***SAVOR: A Sephardic Music & Food Experience***

**RECIPES**

***Yaprakes Finos***

**Stuffed Grape Leaves**

By Jennifer Abadi

Makes about 2 dozen stuffed leaves

**Wrapping**

One 16-ounce jar grape leaves, packed in brine

**Filling**

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil plus more to grease the pan

1⁄2 cup coarsely chopped white onion

1 1⁄2 teaspoons dried mint leaves

1 cup cold water

3 tablespoons pine nuts

1⁄4 cup dried currants

3⁄4 teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 1⁄2 teaspoons sugar

1⁄2 cup uncooked Turkish-style rice or another medium-grain white rice, rinsed

several times in cold water and drained

**Sauce**

1⁄2 cup cold water, plus more if needed

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more if needed

**For serving**

1⁄2 lemon

Drain and dislodge grape leaves from the jar. Unroll, separate them gently and

place in a medium bowl. Set the bowl in the sink and fill with cold water to soak

and rinse the leaves. Remove rinsed leaves and place in a large colander over a

bowl or plate to drain. When well drained, separate leaves into 3 piles–larger,

smaller, and ripped.

Use olive oil to grease a 9- or 10-inch skillet, 2 to 3 inches deep, with a tight-fitting

lid. Line the bottom with some of the smaller and/or ripped leaves that won’t be

used for filling and rolling.

To prepare the filling, heat the oil in a large skillet (about 12 inches) overmedium-high

heat for 1 minute. Add the onion and cook until soft and transparent, about 5 minutes.

Crush the mint in your hands over the onion. Add the water, pine nuts, currants, salt,

cinnamon, and sugar. Mix well, then stir in the rice. Simmer over very low heat,

uncovered, about 10 minutes until the liquid is mostly absorbed and the mixture

becomes porridge-like. Pour the mixture into a large bowl to cool to room temperature.

There will be about 11⁄2 cups of filling.

To stuff and roll the leaves, spread out a large grape leaf with the veined underside

facing up and base or stem closest to you. Trim the stem close to the leaf if it’s

longer than the leaf. The shiny, smooth side should be the outside of the stuffed leaf

once rolled.

Place about 2 teaspoons of filling at the bottom-most center of the leaf and gently

arrange the filling in a horizontal line about 3 inches long. Fold the bottom part of the

leaf tightly over the filling. Fold in the left and right sides of the leaf just up to the edges

of the filling. Continue to very tightly roll up to create a cigar shape.

Place the rolled grape leaf, seam side down, on top of the flat leaves lining the skillet.

Continue filling and rolling leaves until the filling is finished, placing rolls close together

in the pan. The rolls must fit together snugly to prevent them from unraveling while

cooking. If you run out of room on the bottom of the pan, layer the remaining stuffed

leaves on top in a crisscross pattern or in the opposite direction of the ones underneath.

Make the sauce by stirring together the water and olive oil. Pour evenly over the stuffed

grape leaves. Place a small plate on top of them to compress and prevent unraveling

while cooking. Cover the skillet with its tight-fitting lid.

Simmer 1 to 1 1/2 hours over low heat, or until the stuffed grape leaves are tender, but

not mushy, and the filling is very soft. Check every half hour, and, if all the liquid is

absorbed and the leaves appear dry, make another sauce mixture and pour it over the yaprakes. When cooked, remove from the heat, let cool to room temperature, still covered.

To serve, arrange the stuffed grape leaves on a platter or plate and squeeze juice

from 1/2 fresh lemon on top.

*Writer and cooking instructor Jennifer Abadi is the author of* Too Good to Passover:

Sephardic & Judeo-Arabic Seder Menusand Memories from Africa, Asia and Europe

*and* A Fistful of Lentils: Syrian-Jewish Recipes from my Grandmother Fritzi’s Kitchen*.*

***Komida de Berendjena***

**Honeyed Eggplant with Hummus**

By Hélène Jawhara Piñer

Makes 4-6 servings

**Eggplant**

1⁄4 cup olive oil, divided

1 medium eggplant

1 large clove garlic, minced

1 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon honey

2 or 3 pinches ground cinnamon

1⁄2 cup chopped fresh cilantro (optional)

