

Finding the taste of home away from home

Original Script:

My mother is not a great cook, I don't think she even enjoyed cooking! Sorry Mama! But of course, there are few recipes that she has mastered and I for sure miss! Kusa me7she, mlokhiyeh, wara2 3inab, kebeh b laban, shish barak, la7meh b3ajin, kafta b sayninyeh, knefe; just to name few.

My student Michael will share his journey of finding the taste of the Levant cuisine when away from home.

El-yom bade e7keh 3an shaghle ekid kel el shabeb w el-sabaya el-mkthirbeen byemre2o fiha. W heye keef fik takol akl beit lama tkon mekhtereb.

The word mekhtereb in English is best described as; diaspora.

Ana lama kent sgheer, emmeh kenet tetbokh kel yom. Kent erja3 min el madraseh ba3d el-dehr w kenet m7adra humus, tabbouleh, mjadara, kibbeh, khebez 3arabi, kel el aklat yale bet7eba keno mowjoudeen 3ala el-tawleh w wala mar-ra sa2alet 7aleh min wein byejou kel hol?

Ba3d fatra taraket el-beit w re7t 3ala el jama3ah, tkharajet w na2alet 3ala Dubai. B Dubai shta2et la tabekh emmeh bas 3al alileh b Dubai fi kteer mata3em Lebniyeh.

Bas 7atta b el-mata3em Lebniyeh, ma b admo aklat el-beit. B rakzo 3ala el-mezze w mashawi...w la hal sabab, el-ajaneb bifakrou ino el-akel el-Lebnene ma fiha shi gheir el-kebab w el-humus. Ma ra7ou 3ala beit Lebne ta yet3arraffou 3ala el-kousa ma7she, el-siyyadieh, el-kibbeh bil saynieh, elleh baddek ya!

That is so true! Most restaurants will only serve you mezze and mashawi. Mezze is Middle Eastern tapas or appetizers and mashawi means grilled meats. Could be chicken or meat!

Fa ana lamma na2alet min Dubai 3ala New York 7atta el-humus w el-mashawi balasht eshta2lon! 2arrarret eno bade et3alam keef etbokh akel yale bi zakerni bi akel emeh.

Bas keef? Taba3an kent es2al emme bas hiyeh kent b LA w ana bi New York. Fa balasht e7dor videos 3ala YouTube. Jarrabet e7dar kteer channels 3an tabakh el 3arabi w bade 2elek inno fi kteer minnon ma 2ellon 3azeh.

Ana shakhsiyan b7eb etbokh 3ala wasfeh ma3 el moukawinat b el-zabet. W fi kteer videos 3ala YouTube, khasatan b el-3arabi, el-chef 3am bi 7adder akel w bi 2ellek “7ot rashet mele7” aw “zeed niftet 7amod” w ana manni khabeer la darajeh inno be2der 2ayyess mele7 aw felfel bala ma a3ref addeh bi zabet badde 7ot. Fa ma bensa7 7ada yshuf hek videos.

I feel the measurement concept doesn't exist in the Middle East. Any time I ask my mother about a recipe she says a bit of salt, a pinch of this, a tiny bit of that! What is a bit or pinch! God knows!

Bas b el-ekher la2et tnein aw talete channels yale byeshra7o kil shi b el-tafaseel w ana bensa7 fihon.

Abel ma kafe el-mowdou3 bade elek shi kteer mehem wa hayda ba3tebro ser. Abel ma jarreb wasfeh jdideh, bo7dar 3 videos la nafs el akeleh. Lesh? La2ano bade shouf kif el-3alam b 7adrou nefs el-akleh w bade shouf shou el-fare2 w ba3den b2arrer aya atayeb.

Masalan: el-manousheh, fi nas b7eboha b el-foron w nas b7eboha 3ala el-saj.

Saj is a type of bread that is very thin, as thin as a paper, and is cooked on doomed or convex metal griddle.

El falafel: fi nas bi7adroha b el-humus w nas bi7adrouha b el-foul.

El Molokhieh: fi nas byeformo el-wra2 el-molokhieh la 7atta ykounou kteer ne3meh (3ala tari2a el-masrieh) w fi nas b khalo el-wra2 twal.

El bamieh bil riz: fi nas byesta3malo samneh, w fi nas byesta3amlou zeit zeytoun aw zebdeh.

El-wara2 3enab: fi nas be7ebo wara2 3enab b el-la7meh w fi nas bi7ebo b el-zeit.

Fa assdeh eno fi kteer toro2 t-ta3mol nafes el-wasfeh w b7eb a3ref kel el- toro2 2abel ma ekhtar ana keef badde a3mela.

W hala2, mean be7dar 3ala YouTube? Awalan bensa7 kel el-shabab w el-sabaya ele badon yet3alamo matbakh el-3arabi bensa7on b channel Fatafeat 3ala YouTube. 3andon aktar min alf w khamse mieh videos, aya wasfeh fik tetkhayyala 3andon yaha w byeshra7ou b shakel kteer wade7 w ma fee a7san minnon.

Actually, this is exactly how I learnt to cook by watching Fatafeat channel as well!

Teniyani fi Chef Antoine bi Tele Liban, Antoine El-Hajj. Huwe bi rakez 3ala el-akalat m3a2adin mitel el shish barak, sfi7a ba3albakieh, laban emmo, djeij b el-toum b el-feren...tab3an el vegan burger kamen :).

