed to food habits of various regions, hence created a long list of food choices for various occasions and purposes. The downside of this seasonal fruits and vegetables is, with the absence of proper storage facilities, they are hard to get once the season's passed. Traditional conservation methods are, however, still in place. For longevity and durability, fruits and vegetables are bought in great quantity, they are dried and kept in cooler parts of living quarters (i.e. cellars or basements). Once the season is gone, the dried fruits and or vegetables are retrieved by letting them soak in water for a longer period of time. Tomato, okra, eggplant, onion, are among other vegetables that are dried. Melon, fig, plum, quince, apricot, grapes, are among fruits that are dried and consumed as dried fruit or soaked into water to retrieve the fresh feel.

# QABOLI PALAW



 40-60min

*Qaboli Palaw is one of the dishes that is recognized across the country and people in various region attempt to prepare it. It is served as main course, since it is prepared with rice, however, it is always accompanied by another one or two side dishes. There is a misconception concerning the name of the recipe. Some people Afghans and foreigners alike, call it Kabuli Palaw, which is an indication that this is native of Kabul province. However, this is nothing but a myth. The idea of Qabuli being native of Kabul is a laughing matter. It's been traditionally prepared by ethnic Uzbek in northern Afghanistan. Therefore it is called Qabuli Uzbeki - Uzbek made Qabuli - an ethnic who fairly deserve the credit for it. It is them who introduced the dish to other part of the country via their restaurants. Uzbek restaurants in major Afghan cities are by far the most crowded restaurant. It is rice with lamb, nonetheless, its meatless variation is common as well. It can be the main course in a gathering or it could be part of daily consumed food, the one and only menu item offered by a local restaurant in a city.*

## • ingredients (4 servings) •

### meatless (vegetarian)

#### for rice\*

- 600g good quality rice
- 2 tbsp cumin
- 1 tbsp salt or as desired
- 1 tbsp pepper or as desired
- 5 tbsp vegetable oil

#### for toppings

- 3 large carrots
- 1/2 cup of raisins
- 2 tbsp sugar (optional)
- 1/4 cup of silvered, sliced almonds (optional)

### with meat\*\*

- 500g lamb or beef
- 2 large onions
- 1 tbsp salt
- 2 tbsp masala

## directions

\* The rice I use is long-grain basmati rice comes from a supermarket owned or run by an Iranian. Please see [www.ambic.pl](http://www.ambic.pl). There you can buy masala you need for palaw. In Krakow, the best rice I've seen so far was basmati rice sold in Lidl, although it does not produce.

\*\* Please note that in order to prepare the meat, you need a pressure cooker or longer time to cook the meat. So plan accordingly.

**Step 1:** Chop the onions and add them in the pressure cooker (or in a pot if you don't have a pressure cooker), clean up the meat (don't remove the fat), and add them in the pot. Add salt and water. You need to add two cups of water over the meat. The water level should raise almost to cover the ingredients. Pressure cook for 20 minutes or cook them in a normal pot until the meat is done and tender (approx. 30-45 minutes depends on the type of meat). Take out the meat, don't throw away the soup, you will need them to flavour your rice with.

**Step 2:** If you are preparing meatless palaw, please ignore step one. Soak the rice in cold water and leave it for as long as a couple of hours. You can also leave them in the water overnight. Or leave them in the water in the morning when you leave for work and the rice should be soaked up and ready to be cooked when you return in the evening.

When ready to cook, boil some water in a large pot. Please note that it is very important for the rice to have plenty of space when boiling to prevent fraction. Otherwise your rice will break into pieces and eventually turn into a globe of white mesh. The larger the pot the better the rice will boil. Of course the quality of your rice is very important. Don't remove the rice from water yet. Once the water is boiling remove the rice from cold water and add them into the boiling water. Add two tablespoon of salt, no worries, you will drain the water eventually. Let them boil 10 up to 15 minutes until they are cooked. To assure they are cooked, take some grains of rice out and squeeze it between your thumb and index finger. If it can be pressed easily and the rice is still in one piece, they are cooked.

Meanwhile, as your rice is boiling, wash and slice your carrots to 7 or 8 centimetres long pieces. The thinner the slices are the easier they are cooked, better they will look. Place a frying pan on the stove and add some oil, add the sliced carrots, you can add the two tablespoon of sugar if you like it, stir them to mix put the lid and leave them to cook for about 5 minutes until they are half cooked. After 5 minutes add the raisins and almonds if you like, add two or three tablespoon of water and then close the lid once again and let it cook for another five minutes. Take it down the stove.

**Step 3:** Now that you have your rice topping ready, your rice should be cooked by now. Drain the hot water using a colander or a rice strainer, and while still there, sprinkle half of the ground cumin on top of you hot steaming rice. Wash the pot you boiled the rice in and place it on the stove. Add a little bit of oil and then put all the rice in the pot.

**Step 4:** If you prepared meat, then you can use the soup now. Add your Masala into the soup and mix them together, pour half of glass of that soup evenly all over the rice. Some people slice an onion, fry it on the frying pan until it almost burnt, then crush it and mix it with the soup and spices before they pour it over the rice. It is very unhealthy and I don't do that.