**Hummus**

2cups cooked or canned chickpeas, drained

1 clove garlic, coarsely chopped

3 tablespoons tehina (sesame paste)

2 teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon ground cumin

Juice from 1 lemon

1 cup crushed ice

1 tablespoon olive oil

Cold water (optional)

To make the eggplant, put about half the olive oil (2 tablespoons) in a 9- or 10-inch

skillet over medium heat. While that heats, cut the eggplant in half lengthwise and

cut each half into long planks about 1⁄2-inch wide. Lay planks flat and cut into long

strips about 1⁄2-inch wide, then cut crosswise to make small cubes. Add the eggplant

cubes and minced garlic to the hot pan and drizzle the rest of the olive oil on top.

Cook for about 15 minutes over medium heat, then stir and cook for another 5 minutes.

Alternatively, cook for 30 minutes over low heat, stirring occasionally. Then,with either

method, stir in the salt and continue to cook until the eggplant cubes are golden, stirring occasionally. Add honey and cinnamon to taste, stir, and take the pan off the heat.

To make the hummus, add all the ingredients to a food processor and pulse 5 times,

for about 30 seconds each. If the hummus is too thick, add cold water little by little.

Put a couple large spoonfuls of hummus on a serving plate, and, with the back of the

spoon, spread the hummus around the plate, making a dip in the middle. Onto that dip,

put two or three generous spoonfuls of honeyed eggplant, draining any extra oil from the

eggplant as you take it out of the pan. Sprinkle with fresh chopped cilantro just before

serving, if you like.

*Chef Hélène Jawhara Piñer, is a PhD in Medieval History, History of Food and author*

*of* Sephardi: Cooking the History–Recipes of the Jews of Spain and the Diaspora from

the 13th Century to Today *and* Jews, Food and Spain: The Oldest Medieval Spanish

Cookbook and the Sephardic Culinary Heritage*.*

***Sopa de Ajo***

**Garlic Soup**

By Susan Barocas

Makes 8-10 servings

3 medium leeks (about 11⁄2 pounds)

Cloves from 3 heads of garlic (25-30 total), thinly sliced lengthwise

12 ounces (about 6 cups loosely packed) cleaned fresh spinach, baby spinach or

white-stemmed chard

6 tablespoons olive oil, divided

12 cups chicken or vegetable broth, homemade or store-bought

3 bay leaves

1⁄2 cup uncooked long-grain white rice, rinsed briefly under cold water

Salt and pepper to taste

Lemon wedges, for serving

Trim off the root end and remove 1 or 2 tough outer layers of each leek. Cut off just

the darkest green top parts, remove the lighter green inside each top, and slice it and

the rest of each leek crosswise into 1/4-inch rings. (Wash the trimmed parts and save

for soup stock.) Place the leek pieces in a colander and wash under cold water, using

your hands to separate the rings and stirring to get all the dirt off. If the leeks are

particularly gritty, set the filled colander in a bowl of cool water for a few minutes, pull

out without stirring up the water and rinse again. Shake off water and set aside to drain

well. Set aside 1 generous cup of the clean, sliced leeks and (separately) 2 tablespoons

of the sliced garlic.

Cut any thick stems off the spinach or chard and dice small. Roughly chop larger leaves

into about 2-inch pieces.

In a large, heavy-bottomed soup pot, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil over medium

heat. Add the remaining leeks to the pot, being careful to avoid any splatters (from

water still clinging to them). Turn the heat down to medium-low and sauté the leeks

until just softened without browning, 12 to 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the

remaining sliced garlic and cook until fragrant and softened, 3 to 4 minutes, stirring often

so neither the garlic nor the leeks brown.

Add the broth and bay leaves. Turn the heat to medium-high and bring to a boil. When

the soup is boiling, stir in the rice. (The residue starch on the grains will help to thicken

the soup.) Bring the soup back to a boil, then turn the heat down to a simmer and cover.

Let simmer for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the rice is soft and the flavors

have blended.

