

A TASTE OF TURKEY

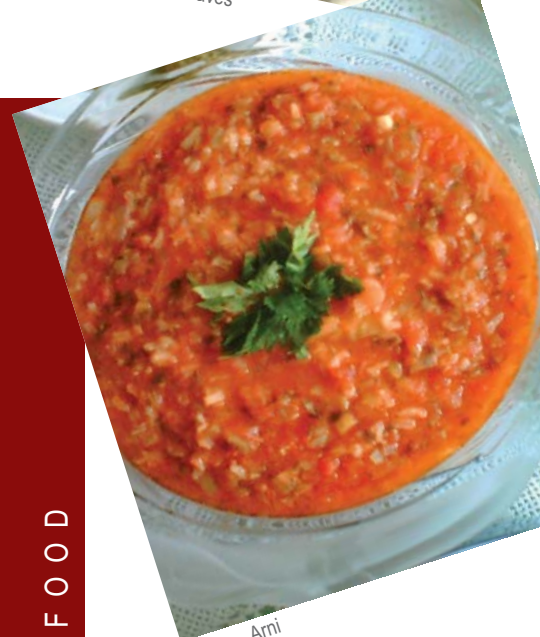
KAREN SARHON



Bulemas



Stuffed vine leaves



Arni

Sephardic Jewish cooking in Turkey is characterised by its Spanish heritage and the Turkish culture, with additional flavours and techniques borrowed from the Greeks, who were famous for their culinary skills. The interchange of culinary traditions was common in the days when people socialised with their neighbours. We read stories of Moslems and Christians visiting their Jewish neighbours on their religious holidays and being offered their traditional dishes and of Jews visiting their Moslem, Greek and Armenian neighbours on their holidays to partake of their delicious sweets and desserts.

We have many tasty dishes with vegetables of which every last scrap is used, even the peel. A good example is the dish made from squash peel, called *kashkarikas*. It is delicious eaten cold as a salad, with olive oil, lemon and dill. Another example is the tasty pie made, without any dough, from beetroot leaves which is both nourishing and filling. (See recipe to right).

A dish called *kucharikas* (Spanish for spoons) by some and *papuchakyas* (meaning shoes and sounding very Greek) by others, is made with aubergines and/or squash cut in the form of shoes and filled with cheese and eggs and baked in the oven. A wonderful meal.

The king of vegetables in both Sephardic and Turkish cuisine was the aubergine. Every meal in summer includes aubergines in many different forms: fried, baked, stuffed, made into pies etc. There is even a famous poem that talks about the 36 different ways to cook aubergines.

Making tasty dishes for the enjoyment of family and guests was (and still is) one of the most important indications of a woman's skill as a 'good housewife'. Men are heard to wax lyrical about their mothers' this dish or that dish, which they crave after they get married. A lot of women have to learn the way their mothers-in-law cook because that is the way their husbands prefer to eat.

All girls learn to cook from their mothers. This is especially true of the more traditional dishes like *borekitas*, *prasifuchi*, *avas kon ispinaka*, *almodrote de kalavasa*, *kashkarikas*, *rulikos de berendjena* and *chufletikos*.

With women now working full-time to support home and family, alongside men, it

has got more and more difficult to make the special dishes that our mothers used to make.

Now, *chufletikos* means 'little whistles' in Ladino and in Spanish. This dish is made from leeks which you cut into whistle-shaped, little finger-sized tubes. You have to carve out the inside and fill the hollow tube with minced meat. Then you dip these little whistles into flour and then eggs and then you fry them. Then you put them in a pyrex dish and bake them in tomato sauce. Easy huh? It takes more than half a day to make this dish and not even 15 minutes to eat a big dish-full. Describing this dish while visiting Cordoba, my stunned companion cried out: "*hacer los chufletes*" (to make whistles). Apparently it is a Spanish idiom for doing something extremely difficult about which no-one knew the origins.

As to meat, we have a lot of dishes made with minced meat and most of these are *köftes*, meatballs of one form or another. The most famous of these are the leek meatballs or *köftes de prasa* (see recipe opposite) which can also be made with spinach or celery. This dish makes a lot of mess both on your counter and your hands but it is worth it, as it is one of the most delicious dishes you have ever tasted.

Beef and lamb are braised, baked and roasted with vegetables and spices and have a great taste. The stock the meat cooked in is never thrown away, but used in making rice or pasta or just vegetables. The same applies to chicken.

