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March 2012
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Good Food

Family time!

MIDDLE EAST

- * Easy everyday dinners
- * Mother's Day brunch
- * Healthy eating for kids



Awards supplement inside!



GET COOKING WITH YOUR KIDS

FLAVOURS FROM THE CAPE

ARIANA BUNDY LAUNCHES Pomegranates & Roses

EVERYDAY INSPIRATION

WEEKEND BAKING



Orange, walnut & Stilton salad

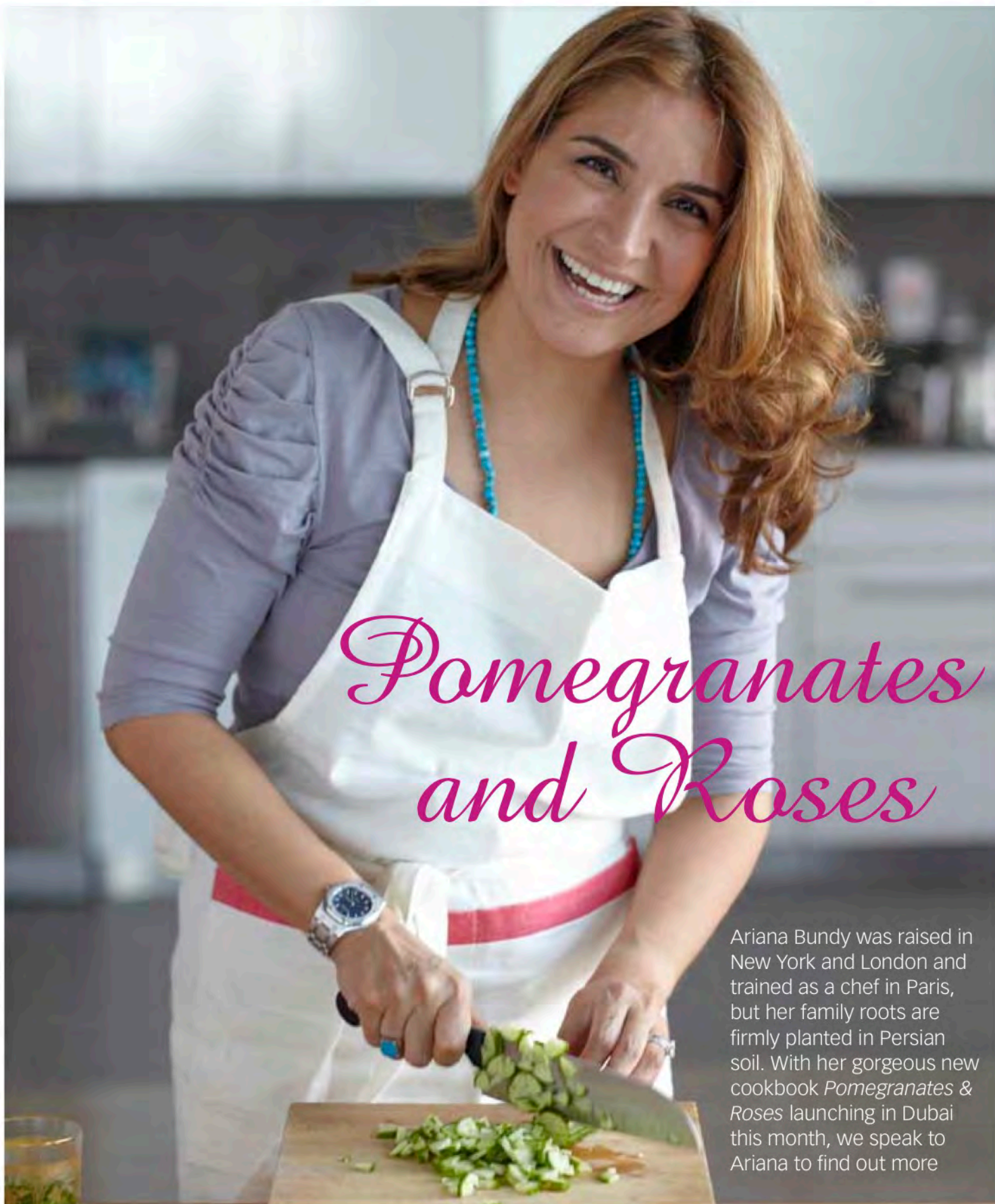


Gaby's Victoria sandwich

Healthy lemon-roast chicken the whole family will love

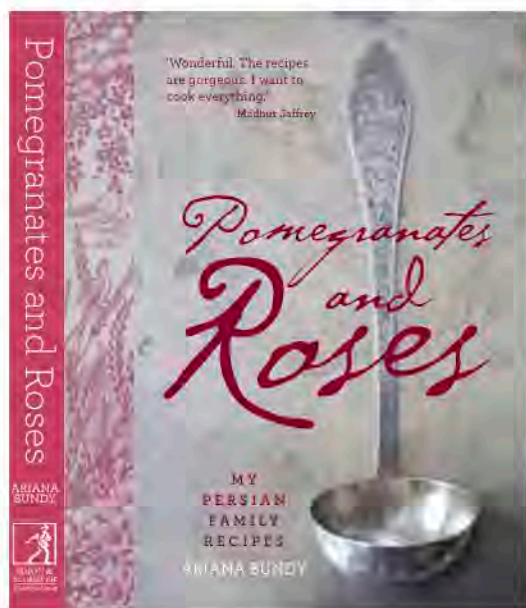
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Pomegranates and Roses