While the soup simmers, heat the remaining 4 tablespoons of oil in a sauté pan over

medium heat. Add the reserved cup of leeks and cook until just starting to turn crispy

and golden, about 10 minutes, then add the reserved sliced garlic. Cook for about 5 or

6 minutes, stirring often until garlic is golden brown. Take the pan off the heat a little

before the leeks or garlic become dark golden as they will continue to darken in the hot

oil. Set the pan aside.

Remove the bay leaves from the soup, then stir in the chopped spinach or chard and

diced stems. Bring the soup back to a simmer over medium heat and let cook just until

the greens are soft, 8 to 10 minutes for spinach or 15 to 18 minutes for chard. Taste,

and add salt and pepper as desired.

To serve, garnish each portion of soup with the crispy leeks and garlic, plus a drizzle of

oil from the sauté pan and a wedge of lemon for each person to squeeze into their bowls.

*Susan Barocas is a writer, chef, cooking instructor and speaker focusing on Sephardic*

*history, culture and cuisine inspired by her family’s background in the Ottoman Empire.*

*She is the co-founder/co-director of Savor: A Sephardic Music & Food Experience.*

***Burekas***

**Cheese and Rice Stuffed Pastries**

By Kaye (Hasson) Israel and Marcia Israel Weingarten

Bendichas Manos

Makes about 84 burekas

**Filling**

5 cups water

1 teaspoon salt

2 cups uncooked long- or short-grain rice, rinsed and drained

1 cup cottage cheese

1 cup (4 ounces) feta cheese, crumbled

1 1⁄2 cups grated Romano or Parmesan cheese, plus more for topping pastries

3 large eggs

**Dough**

2 1⁄2 cups water, plus a few drops for egg wash

2 1⁄2 cups vegetable or canola oil

1 teaspoon salt

10-12 cups all-purpose flour, sifted

1 large egg, for wash

To make the filling, bring a medium pot with the water and salt to boil over high

heat. Add the rice, cover, reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until the rice is soft

and all the water absorbed, about 30 minutes. Remove from the heat and transfer

to a large mixing bowl.

Use a potato masher to mash the hot rice. Add the cottage cheese, feta, Romano or

Parmesan and the eggs, and continue to mash until well blended and there are no

lumps. The mixture should be damp, not dry.

For the dough, put about 1⁄2 cup ice cubes in a large glass measuring cup and add

water to the 3-cup mark.

In a separate, large mixing bowl, add the mixture of water and ice, plus the oil and

salt. Let stand for a few minutes for the water to get ice cold, then add the flour

gradually, 1 cup at a time, stirring with a wooden or large spoon to incorporate

completely until the mixture begins to take on the elastic consistency of dough.

(Usually about 11 cups is the right amount.) Discard any remaining ice cubes.

Take the dough out of the bowl and knead it on a clean, dry surface until the dough

is smooth, not sticky, and has the consistency of pie dough. As with pie dough,

don’t overwork it.

Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper. Divide the dough into 4 equal

portions. Working with one portion at a time, pinch off walnut-size balls and place

on a work surface. If you are right-handed, work each ball in the palm of your left

hand. Use your right hand to tuck the dough under and into itself, working to make

it a smooth ball. (Reverse the work of the hands if you are left-handed.) As balls

are formed, place them not touching on the baking sheets.

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Once all the dough is formed into balls (about 84 of them), place 6 or 8 of the first

balls made on your work surface. Using your fingers, press out the dough. Then

use a small rolling pin to make flat, slightly oval shapes big enough to hold a

spoonful of filling. Each piece should be no larger than the perimeter of a drinking

glass. Using a small scoop or a tablespoon measure, scoop filling into the middle

of the flattened doughs.

After all 6 or 8 flat pieces of dough have been filled, fold each in the middle so the

edges meet and the filling is covered, making a moon-shaped pastry. Pinch the

edges shut. You can make a beautiful edge by pinching the dough between your

thumb and side of your index finger, then use your thumb to roll the edge, working

your way around the entire *bureka,* or you can use a fork to crimp the edges with

a nice, clean pattern. Place the crimped *burekas,* not touching, back on the baking

sheets. Continue with all the dough, 6 or 8 balls at a time, working in the order the

balls were formed.

In a small bowl, whisk together the egg with a couple drops of water. Use a pastry

brush to coat each pastry with that egg wash, then top with a sprinkle of grated cheese.

