

# Food of the gods

Journey through eastern Mediterranean countries to discover mouthwatering meals and exciting flavours from an area bursting with culture and character

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**F**ood evokes memories of people and places; it comforts and helps us heal in hard times and unites diverse cultures across continents. Migrant communities in major cities enrich so much of our lives, including our kitchen cupboards with interesting and exotic ingredients. In her new book, *'Ripe Figs'* (Bloomsbury, £26), food and travel writer Yasmin Khan brings us a taste of the eastern Med. Travelling through Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, Khan shares recipes from a region brimming with culinary charm, transporting us to 'cobalt blue skies and shimmering seas, sun-drenched islands filled with olive groves and citrus trees, and mezze-laden tables'.

Beautifully interwoven are stories of the eclectic mix of people with whom she shares meals, as we're invited into a discussion about migration, borders and identity. The book is a celebration of food but is also dedicated to migrants and the resilience of the human spirit because, even in challenging periods, people can always find communion around the kitchen table.

## HALLOUMI SAGANAKI

*This Cypriot-inspired dish is the perfect appetiser and makes an ideal additional to any mezze feast. Sweet, salty, fried rectangles of halloumi are dusted in semolina or polenta, sautéed until crisp, then drizzled with warm, thyme-infused honey and topped with crunchy pomegranate seeds.*

### SERVES 4 (AS A MEZZE DISH)

- 300g halloumi cheese
- 1 medium egg
- 4 tbsp fine semolina or polenta
- 3 tbsp sunflower oil
- 2 tbsp runny honey
- 1 tsp finely chopped thyme leaves
- A couple of handfuls rocket leaves
- 4-5 fresh figs, quartered (optional)
- 3 tbsp pomegranate seeds
- Freshly ground black pepper

- 1** Cut the halloumi into eight thick slices. Beat the egg in a small bowl and sprinkle the semolina or polenta onto a plate. Dip the halloumi slices in the beaten egg, then roll them in the semolina or polenta so they have a crust around them.
- 2** Heat the oil in a non-stick frying pan until hot, then fry the halloumi pieces for a couple of minutes on each side until they are golden brown. Place on kitchen paper to soak up any excess oil. Meanwhile, heat the honey in a small saucepan with the thyme.
- 3** Now assemble the dish. Place the rocket on a serving plate and arrange the halloumi on top, nestling the figs around, if using. Drizzle a little of the hot honey over each slice of halloumi. Finish with a smattering of pomegranate seeds and grind over some black pepper.

Reader offer

### 'Psychologies' readers

can buy a copy of *'Ripe Figs: Recipes And Stories From The Eastern Mediterranean'* by Yasmin Khan for the special price of £20.80 (RRP £26).

**To order,** go to [bloomsbury.com](https://www.bloomsbury.com) and use the code 'PSYCHOLOGIES20' at checkout. Postage charges may apply. Offer valid until 11 June 2021.



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## GRIDDLED FRUIT WITH YOGHURT AND HONEY

*Be transported to sunnier climes with this delicious breakfast recipe. It's the ideal way to start a hot summer's morning; warm and succulent fruit served with thick, full-fat Greek yoghurt, finished with a drizzle of floral honey.*

### SERVES 4

- 8 ripe figs, halved
- 6 apricots or plums, halved and pitted
- 3 nectarines or peaches, quartered and pitted
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- 4 tbsp orange juice

- 600g strained full-fat Greek-style yoghurt
- Handful of grapes, halved
- Handful of nuts, such as walnuts, almonds and pistachios, roughly chopped
- 8 tbsp runny honey of your choice

- 1 Place the halved figs and stone fruits in a bowl, then sprinkle over the cinnamon. Add the orange juice and toss well.
- 2 Heat a griddle pan until very hot. Cook the fruits for 1-2 minutes on each side until charred and slightly softened. Remove and set aside to cool.
- 3 Spoon the yoghurt into bowls, top with the griddled fruits, grapes and nuts, then finish with a thick slick of honey.

## FIG AND PEACH TART

*This easy-to-assemble tart is bursting with quintessential summer flavours of the eastern Mediterranean: ripe figs and sweet peaches, best served with a dollop of fresh cream or kaymak and a cup of coffee.*

### SERVES 4-6

#### For the pastry

- 250g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 45g caster sugar
- ¼ tsp salt
- 150g cold unsalted butter, finely chopped
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tbsp cold water

#### For the filling

- 2 ripe peaches (total weight about 320g)
- 5 ripe figs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 75g demerara sugar

#### For the glaze

- 1 egg white, lightly beaten
- 2 tbsp demerara sugar

- 1 To make the pastry, place the flour, caster sugar, salt and butter in a large bowl and rub together with your fingertips until they resemble breadcrumbs.
- 2 Lightly beat the egg yolk with the cold water, then add to the bowl, using your hands to lightly knead everything together into a soft ball of dough. Wrap in cling film and transfer to the fridge for 1 hour. When you are ready to start baking, preheat the oven to 200°C, gas mark 6.
- 3 Slice the peaches into 2cm-thick slices, removing the stones, and quarter the

- figs. Place the fruit in a bowl and toss with the vanilla extract, ground cinnamon, lemon juice, demerara sugar and cornflour.
- 4 Place a sheet of baking parchment on a work surface and put the ball of pastry on it. Lightly flour a rolling pin and use it to roll out the pastry into a circle of around 5mm thick and 35cm in diameter. Don't worry if the edges are rough and the pastry starts coming apart, just squish it together with your fingers. Place the baking parchment with the dough on a baking tray.
- 5 Now arrange the peach and fig slices in the centre of the circle, leaving a 5cm border. You can do this by piling them all into the middle or making a pattern, such as concentric circles. Once you are done, fold the edges of the pastry over the fruit. Use your fingers to bring the pastry together where you have gaps.
- 6 Finally, use a pastry brush to lightly coat the top of the pastry with the beaten egg white, then sprinkle the crust with some demerara sugar.
- 7 Bake for around 40 minutes, until the top of the pastry is an even, dark golden brown. You can serve the tart warm, but the flavours improve at room temperature, so it is best to leave it to cool for 30 minutes.

