

# Palestinian Foods

by Mary Ann Dames

Walk down any Palestinian main street and you will see colorful displays of pickles and salads in the street stalls and on the vendors' trays. These *mesas* are eaten as appetizers or as a meal in themselves. At bakeries and sweet shops, syrupy desserts are heaped on large trays.

Many of the same foods are found throughout the Middle East. Recipes may be similar, but vary from country to country and from family to family. Hummus (HUM-mus) is made from chick peas and *tahini* (sesame paste). *Tabouleh* (ta-BOO-lee) is a salad made with cracked wheat, mint, chopped onions, tomatoes, and cucumbers.

A traditional Palestinian main dish features rice with lamb or chicken. *Maqlouba* (MAC-lou-ba) or upside-down chicken is often served at feasts or on Friday, which is the Muslim day of worship.

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**Mary Ann Dames** has had food adventures in more than 27 countries.




# Maqlouba

## You need:

- 2 cups chicken broth or water
- 1 cup basmati rice
- 1 1-pound eggplant, sliced about 1/2-inch thick
- 1 2-1/2 pound chicken, cut up
- 1 large onion, chopped (about 3/4 cup)
- 3/4 to 1 cup olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric, optional
- salt

1. Combine rice and chicken broth in a 6-quart pot. Set aside.
2. Sprinkle the slices of eggplant with salt. Set aside.
3. Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet. Brown the chicken, about 5 minutes on each side. Remove and place on top of the rice.
4. Add the chopped onions to the skillet and brown. Pour over the chicken.
5. Pat the eggplant dry. Heat 1/2 cup olive oil in the skillet. Add the eggplant. Fry the slices over medium heat until they start to turn color. Add more oil if needed. Turn off the heat. Place the eggplant slices on top of the chicken.
6. Sprinkle on pepper and turmeric.
7. Bring to a boil. Cover. Reduce heat and simmer about 20 minutes until the rice is cooked.
8. Turn off the stove. Taste for seasoning. Add salt and more pepper to taste. Using pot holders, carefully flip the whole mixture onto a very large platter. (*Maqlouba* tastes just as good if it is not flipped.) Serve your upside down dish.

M.A.D.



A Palestinian boy helps at a hummus and falafel stand in Gaza City.