Bake one sheet at a time for about 30 minutes or until golden brown. Eat right out of

the oven, or refrigerate for a few days, or cool and freeze. Reheat the *burekas* in a

350°F oven, either defrosted or frozen. Do not microwave, as it makes the pastries

soggy. Great to keep in the freezer for a quick brunch or snack or most any time.

*The mother-daughter duo of Kaye (Hasson) Israel and Marcia Israel Weingarten write*

*about Sephardic and Ladino topics and share family recipes in the Sephardic tradition*

*of the Island of Rhodes on their Bendichas Manos website and active Facebook group.*

***Pan de Kalavaza***

**Yeasted Pumpkin Bread**

By Leah Koenig

Makes 2 loaves

One 1⁄4-ounce packet (21⁄4 teaspoons) active dry yeast

1⁄2 cup plus 1 teaspoon sugar

1 cup warm water (about 110°F)

4 1⁄2-5 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for kneading

3⁄4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1⁄2 teaspoon ground cardamom

1⁄2 teaspoon ground ginger

2 teaspoons kosher salt

1⁄2 cup canned unsweetened pumpkin purée

1⁄4 cup vegetable oil, plus more for greasing the bowl

2 large eggs

In a large mixing bowl, stir together the yeast, 1 teaspoon of the sugar and the

warm water. Let sit until foaming, 5–10 minutes. (If it doesn’t foam up, start over

with new yeast.)

Meanwhile, in a separate large bowl, whisk together 41⁄2 cups of the flour, the

remaining 1⁄2 cup of sugar, the cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, and salt.

Add the pumpkin purée, the 1⁄4 cup of oil and one of the eggs to the yeast mixture

and whisk to combine. Add the flour mixture and stir until a shaggy dough begins

to form. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead well for about

10 minutes, adding up to 1⁄2 cup more flour, a little at a time, as necessary until a

supple, elastic dough forms. (The kneading can also be done in a stand mixer with

a dough hook, for 5 to 7 minutes.)

Grease the now-empty flour bowl with about 1 teaspoon of oil, add the dough and

turn to coat. Cover with plastic wrap (cling film) or a clean tea towel and let sit in

a warm place until doubled in size, about 2 hours.

Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Uncover the dough and gently

deflate with the heel of your hand and turn out of the bowl onto a clean, dry work

surface. Divide the dough in half, then divide each dough half into thirds and roll

each third into a long rope. Pinch the top of 3 ropes together and braid (plait),

pinching at the bottom to seal. Place the braided loaf on the prepared baking sheet.

Repeat the process with the remaining 3 ropes.

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Meanwhile, whisk the remaining egg in a small bowl and brush the loaves with

some of that egg wash. (Set the remaining egg wash in the fridge.) Cover the loaves

loosely with lightly greased parchment paper and let rise for another 30 minutes.

Uncover the loaves and brush with a second coat of the reserved egg wash. Bake

30 to 35 minutes until the loaves are deep golden brown and cooked through, or

until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center of the loaf registers 195°F

(90°C). Transfer the loaves to a wire rack to cool for 15 minutes before slicing.

Revive leftovers by reheating them briefly in an oven or toaster (mini) oven.

*Writer and cooking instructor Leah Koenig is the author of six cookbooks including her*

*newest,* Portico: Cooking and Feasting in Rome’s Jewish Kitchen *along with* The Jewish

Cookbook, The Little Book of Jewish Sweets *and* The Haddassah Everyday Cookbook*.*

***Berendjenas Rellenas kon Keso***

**Eggplants with Smoky Cheese Filling**

By Viviane Bowell

Makes 8 servings as a main dish

4 medium eggplants

3 tablespoons sunflower or other neutral vegetable oil

2 medium onions, finely chopped

1/3 cup chopped parsley (flat-leaf or curly)

Juice of 1/2 lemon

1 teaspoon tomato paste

1⁄2 teaspoon smoked paprika, or to taste

1⁄2 teaspoon ground turmeric (optional)

1⁄2 cup water

Salt

4 ounces (1 cup) feta cheese, crumbled

1 cup ricotta cheese

3⁄4 cup shredded cheddar or similar mature cheese

2/3 cup fine matzah meal or bread crumbs

**Topping**

3⁄4 cup mozzarella cheese (shredded or sliced)

1/3 cup shredded cheddar or similar mature cheese

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

For the eggplant (also called aubergines in England), cut each one in half lengthwise.