**Step 5:** If you did not prepare meat, then skip step 4. You still need to pour the same amount of water evenly all over the rice and just sprinkle your remaining ground cumin on the rice. You can also use whole cumin instead of ground cumin. Place the carrot mix (and if you prepare meat, the meat also) on top of the rice in one corner so you can take them out first after the steaming. It is time for steaming of your rice. To steam your rice you need a kitchen towel or foil to cover the lid. I prefer the towel. What's with the towel, you ask? Well, it absorbs the condensation coming off of the rice as it steams so it doesn't "rain" back down onto the top of the rice, which makes it soggy. SCIENCE!

**Step 6:** To steam your rice, set the pot on full-heat for 5 minutes until the rice start to steam and then place a kitchen towel between the top of the pot and the lid (wrap the lid with the kitchen towel), and cover the rice with the pot's lid. Bring the edges of the towel up and twist around the handle of the lid so they aren't dangling down near the heat element. Now bring the heat down to medium-heat and leave it for 10 minutes. Finally bring down the heat to the lowest heat possible and your rice is ready to be served after 5 more minutes. Remove the lid and the towel and use a kitchen skimmer to fluff the rice into those perfect individual grains. Your rice is ready to be served.

# SPINACH



fresh 45min  
frozen 30min

*Spinach is the most common side dish in Herat. Growing up as a kid, it was and still is by far my favorite food and I often cook it here. I decided to add it to this list because it is very simple and easy to prepare, as well as very delicious and healthy.*

## ingredients

- 500g fresh or frozen spinach (4-6 servings)
- 1/2 cup black-eyed peas (you can substitute it with white bean or kidney beans)
- 1 large onion
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 1/2 tbsp curcuma
- 1/2 tbsp or as desired paprica/black pepper

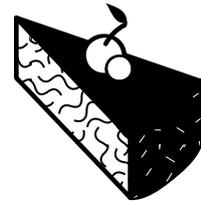
## directions

**Step 1:** If you are using fresh spinach then wash them, cut off the roots and put them in boiling water for about 10 minutes. Meanwhile you can jump to step 2. After spinach is boiled, drain them and chop them very finely using the back of a bigger knife and a cutting board or using a meat mallet.

Cook your peas/beans in a separate pot here while your spinach is prepared. You can use white or kidney beans instead of black-eyed pea. You can also substitute it with canned peas/beans. If you are using minced spinach and canned peas/beans then please skip to step 2.

**Step 2:** To prepare your spinach, chop the cloves of garlic, and cut the onion into small dices, place a pot or a deeper frying pan on the stove. Add the oil let it heat up then add garlic and onion and let them fry until they are brown. Add your spinach, you can all salt and pepper, curcuma and 1 cup of water. Place the lid and let them cook on medium-heat for around 10 minutes. After 10 minutes add your peas/beans and make sure the spinach is a little juicy, stir them around a little and place the lid and let them cook for another 10 minutes. Once the water is evaporated, turn down the heat and let them cool down. Your spinach is ready to be served now.

# FERNI



*For dessert I picked Feni, a sweet thick porridge that is very popular in Western Afghanistan and East of Iran. A Wikipedia entry describes Feni as a dessert "eaten in Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and among the Muslim communities of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan." Feni is mostly consumed during the holy month of Ramadan and I remember growing up it was one of my favorite things to eat. Perhaps one of the reasons I liked Ramadan? Who knows? :)*

## ingredients

- 1 liter of milk (6 servings)
- 4 tablespoon of cornstarch (alternatively you can use 8 tbsp of all-purpose flour)
- 4 tbsp sugar (add more if you like it more sweet)
- 4 tbsp rose water
- 2 tbsp cardamom
- 4 tbsp pistachios
- 1/2 cup of water (or you can use milk)

## directions

**Step 1:** Pour the milk in a pot and place it on stove at medium-heat and stir it (use an egg whisk) until the milk reaches its boiling point. Keep stirring otherwise the milk will thicken and burns at the bottom of the pot.

**Step 2:** Mix the sugar and cornstarch (or flour) and add the water (or milk if you prefer) little by little until the sugar and cornstarch is dissolved. Slowly add the sugar and cornstarch solution into the boiling milk and keep stirring. Add your rosewater and cardamom. You can use the cardamom later for topping but adding it inside the solution will add to its flavours and gives a better aroma. Keep stirring until your solution is thicker. Once it started boiling again, turn the heat down and let it cool down a little bit. Pour it into a bowl and crush the pistachios to decorate it with patterns. Serve it warm or cold as you desire. It gets thicker as it cools down. Enjoy!



# Legal Aid Center The Halina Nieć

## *about us*

For 16 years we have been working towards protection of human rights and providing free legal assistance to foreigners, refugees and stateless persons. Through this recipe ebook we would like to share with you our intercultural experience that comes from our daily work with persons coming from all over the world. We believe that learning about the customs and the cuisine of different cultures is a great way of building a more open society!

In our cycle called „Multicultural Flavours” we will be publishing a free ebook featuring a different cuisine every month. If you like our work, we will be grateful if you would support us by a voluntary donation:

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**Thanks to collected funds we will be able to continue our mission of helping refugees. Thanks for all your support!**

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