

# Tasteology

TRENDS, PRODUCTS AND MORE FROM NEWLY WEDS FOODS

May 2017

## MARKET INSIGHT

### Middle Eastern Cuisine, An Emerging Trend

The popularity of Middle Eastern cuisine is growing rapidly and is probably the result of a number of factors. Certainly the ongoing news coverage of civil unrest in that part of the world is a significant one. It has caught the attention of the American public, stimulating the kind of overall interest in the region that includes its food offerings. In addition, the populations of these different ethnic groups and cultures from that geography are growing in North America, many with concentrations in some very specific locales making food immersion much more accessible.

Increasingly, demand for authentic foods aligned with these ethnic groups has taken on a life of its own. Seeing this as a great opportunity to expand their experience and knowledge in all things culinary, the chefs at Newly Weds Foods decided to take time to deep dive into the world of Middle Eastern fare. These flavors and ingredients are popping up and holding strong on menus, as well as on retail shelves. Industry trend watchers like Sterling-Rice have predicted a rise in popularity, most notably from places like Afghanistan and Syria. The Newly Weds chefs concur, and believe the world will soon have a better understanding of Middle Eastern cuisine beyond shawarma and falafel.

This issue of Tasteology provides insights on this topic and highlights key learnings from the food safari Newly Weds Foods' chefs took through Dearborn, Michigan where one of the largest, most storied and diverse



Arab American communities resides. Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Morocco, and Lebanon are among the many Middle Eastern countries from where Dearborn residents emigrated. Together the chefs experienced new and inspiring flavors heightened through the use of special cooking techniques. They learned much about the history and traditions of the Middle East and why that region's palate is so diverse. Although it all felt so foreign in the beginning, the immersion left them food ambassadors to the Middle East's culture and its peoples.

Read on for more about the food safari as well as, information relevant to this Middle East focus. And, enjoy the recipes developed by the culinary team that represent true taste and cultural awakenings.



## RECIPES

### Roasted & Chickpea Cauliflower Salad



#### Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups roasted cauliflower
- 1 ½ cups chickpeas, cooked
- ½ cup Italian parsley, chopped
- ½ cup kale, chopped
- ¼ cup roasted red peppers
- ¼ cup red onion, small dice
- ½ cup English/seedless cucumbers, medium dice
- 3 teaspoons lemon zest (apx. 3 lemons)
- 11 tablespoons Yemeni curry dressing (*Recipe on [www.newlywedsfoods.com](http://www.newlywedsfoods.com)*)

#### Directions:

1. Place one medium-large head of cauliflower into food processor. Using pulse setting, chop to coarse small pebble size. Place chopped cauliflower onto a greased sheet pan. Roast in convection oven at 350°F for about 10-12 minutes. Make sure you stir around the 5 minute mark.
2. Place all items into a mixing bowl, except dressing. Toss/mix well to distribute ingredients.
3. Add in dressing, toss to evenly coat/dress salad.

### Feta & Olive Salad (Flatbread/Sandwich Topper)

#### Ingredients:

- ½ cup kalamata olives, cut in half
- ¼ cup green olives, rough chopped
- 2 tablespoons roasted red peppers, medium dice
- ½ cup feta cheese (seasoned in oil and pepper/herbs), small dice
- 1 tablespoon red onions, small dice
- ¼ teaspoon za'atar seasoning
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest

#### Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients together. Stir well to ensure even distribution of ingredients.
2. Cover and set aside.
3. Place on top of za'atar seasoned flatbread or sandwich.

## A “Hot Cuisine” for a Hot Day

Summer is coming up, and with the exit of colder weather comes a shift from hearty cuisine to lighter fare. Middle East cuisine has long been recognized as “healthy” for its frequent use of fresh herbs, vegetables, olive oil, and spices. Famed chef Rick Bayless once said, “It’s time for Americans to get excited about it because it is healthy and full of flavor.” The Middle East, which includes a region formerly known as the Fertile Crescent, encompasses land rich in indigenous ingredients such as wheat, barley, pistachios, figs, pomegranates, and dates. As consumers seek new and exciting ethnic flavors while staying conscious about their health, it is no wonder that Middle East cuisine has risen to be one of the fastest growing ethnic food trends.