Carefully scoop out the pulp, leaving about a 1-inch shell; you can use a melon baller,

or a small teaspoon and a sharp knife works well. It doesn’t have to be a work of art

because whatever pulp is left will soften in the oven and be covered by filling.

Place the eggplant pulp in a bowl and squeeze out all the (bitter) juices. You may

have to do this twice.

Place the eggplant shells on a large rimmed baking sheet, cover with foil, and bake

for about 10 minutes. Uncover and bake for another 5 minutes. The shells should

be soft to handle, but not so soft that they can’t hold their shape. Remove from the

oven and allow to cool. Leave the oven on.

For the filling, heat oil in a large pan over medium heat. Add the chopped onions

and cook until starting to turn golden brown, 4 to 6 minutes. Add the eggplant

pulp, chopped parsley, and stir well. Add the lemon juice, tomato paste, smoked

paprika, and ground turmeric, if using. Stir well until all the ingredients are

mixed, then add the water. Cover and simmer for about 12 minutes. Uncover,

taste, and add salt as needed. Stir, then cook, uncovered, for another 2 or 3

minutes, or until all the water has been absorbed. Remove from the heat.

When cool, tip the pulp mixture into a bowl. Add the matzah meal or bread crumbs

and the feta, ricotta, shredded cheeses and additional smoked paprika to taste if

desired. Mix to blend well. Stuff the par-baked eggplant shells with equal amounts

of the pulp mixture, and place them on a lightly oiled rimmed baking sheet.

For the topping, cover each stuffed eggplant with half of each, the mozzarella and

the cheddar or mature cheese. Cover loosely with foil and bake for about 15

minutes. Uncover, top with the remaining cheeses and bake for another 5 minutes,

or until golden on top.

*Writer and chef Viviane Bowell is the author of two books about her family’s experience*

*as Sephardim in the Middle East,* A Culinary Legacy: Recipes from a Sephardi

Egyptian Kitchen *and* To Egypt with Love: Memories of a Bygone World*.*

***Gayina Agristada***

**Chicken with Lemon Sauce**

By Chef Sibel Pinto

Makes 4 servings as a main dish

**Chicken roulade**

2 thin chicken breast fillets

6-8 large spinach leaves

1 large carrot, cut in half, or 2 small carrots, trimmed and peeled

Salt and ground black pepper to taste

2-3 tablespoons olive oil

***Kofti Baharati* spice mix**

3 tablespoons ground cumin

2 tablespoons ground allspice

2 tablespoons onion powder

1 tablespoon garlic powder

1 tablespoon sweet paprika

1/2 tablespoon dried oregano or thyme

1/2 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon salt

1 tablespoon crushed red pepper flakes (such as Urfa, Antep or Aleppo pepper), optional

**Chicken *yullikas* (meatballs)**

10 1⁄2 ounces (2/3 pound) minced/ground chicken breast

1⁄2 cup bread crumbs

2-3 teaspoons *kofte baharati* spice mix (see previous recipe)

Leaves and thinnest stems from 10-12 stems parsley, finely chopped

2 cups chicken or vegetable broth or water

Bay leaves, fresh thyme, or other herbs, dried or fresh (optional)

***Agristada* sauce**

1 1⁄2 cups reserved cooking liquid from the *yullikas*

3 large eggs, at room temperature

Zest and juice of 2 lemons (keep separate)

Salt and ground black pepper to taste

**Red pepper-infused oil**

2-3 tablespoons olive oil or the oil from browning the chicken roulades

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes, or to taste

**Parsley-infused oil**

1 cup fresh parsley leaves, loosely packed

5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Pinch of salt, or to taste

If the chicken breast is not thin enough, place the cutlets between two pieces of

plastic wrap (cling film), then use the flat side of a meat tenderizer or small

cast-iron skillet to flatten the chicken until about a 1/4-inch thick.