A characteristic of Sephardic cooking is the use of lemons. Vegetables like okra, artichoke, spinach and cabbage are cooked with a lot more lemon than in Turkish cuisine. Our stuffed vine leaves *yalanci dolma*, for example, and stuffed cabbage leaves are cooked with a lot of lemon inside, which makes them softer and very tasty. To each artichoke we cook, we add half a lemon and half a tablespoon of sugar. We also make a sauce from lemon and egg for fish and meat.

Most of our sweets and desserts are borrowed from Turkish cuisine. We do have special sweets made from fruits, like *halva de bembriyo*, and other desserts like *tishpishti*, which is special for Passover.

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BÖREK DE PANDJAR/ISPİNAKA

1lb beetroot or spinach leaves
2 eggs
4oz yellow cheese, grated
4oz feta cheese, in pieces
4oz breadcrumbs or 2 tbs flour

Wash leaves well and chop finely. Put into a bowl and add eggs, breadcrumbs or flour, the feta and all but 1 oz of the yellow cheese.

Knead until the ingredients are well-mixed. Sprinkle with remaining grated cheese and bake in the oven (200°C) for about 50 mins. This can also be made with leeks or aubergines, but with leeks you have to slice them finely and boil in water till soft. Then squeeze the water out of them really well.

KÖFTES DE PRASA

4lbs leeks
8oz minced beef
3 eggs
4oz breadcrumbs
Salt and pepper to taste
2tbsp vegetable oil



Slice the leeks lengthwise, wash and chop finely (or put into food processor). Then boil in water.

When really soft, strain and run cold water over them. Then squeeze out all the water really, really well.

Put the leeks into a bowl with two of the eggs; meat, bread crumbs, salt, pepper and oil and knead into a dough-like mixture.

Shape into patties. Coat each patty in flour. Heat enough oil to cover the patties in a deep frying pan.

Beat remaining egg. In batches, dip the patties in the egg and put into the pan.

Fry until nicely browned and then drain on kitchen paper.

This dish can also be made with spinach or celery instead of leeks.

In how many ways can you cook an aubergine?

LOS GIZADOS DE LAS BERENDJENAS

From *La Cocina Judía*, Uriel Macias Kapon, Red de Juderías de España, Girona, 2005,
adapted to Judeo-Spanish and translated into English by Karen Sarhon

Kuantos modos de gizados se aziyan de la berendjena?
La primera las aziya la deskansada de Morena:
Kortadas en revanadas i echadas en la sena,
Ke asi le ambezo su kosfuegra bula Lena.

La sigunda si oyish, vos agrada mas i mas,
Lo ke aziya la mujer de Elazar el sammas:
Burakadas por arientro, inchidas a no mas
I las yamavan por nombre las senas de las dolmas.

La tresera las aziya bula Djoya de Akshote:
Las buiya i las koziya i les sakava el kokote
I el kezo sin manziya i azete kon el bote
I las yamava por nombre la komida de almodrote.

La onzena las aziya la bulisa de Sisilya:
Las friiya a una a una debasho de una kostiya,
Espesias a muchedumbre i safran sin manziya
I es komida galana, se aze a la maraviya.

La de diez i sesh las aziya bula Pava de Aruete,
La tiya de Menahem, entenada de Kontente:
Las kortava i las aziya kon vinagre i azete
I mustarda i pimienta, i es koza muy valiente.

La de vente i dos las aziya bula Anula la korredera,
Ke no le agradava vaka sino la buena kodrera:
Pimienta i muncha espesia ke no le diera durera
Kon sus ajikos mundados dentro de una kaldera.



The first, was made by Morena, the relaxed,
Cut in slices and thrown in a pot
That is how her mother-in-law, Lena taught her.

If you hear about the second, you will like it even more,
What the wife of Elazar the shammas made,
Carved the inside and filled to the top
They called them dolmas.

The third, Mistress Djoya de Akshote made,
She boiled them and cooked them and took the pip out
She used cheese with no pity and oil with a barrel
And called it almodrote.

The 11th was made by the lady from Sicily,
She fried them one by one under a lamb chop,,
With lots of spices and safran with no pity
It is a very elegant dish, marvellously tasty.

The 16th was made by Mistress Pava de Aruete,
Menahem's aunt, from the family of Kontente,
She cut them up and made them with vinegar and oil
And mustard and pepper, it is something ultra delicious.

The 22nd, was made by mistress Anula, the matchmaker,
She didn't like beef but preferred lamb,
Pepper and too many spices rendered her constipated
With peeled garlic in a pot.