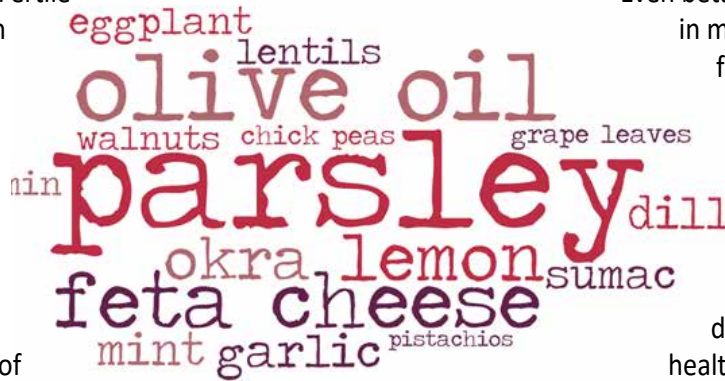
For the past two years, the National Restaurant Association “What’s Hot List” Culinary Forecast has included Middle Eastern as one of the top five global flavor trends.

Middle Eastern cuisine is unique in that it is diverse while also being homogeneous. It is quite common to see

variations of similar dishes across multiple countries. For example, Greek dolmades are typically preserved grape leaves stuffed with minced meat, rice, herbs (such as parsley, dill, and garlic), and pine nuts or currants, while Armenian tolmas are typically stuffed with minced meat, pork fat, onions, rice, greens and tomato paste. Many dishes within the region could be considered signature dishes.

Even better, many of them have grown in menu penetration over the past four years! A few of these include hummus (+34.7%), shawarma (+60.9%), falafel (+38.4%), tabbouleh (+4.4%), and shish tawook (+46.9%). Besides being flavorful and delicious, many of these dishes are prepared with heart healthy olive oil, whole grains, pulses and vegetables.

There are also some common ingredients within the cuisine. As consumers become more enamored with it, expect to see these common ingredients (see graphic) as well as spice blends such as za’atar, and sauces such as tahini, pop up on menus and retail launches in the coming years.



### RECIPES

#### ***Ras El Hanout Spiced Almonds***

##### *Ingredients:*

- 2 cups almonds
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons coconut milk
- ½-¾ teaspoon sea salt, flaked
- 2 teaspoons za’atar seasoning
- 3 teaspoons ras el hanout seasoning blend
- 1 tablespoon coconut sugar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 tablespoons harissa paste (store bought)

##### *Directions:*

1. Mix all ingredients together, except the almonds.
2. Add almonds to seasoning blend. Mix/toss well to ensure all almonds are coated with seasonings.
3. Place almonds onto non-stick baking mat or lightly greased sheet pan.
4. Bake in a preheated 325°F convection oven. Bake for 4 minutes, pull from oven and toss/mix almonds.
5. Place back into oven to bake for an additional 2 to 4 minutes.
6. Let cool before placing into serving dish/bowl.

## Middle East Food Safari

Accompanied by several customer and supplier culinary partners, the Newly Weds Foods culinary team had the incredible opportunity to explore Dearborn, Michigan on a Middle Eastern food safari. In the words of Newly Weds Foods' Chef John, "the goal was to immerse ourselves in the ingredients, cooking techniques, and culture of the Middle East while learning about the flavors that define the trending Middle Eastern cuisine."

Local markets specific to each country contained authentic ingredients, ranging from ground lamb to rose water and dried black lemons. Guided by employees of the local Arab-American National Museum, they toured more than 15

different restaurants and sampled traditional dishes such as kabab bil karaz made of lamb meatballs simmered in a slightly sweet and savory cherry sauce, shish tawook made of marinated chicken kebabs, and sweets such as bint al-sahn or honey cake.

Despite not being able to read the Arabic store signs and advertisements, they dove straight into the community, experiencing as much as possible in the short three day adventure. Some of the highlights were experiencing Iftar, the evening meal at the local Mosque to break the daily fast during Ramadan with fried chicken, rice with vermicelli, and Arabic coffee. Another was visiting markets that offered brightly colored spice blends smelling of earthy turmeric and sweet allspice, lambs heads complete with tongue ready for broth, and finely ground raw beef perfect for kibbeh. There were barrels of grains such as freekeh, bulgur and teff to supplement the braised meats common amongst many of the different countries' traditions, condiments ranging from dark za'atar in oil, red harissa, and Yemeni green z'hug, which is the Middle Eastern version of pesto or chimichurri.

The trip was a flurry of food, and the group disembarked from this safari wiser and more knowledgeable of Middle Eastern foods. The experience instilled a great curiosity and desire to create unforgettable dishes inspired by the cuisine.