Let's take a moment hear and explain the Chef Antoine vegan burger. Chef Antoine is probably in his 70's. Few months ago on one of his episodes he wanted to show us how to cook vegan burger and his first ingredient was 100 grams of ground beef! He's so cute! He thought vegan burger would be a regular burger with some vegetables.

El-meshkleh el-wa7ideh ino bye7ke ktir, ya3ne b sawweh video khamseh w arba3een di2a w byekhod etisalat khilal el 7al2a w b tawlou el-7adees. Fa mish metl be2e el videos b el-YouTube w Instagram inu te7dora khamis diya2eh w tefhame kel shee, ma3 chef Antoine baddek saber.

W bil ekher, fi Anthony Rahayel ma3 "No Garlic No Onions". Hayda afdal channel bi ra2eeye la2ano mish bas b addem tabakh Lebene, bas kamen b khaleeke tefhami el-tarikh w el-7adara wara el-akel w 3alatool kteer m7amas w fakhour bi tourasat Lebne w b khalee el-mshahedeen yet7ammasou kamen.

Translation:

My mother is not a great cook, I don't think she even enjoyed cooking! Sorry Mama! But of course, there are few recipes that she has mastered and I for sure miss! Kusa ma7she, mlokhiyeh, wara2 3inab, kebeh b laban, shish barak, la7meh b3ajin, kafta b sayninyeh, knefe; just to name few.

My student Michael will share his journey of finding the taste of the Levant cuisine when away from home.

Today I want to speak about something that all diaspora guys and girls face. And that is how can you eat home cooked meals when you are away from home.

The word mekhtereb in English is best described as; diaspora.

When I was young, my mother used to cook every day. When I came back from school in the afternoon, she had humus, tabbouleh, mjadara, kibbeh, pita bread, and all the food that you can imagine on the table. I never asked myself where did all of this come from?

After a while I left home to go to school, I graduated and moved to Dubai. In Dubai I missed my mother's cooking but at least in Dubai there are a lot of Lebanese restaurants.

But even in the restaurants they don't serve meals that we cook at home. They focus on mezze and mashawi. And that's why foreigners think that Lebanese food is only kabab and humus. They've never been to a Lebanese house to know el-kousa ma7she, el-siyadiieh, el-kibbeh bil saynieh. Anything you can imagine!

That is so true! Most restaurants will only serve you mezze and mashawi. Mezze is Middle Eastern tapas or appetizers and mashawi means grilled meats. Could be chicken or meat!

So, when I moved from Dubai to New York I even missed the humus and mashawi. I decided to learn how to cook food that reminds me of my mother.

But how? Of course, I asked my mother, but she was in LA and I was in NY. So, I started watching videos on YouTube. I tried to watch a lot of Middle Eastern cooking channels and I must say many of them are useless.

Personally, I like to cook following a recipe with exact ingredients. And there a lot of videos on YouTube, especially the ones in Arabic, while the chef is preparing the food he says; “add a pinch of salt” or “add a bit of lemons” and I’m not a cooking expert to know exactly how much salt, pepper, or lemons I should add. So, I advise not to watch videos like that.

I feel the measurement concept doesn’t exist in the Middle East. Any time I ask my mother about a recipe she says a bit of salt, a pinch of this, a tiny bit of that! What is a bit or pinch! God knows!

But finally, I found two or three channels that explains everything in details and I definitely recommend.

Before I continue, I want to tell you something really important and I consider it a secret. Before I try any new recipe, I watch 3 different videos for the same recipe. Why? Because I want to see how people prepare the same recipe and see the difference and then I decide which one is more delicious.

For example: the manoushe, there are people that like it in the oven and some on the Saj.

Saj is a type of bread that is very thin, as thin as a paper, and is cooked on domed or convex metal griddle.

Falafel: some people prepare it with chickpeas and some people prepare it with fava beans.

Molokhieh: some people finely chop the leaves (Egyptian way) and some people keep the leaves whole.

Okra with rice: some people use gee, some people use olive oil, or butter.

Stuffed vine leaves: some people love them with meat and some people love them with olive oil.

What I’m trying to say is that there are a lot of recipes and I like to know the different methods before I decide which method I will try.

And now who do I watch on YouTube? First, I advise everyone if you want to learn about Middle Eastern cuisine check out Fatafeat channel on YouTube. They have more than 1500 videos any recipe you can think off! And they clearly explain everything.

Actually, this is exactly how I learnt to cook by watching Fatafeat channel as well!

Secondly, Chef Antoine from Tele Liban, Antoine El-Hajj. He focuses a lot on complicated recipes like Shish barak, sfi7a ba3albakieh, laban emmo, djeij b el-toum b el-feren...Of course, vegan burger as well :).

Let's take a moment here and explain the Chef Antoine vegan burger. Chef Antoine is probably in his 70's. Few months ago on one of his episodes he wanted to show us how to cook vegan burger and his first ingredient was 100 grams of ground beef! He's so cute! He thought vegan burger would be a regular burger with some vegetables.

The only problem with him is that he speaks a lot. His videos are 45-minute-long, and he takes calls during the episode and chats throughout the call. Unlike other videos on YouTube or Instagram, in 5 minute you understand everything, with chef Antoine you need patience.

Finally, there is Anthony Rahayel with "No Garlic No Onions". This is my favorite channel in my opinion because not only he serves Lebanese food, but also explains the history behind it and the culture and always excited and proud of the Lebanese heritage. And makes you excited as well.