Ariana Bundy was raised in New York and London and trained as a chef in Paris, but her family roots are firmly planted in Persian soil. With her gorgeous new cookbook *Pomegranates & Roses* launching in Dubai this month, we speak to Ariana to find out more



6 If you dream about being whisked into a world of gentle, aromatic, Persian delights, where fruit, nuts, green herbs and flowery fragrances combine beatifically with meats, vegetables and grains, look no further than Ariana Bundy's heady new cookbook, *Pomegranates and Roses: My Persian Family Recipes*, says award-winning actress and cookbook author Madhur Jaffrey.

What was the inspiration behind *Pomegranates & Roses*?

I wanted to showcase Iranian produce as it is one of the best in the world due to its rich soil and ancient irrigation system. Did you know that Iran is the biggest exporter of saffron, berries, stone fruit, pistachios and caviar in the world? I also wanted to learn about my culture and heritage through food, which this book certainly allowed me to do. For me the title evokes Persia in every way. Pomegranates because they are indigenous to Iran and Afghanistan, are used in certain notable dishes and also because pomegranate juice stands are in every neighbourhood, just like a Starbucks over here! Roses are such an integral part of Iranian culture: think Persian rose garden, or Goleh Mohammadi from which the Persian rose water is extracted from and the great poetry of Hafez or Saadi who praise the rose which symbolise the beloved.

Are these family recipes?

Absolutely! When I was younger I barely

knew how to prepare Persian dishes and relied on family gatherings for a fix of Iranian food. Even later when I became a professional chef, Iranian food was still very daunting. I gathered recipes from my grandmother, my dead great aunt, the faithful staff who are part of the family and other great cooks in the family.

How would you describe the book? Is this something new on the market?

Yes it's totally new, there is no such book out in the market as it showcases Persian food in a novel way. The food photography and styling are very modern yet traditional and the recipes are very easy to follow. I made sure to write the exact timings and what to look out for before moving on to the next stage. When I would ask my family for a recipe, it was always very vague such as put a little bit of this and a little bit of that and cook it until done! I know they meant well and that is the way people tend to cook this cuisine, but there is no way you can learn how to cook food like

this, especially a complicated cuisine such as this one! I also made sure to include the stories I gathered along the way such as cooking with my grandmother or aunt, or where a certain dish comes from...the royal courts of Shah Abbas in the 16th century or a certain village in the Caspian Sea.

How does it feel to be sharing Iranian food with a wider audience?

I feel so proud to be able to bring Iranian recipes not only to the wider audience but also to other Iranians who aren't completely confident in cooking Persian meals. Iranian women have long held the torch of passing our culinary heritage onto the next generation through family recipes. I felt as though this tradition was getting a bit lost with Iranians scattered throughout the world, so far away from their country and many not living near their family. Also, Persian food needs to be recognised and enjoyed by non-Iranians. Millions of people have been eating it for thousands of years yet not many people know about it.

CHEF'S BITES

The few people that do, simply think that it consists of kebabs and a few handful of rice dishes found in most Persian restaurants. However, its rich food and varied dishes deserve to be shared! Try making Persian meals for your children; it's amazing how they love it. My son gobbles up his food like a mini monster! Even Jamie Oliver says that Persian Food is the next big thing!

What are the staple ingredients to Iranian cooking?

The beauty of Persian cooking is that 99 percent of the ingredients can be found in your local supermarket. Iranians love fresh produce so as long as you have great ordinary vegetables (carrots, potatoes, beans, tomatoes), vibrant herbs, fresh meat, rice, nuts, pulses and so on you can make most Iranian recipes. The most important ingredient in Persian cooking is the saffron which is used not only in rice dishes, stews, soups and so on but also in simple Kuku (similar to Arabic Eggah) to desserts, candies, ice creams and even tea. Other key ingredients are pomegranate paste (make sure to only use Iranian brands as the ones from other countries won't yield the same results in taste), barberries which are tart little bush berries and dried Omani limes.

What are some of your favourite ingredients to work with, and why?

I love rose petals as they instantly lift up any dish when you sprinkle them on top. Saffron too, it's simply magic. Not only does it dye the food a lovely hue but gives it a distinct taste and aroma even when added to simple plain rice.