### RECIPES

#### Tahini Brownies

*Ingredients:*

- 4 tablespoons butter, salted
- 4 ounces chocolate (bittersweet), chopped
- 3 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 3 eggs (large)
- 1 cup and 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon kosher or sea salt
- ¾ cup tahini
- ½ cup flour (all purpose)



*Directions:*

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line 8" square baking pan with foil, and lightly coat with butter.
2. Melt butter over medium heat. Remove from heat and pour over cocoa powder and chopped chocolate. Whisk to combine.
3. In a large bowl, whisk eggs, sugar, vanilla and salt. Then whisk in tahini. Fold in the flour. RESERVE ½ cup of the tahini mixture for top garnish.
4. Combine the remaining tahini mixture with the melted butter and chocolate to form brownie batter. Pour into buttered baking pan.
5. Using reserved tahini mixture, evenly place dollops (approx. 6) across the whole pan, leaving some brownie batter showing.
6. Cut or swirl into batter with a butter knife or fork to create a marbled effect. Be careful not to overwork it.
7. Place into oven, bake at 350°F for about 28-30 minutes or until toothpick inserted into center comes out clean.
8. Allow to cool before cutting into squares.



## FLAVOR INTROSPECTIVE

# The Vibrant Flavors Of A Colorful Cuisine

What makes Middle Eastern cuisine so celebrated are some of the unique preparation methods and ingredients native to the Fertile Crescent area. Some representative tastes of the cuisine include cooling, tangy, slightly spicy, and herbal. These flavors are derived from ingredients such as yogurt, garlic, red pepper, and oregano that tantalize the taste buds with each bite. With the variety of flavors that Middle Eastern foods have to offer, it's no wonder they are starting to gain popularity in retail and foodservice channels. They are poised for even further success when seen as a "better for you" option.

From a preparation method perspective, Middle Eastern foods, especially meats, are traditionally grilled, braised, or roasted. Roasting meat on a vertical spit is one of the more unique cooking methods that originated from the region. Grains, legumes, spices, and vegetables are typically blended, puréed or fermented to enhance the natural flavors of the ingredients, which create unusual yet delicious condiments for proteins, vegetables and breads.

One such condiment that is growing in prominence in the western hemisphere is harissa. This chili paste is made from a blend of smoked Tunisian baklouti and serrano peppers, garlic, coriander, and tomatoes. Another notable item is tahini, which is a paste of sesame seeds often used in falafel wraps. Both of these have seen growth on menus over the last four years, harissa (+78.8%) while tahini went up (+53.3%). A few emerging condiments from the region include muhammara and Yemeni green z'hug. Muhammara is a mixture of puréed roasted red peppers, walnuts, garlic, and lemon juice blended with the tangy sweetness of pomegranate molasses. Yemeni green z'hug has been described as the Arabic version of pesto, only spicier. Z'hug is typically made with green hot peppers, cilantro, coriander, garlic, parsley and various other spices such as caraway seeds. Both muhammara and Yemeni green z'hug are relatively new to American menus and grocery shelves, but as consumers with adventurous palates continue seeking new flavors, these interesting, bright, bold and tangy offerings just might be what they are craving.

## RECIPES

### Z'hug Sauce

#### Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups parsley, rough chop with some stems
- 1 ¼ cups cilantro, rough chop with some stems
- 3 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ cup and 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons jalapeño, rough chop
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon coriander
- ½ teaspoon cardamom
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- 2 teaspoons NWF harissa seasoning
- 1 tablespoon water

#### Directions:

1. Place all ingredients into food processor or blender. Blend until smooth.
2. Taste, and adjust seasoning if needed.



## NEWLY WEDS FOODS NEWS

### A Middle Eastern Presentation...Just For You

Now that you have learned about the Middle Eastern food trend in this issue from the highlights about the cuisine to the flavors that enliven the meals and even seen some insight into our culinary team's adventures, what could be next? An opportunity for Newly Weds Foods to help your company bring these flavors to life with your new product development initiatives.

Allow Newly Weds Foods to be your guide. Coming soon, Newly Weds Foods will have a deep dive presentation on Middle Eastern cuisine, which contains:

- An overview of the region
- Signature dishes from several countries
- Commonly used ingredients and examples of how these are being used in foodservice and retail products
- Recipes developed by Newly Weds Foods chefs that highlight the flavors of Middle Eastern cuisine

Contact your sales representative for more details or to schedule a presentation and tasting of these flavors. Let Newly Weds Foods help you deliver that authenticity your customers are looking for.

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