Boil water in a saucepan. Add the spinach and blanch for just a few seconds, then

remove and lay over and around the edges of a bowl to drain and cool. Blanch the

carrot(s) in that same boiling water for about 5 or 6 minutes just until fork-tender. Let cool.

Season the chicken breast fillets with salt and pepper to taste. Lay 3 or 4 of the cooled

spinach leaves on top of each one, covering the chicken, then lay half the large cooked

carrot or whole small one at the end of each fillet closest to you. Roll up each fillet tightly, starting at the end with the carrot. When both roulades are done, roll each tightly in a

large piece of plastic wrap. When completely rolled, firmly twist the ends of the cling film

many times in opposite directions. Roll the wrapped chicken on the counter to make it

tight, then make a knot in the cling film at each side very close to the end of the chicken.

Cook the roulades in a steamer basket over simmering water for 10 minutes. This

cooking method gives a moist and tender chicken with pure flavors. Remove the roulades

from the steamer and let them cool.

Cut open and carefully remove the wrap from each chicken roulade. Cut each crosswise

Into 2 or 3 pieces. Heat the olive oil in a skillet until it shimmers. Add the chicken roulade

pieces and pan-fry them, turning onto all sides, until they are evenly golden in color.

You may wish to reserve the oil to create the red pepper-infused oil (see recipe below).

In a container with a tight-fitting lid, mix all the *kofti baharati* ingredients together until well

blended. Reserve 2-3 teaspoons for the *yullikas*, then seal and store the rest in a cool,

dry, dark place.

In a mixing bowl, combine the chicken, bread crumbs, spice mix (to taste) and parsley,

and use your hands to mix well. Use dampened hands to make 16-18 small balls

about 1 1/4 inch in diameter using all the chicken mixture. Put shaped balls on a large

plate, cover and refrigerate them for a half hour so the flavors blend.

In a medium saucepan, bring the broth or water to a boil over medium heat. (Add

bay leaves, fresh thyme or other herbs to the broth or water for different tastes, if

desired.) Adjust to a gentle simmer. Drop the chilled chicken meatballs into the

simmering liquid and poach until cooked through, 10 to 15 minutes. Reserve 1 1⁄2

cups of the cooking liquid (strain as needed).

Heat the cooking liquid in a saucepan. It should be warm, but not boiling. In a mixing

bowl, beat the eggs and add the fresh lemon juice (not bottled juice because it won’t

taste right). Whisk until frothy to emulsify the eggs with lemon juice.

So that the eggs don’t scramble, temper the warm cooking liquid into the eggs-lemon

on mixture by adding about half of it to the mixture in 3 or 4 small amounts, whisking

constantly. Gradually add this mixture back into the rest of the cooking liquid in the

saucepan, continuing to whisk. Simmer over medium heat. Cook slowly, still whisking continuously until the sauce thickens. Lower the heat if the mixture starts to bubble

more than a simmer. Once the sauce has thickened, add the lemon zest, to taste. Do

not overcook the sauce or let it boil. Taste the sauce, and season with salt and pepper

as needed. It should be salty, glossy, silky and lemony. Store in an airtight container in

the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

In a small saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the red pepper

flakes, remove from the heat and infuse for a few minutes.

Puree the parsley leaves and olive oil in a blender until smooth. Taste, and add

salt as needed. Use as, is or strain through a coffee filter to extract and use only the

green oil. (If you filter it, don’t throw away the parsley puree. It is wonderful over

soups, bruschetta, roasted or grilled vegetables.)

To assemble the finished dish: Spread a generous amount of *agristada* sauce on a

large rimmed platter or in 4 individual shallow wide bowls. Arrange the chicken

roulade pieces and the *yullikas* on top of the sauce, either on one serving platter or

dividing evenly among the 4 bowls. Drizzle with the red pepper and/or parsley

infused oils.

