

A taste of Persia

Bring the intoxicating spices of the Middle East into your home with easy, everyday dishes that are all flavour and no fuss

EDITED BY EMMA COXON PHOTOGRAPHS KRIS KIRKHAM

One of the world's great gastronomies, Persian cuisine is not just about food, it's at the heart of a rich and diverse culture. It showcases fragrant dishes filled with herbs, spices, fruits and nuts, including cumin, coriander, saffron, sumac, pomegranate and pistachio. Freshen up your repertoire with a culinary adventure into a land of heady aromas and tantalising flavours that will transport you to the souks of Tehran. In her book, *Simply* (Mitchell Beazley, £26), British-Iranian cook and author Sabrina Ghayour shares her secrets for authentic Middle Eastern cooking. Divided into sections including 'Effortless eating' and 'Traditions with a twist', you'll find authentic Persian recipes that are easy to recreate, alongside dishes with Western variations. From delicately spiced fish and hearty vegetarian stews to finger-licking street food, Persian cooking is exciting and enticing.

YOGHURT AND SPICE ROASTED SALMON

These oven-baked salmon bites are roasted quickly for slight charring on the outside and delicate flesh on the inside. Pop leftovers into your lunch box for the following day.

SERVES 4

- 500g skinless salmon fillet, cut into 4cm cubes

FOR THE MARINADE

- 4 tbsp Greek yoghurt
- 1 tbsp garlic granules
- 1 heaped tbsp rose harissa
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tsp paprika
- Grated zest of 1 lime and its juice
- 1 tsp olive oil
- Maldon sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper

TO SERVE

- Tortilla wraps
- Sliced tomatoes
- Finely sliced onion
- Coriander leaves
- Greek yoghurt

1 Preheat your oven to its highest setting (with fan if it has one). Line a baking tray with baking paper.

2 Mix all the marinade ingredients together in a bowl. Add the salmon and turn until well coated in the marinade.

3 Spread the salmon out on the prepared baking tray and roast for 10 minutes until cooked through.

4 Remove from the oven and serve immediately with tortilla wraps, tomatoes, finely sliced onion, coriander leaves and Greek yoghurt.





KIDNEY BEAN AND SWEET POTATO STEW

The yoghurt in this veggie stew cools the heat of the mint oil, a traditional addition called *nana daagh*. Serve with rice or bread.

SERVES 4-6

- Vegetable oil, for frying
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 fat garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- 690g (1 large jar) passata
- 500g sweet potato,

- peeled and cut into 1cm chunks
- 400g can kidney beans, drained
- 1 small packet (about 30g) flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
- 1 tbsp dried mint
- 150g Greek yoghurt
- Maldon sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper

1 Place a large saucepan over a medium heat and pour in enough oil to coat the base of the pan. Add the onion and cook for a few minutes until the onion is translucent, then add the garlic, stirring to ensure it doesn't burn. Continue cooking until both have softened without browning.

2 Add the spices to coat the onion and cook, stirring, for a minute. Season with salt and pepper, then stir in the passata. Reduce the heat and simmer gently, uncovered, for 25 minutes.

3 Stir in the sweet potato and cook for a further 20 minutes or until the potato is tender. Add the beans and most of the parsley to heat through.

4 Place a separate pan over a medium heat, add the dried mint and 1 tablespoon of oil. Heat the mint for a few minutes, without letting it burn.

5 Transfer the stew to bowls, add dollops of yoghurt and scatter over the remaining parsley, then pour over the hot mint oil and serve at once.

KABAB KOOBIDEH

A signature Persian dish, the word *kebab* – or *kabab*, as the Persians call it – means 'to grill', usually over fire. Serve street food-style with flatbreads or as a satisfying dinner accompanied by grilled vegetables and flavourful saffron rice.

MAKES 5-6 LARGE KEBABS OR 10-12 SMALL PATTIES

- 1kg minced lamb (30 per cent fat is essential)
- 2 large onions, minced in a food processor and drained of any liquid, or very

finely chopped

- 2 level tbsp ground turmeric
- 2 level tsp bicarbonate of soda
- Maldon sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 tomatoes
- Flatbreads, to serve

1 Put all the main ingredients into a large mixing bowl and, using your hands, work them together well, pummeling the meat mixture for several minutes into a smooth paste.

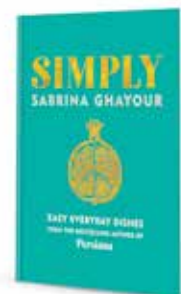
2 To make large kebabs, divide the mixture into 5-6 portions and form each portion around a flat sword skewer about 25cm long. Using your thumb and forefinger, pinch the meat widthways from one end of the kebab to the other to create the classic ridges.

3 Cook the kebabs over a charcoal barbecue that has been burning for about 30 minutes, alongside the whole tomatoes. The trick is to cook

them for about 10-15 minutes in total, until the meat is browned and cooked through, while turning them every 2 minutes to help the fat render and prevent the kebabs from burning.

4 To make small kebabs, preheat your oven to its highest setting (with fan if it has one). Line a large baking tray with baking paper. Divide the mixture into 10-12 portions, form into sausages, then flatten and pinch to create ridges. Place on the baking tray with the tomatoes and bake for 10-12 minutes.

5 Serve the kebabs and tomatoes immediately on the flatbreads so the bread absorbs the juices.



Reader offer

'Psychologies' readers can buy a copy of *Simply: Easy Everyday Dishes* by Sabrina Ghayour for the special price of £17 (RRP £26) including free UK P&P. To order, call 01235 759 555 and quote code '9952100047'. Offer valid until 31 March 2021.