*Note: The roulades are very versatile and can help you use up what is in your*

*refrigerator or pantry. Instead of spinach, you can use kale, chard, green beans, peas*

*and mushrooms with any of these other vegetables, even pulling together leftover bits*

*for the roulade stuffing.*

*Chef Sibel Pinto is the author of* Kashkarikas Wasteless Kitchen *and* The

Evolution of the Sephardic Cuisine in Turkey: Five Hundred Years of Survival*.*

*She is the founder of Action Kashkarikas, an international social responsibility*

*project on food waste awareness.*

***Ropa Vieja***

**Shredded Beef with Rice**

By Genie Milgrom

Makes 4 servings as a main dish

1 pound flank steak, trimmed of excess fat

2 cups full-bodied beef broth, preferably homemade

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 medium yellow onion, small diced

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped

1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped

2 cups tomato sauce

1 tablespoon white vinegar

1 tablespoon cracker meal or matzah meal

1⁄4 teaspoon Bijol spice mix (traditional) or sweet paprika or ground

annatto or saffron threads

Salt, or Genie’s Special Salt Mix (see Note)

Cooked rice, for serving

3 large red pimentos,\* cut in strips, for serving

Cook the flank steak in the broth until tender; this usually takes a few hours on low

in a heavy-bottomed pot on the stove or in a slow cooker. Remove from the broth,

let cool and use two forks to shred the meat. It might be easier to use your hands

to shred some of the smaller pieces.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat, then add the onion, garlic, red and

green peppers and stir to blend. Let cook until this mixture is soft and lightly browned.

Stir in the tomato sauce and simmer together for 10 minutes.

Mix together the shredded meat, vinegar, cracker or matzah meal, and the Bijol or

other spice you are using. Taste, and season with salt or Genie’s Special Salt Mix

as needed. Cook over medium heat for 15 to 20 minutes, until the flavors have blended.

Serve on top of rice with the marinated pimentos on the side.

*Note: To make Genie’s Special Salt Mix, in a food processor add a couple cups of kosher*

*salt, a lot of fresh thyme and rosemary leaves, a little lemon juice and some fresh*

*garlic. Pulse until evenly combined.*

\*Pimento (also called roasted red pepper) is a sweet red pepper that has been

cooked and marinated.

*Genie Milgrom is a Crypto-Jewish genealogist, writer and speaker about the Jews that*

*stayed behind in Spain in 1492. Her books include* Recipes of My 15 Grandmothers*, which traces her ancestry to her Sephardic roots.*

***Peshkado Frito***

**Fried Fish**

By Sharon Gomperts and Rachel Emquies Sheff

The Sephardic Spice Girls

Makes 6 servings as a main dish

**Fish**

2 pounds of cod, sea bass, sole, or halibut, either in 1 large piece

or cut into equal-size fillets

1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus a pinch

1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1⁄2 lemon

2 large eggs

Sunflower oil, for frying

2 small carrot sticks

2 cups all-purpose flour

***Agristada* sauce**

2 large eggs

Juice of 1-2 lemons

2 tablespoons sunflower oil

1 teaspoon salt, or to taste

1 teaspoon ground black pepper, or to taste

3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

2 cups water

To prepare the fish, line a rimmed baking sheet with a cut-open brown paper bag,

or line with paper towels and place a wire rack on top.

Wash the fish under cool water, then pat dry with paper towels. Season the fish with

the teaspoon of salt and let it sit for 10 minutes. Pat dry again, then season evenly

with the pepper and garlic powder. Squeeze the juice from the lemon half evenly

over the fish. If the fish is still in one large piece, cut it into equally sized portions.

In a wide bowl, whisk the eggs with a pinch of salt, then set aside.

Heat about 1 inch of the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat for about 7 to 8

minutes. Add the carrots to prevent the oil from burning.

Meanwhile, put the flour in a shallow wide bowl, rimmed plate or dish with sides such

as a pie pan. Dredge each portion of fish in the flour, evenly coating all sides. When

the oil is ready, dip and coat all sides of each floured piece of fish in the beaten egg

and immediately and carefully slip a few at a time into the hot oil. Let each piece of

fish fry for 2 to 3 minutes before turning over. Flip again until each side is golden and

crisp. Transfer fried fish to the prepared baking sheet to drain. Discard the carrot sticks.

Keep the fried fish in a warm place if serving immediately or reheat in a 400°F oven for

10 minutes. It is best when served hot, although *peshkado frito* is also a dish that was traditionally made on Fridays before Shabbat begins and served at room temperature

for lunch on Saturday.

To make the *agristada* sauce, use a fork to beat the eggs in a medium bowl. Add

the lemon juice, oil, salt, and pepper. Beat again to combine well.

In a separate bowl, mix the flour with a small amount of the 2 cups of water–just

enough to create a smooth paste (a slurry). Stir the remaining water into the

egg-lemon juice mixture.

Pour the egg-lemon juice mixture into a small saucepan over medium heat.

Quickly add the flour-water mixture, whisking constantly. As soon as those are

well blended, lower the heat to a simmer and keep whisking until the sauce has

thickened to a pudding consistency. Serve warm with the fried fish.

*Long-time friends Sharon Gomperts and Rachel Emquies Sheff are the Sephardic Spice*

*Girls. They write about and share their families’ recipes from Morocco, Iraq and*

*Rhodes, on their website, social media and a weekly column in the* LA Jewish Journal*.*

***Dedos de Aman***

**Haman’s Fingers**

By Sarah Aroeste

Makes 24 to 30 pieces

**Fingers**

3⁄4 cup raw walnut halves or pieces

3⁄4 cup raw, unpeeled almonds

5 tablespoons confectioners’ sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Pinch of salt

1-pound box of phyllo (filo) dough, defroste

6 tablespoons of unsalted melted butter or a neutral vegetable oil,

such as sunflower or avocado

**Syrup**

1⁄4 cup rose water

1⁄2 cup granulated sugar

2 green cardamom pods

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

To make the fingers, in a food processor, combine the nuts, confectioners’ sugar,

cinnamon, and salt. Pulse several times to a medium consistency, like small pebbles.

(This is the filling mixture.)

Open the box of phyllo dough. If there are two rolls, take out one, open and unwrap.

Carefully unfold the layers (often in 18- x 12-inch sheets) and, leaving all the layers

together, use a large sharp knife or a pizza cutter to cut the phyllo sheets in half

lengthwise and crosswise, creating 4 stacks of equally sized rectangles. If your phyllo

sheets are larger, cut them into rectangles 8 or 9 inches x 5 or 6 inches. Combine the

4 stacks to create one stack and cover immediately with a slightly damp towel to keep

the phylllo from drying out.

Take 2 or 3 pieces of phyllo rectangles at a time (keeping the pastry you’re not

immediately working with covered with the towel). Brush the top rectangle piece

of phyllo very lightly with melted butter or oil. With the long end of the rectangle

closest to you, measure 1 tablespoon of the filling mixture and place it in a line

evenly very close to the edge closest to you. Roll phyllo over one time away from

you to completely cover the nuts. Then fold 1 inch of phyllo on each side toward

the center and continue rolling the pastry away from you until the pastry is rolled

up in a finger shape (about 3 more rollovers in total). Don’t worry if the phyllo

tears slightly – just keep rolling! You should end up with 24 to 30 pieces.

Place each finger, seam side down, on the prepared baking sheet, keeping the

fingers about half an inch apart, and brush the tops with melted butter. Bake for

10 to 12 minutes, or until golden brown.

While the fingers are baking, prepare the syrup by combining the rose water and

granulated sugar in a medium saucepan. Break open the cardamom pods over

and into the pan. Stir with a wooden spoon or whisk continuously over high heat

for several minutes until the mixture boils and becomes clear. Let cool, then strain

through a small sieve and transfer to a serving bottle or jar.

Once the fingers are baked, let cool for a few minutes before drizzling them with

the syrup. (An alternative to the syrup is a sprinkling of confectioners’ sugar just

before serving.) *Dedos* will keep for a few days refrigerated and can also be frozen

(without the syrup). Take out of the refrigerator or freezer and allow to come to

room temperature. If desired, warm them in a 350°F oven for 4 or 5 minutes to

crisp up the pastry before drizzling with the syrup (or cool again and sprinkle with

confectioners’ sugar).

*Sarah Aroeste is a Ladino singer, songwriter and author of two children’s books,* Buen

Shabbat, Shabbat Shalom *and* Mazal Bueno*. She is the co-founder/co-director of Savor:*

*A Sephardic Music & Food Experience and the accompanying album “Savor” is her*

*eighth to be released.*