Verjuice is another great ingredient. A delicate acidic juice made from young unripe grapes gives Persian food its famous sweet and sour note and it also has excellent health properties.

What is something about Iranian cooking that most people don't know?

It does not contain any chilli or ginger except for a couple of dishes from the deep South which incidentally are delicious! Not much garlic is used unless the recipes are from the lush green Caspian region in the North. Softer spices such as turmeric, cinnamon, rose petals are preferred and used with a very delicate hand so as not to mask the flavors of the main ingredients. Balancing flavours is key in Persian cooking...such as pomegranates and walnut stew, plums and chicken with saffron with a dash of verjuice or lemon, hearty herb soups with pulses and whey with again a touch of something sour and a topping of caramelised onions. Lots of flavour depth, delicate to the senses, comforting, healthy when cooked with not too much oil and beautiful to look at. The system of Unani (Garmi and Sardi meaning hot and cold) is Iran's answer to yin and yang. Iranian recipes are all balanced according to this theory and mothers know which category (hot or cold) the family falls into when preparing certain dishes.

Here are some gorgeous recipes from Ariana Bundy's newly launched book Pomegranates & Roses...

DON'T MISS ARIANA AT THE EMIRATES LITERARY FESTIVAL THIS MONTH

✂ On Friday 9 March at InterContinental Hotel Ariana will be presenting a cookery demo and launching her cookbook *Pomegranates & Roses*. The event is priced at AED 65 per person. This is your chance to be inspired by Ariana's culinary skills and passion for her heritage.

✂ For a Literary Tea with Ariana Bundy and Joscelyn Dimbleby be sure you get down to Anise Restaurant, InterContinental Hotel on Saturday 10 March from 16.30 to 18.00 as these two esteemed cookbook authors talk about their latest cookbooks. Priced at AED 120 per person.



Iranian New Year's Day takes place on Tuesday March 20th 2012 - how do you create this Sabzi polo mahi for the family?

Sabzi polo mahi

Fragrant herbed rice with fried fish and Seville oranges

Sabzi Polo Mahi was like an anchor for my family: wherever in the world we moved to, we knew we would be eating this dish for Norooz or New Year's Day like almost all other Iranians. The smell of the fish frying and the herbs being steamed with the rice is an intrinsic part of the celebration for us. The fish we cooked wasn't boneless like a cod fillet, for example. It was kutum or Caspian roach (also known as mahi sefid), which has a lot of tiny sharp bones. Part of the ritual is to pick out the bones by hand before eating this dish. I did this for my husband Paul when we were dating and he says that was the moment when he knew he wanted to marry me! Any white, relatively meaty fish will do - halibut, sole or flounder - although some Russian markets sell kutum.

FOR THE MARINADE (OPTIONAL):

juice of 1/2 lemon
small lime
pinch of salt and pepper
juice of 1/2 orange

FOR THE HERB MIXTURE:

125g (4oz) 2 cups each of fresh parsley, coriander and dill, tough stems removed and leaves roughly chopped

25g (1oz) 1/2 cup spring onions (green parts) or chives or young leeks, roughly chopped
3 fresh green garlic leaves, cut into 2.5cm (1in) pieces or 2 garlic cloves, finely minced

FOR THE RICE:

600g (3 cups) rice
11/2 tbsp natural yoghurt
50–75g (2–3oz) melted butter, ghee or safflower oil, plus 1 tsp extra
1/4 tsp saffron threads, pounded
1kg kutum pieces, or sole, halibut, flounder or sea bass

FOR THE FISH:

150g (1 cup) plain flour
1/2 tsp salt
pinch of pepper
oil, for frying
wedges of narenj (Seville oranges) or lemon, to serve

1 Mix together the marinade ingredients and add fish. Leave in the fridge for a minimum of 30 minutes to 2 hours, but no longer or the acid from the citrus juices will 'cook' the fish. (Omit this step if you are rushed for time)

2 Mix all the chopped herbs together and set aside

3 Prepare the rice by following the first steps of Polo Ba Taadig, up to draining and cooling. In a large saucepan, mix two ladlefuls of the rice with 75ml water, yoghurt, melted butter, saffron, and heat briskly. Spread over the base of the pan and layer the rice and herbs on top, shaping it into a pyramid. Finish cooking by following the method for Polo ba taadig.

4 Approximately 15 minutes before the rice is cooked, begin preparation for fried fish. Fill a plate with flour (if gluten intolerant you can use gluten-free flour), season and pour the oil into a large non-stick frying pan to a depth of about 2.5cm (1in). Heat on medium heat until the oil is hot but not smoking.

5 Dip the fish in the flour mixture on both sides and fry. Remember not to crowd the pan otherwise the fish may steam instead. Place the golden fish pieces on paper towels to absorb excess oil and serve with the herbed rice and wedges of Seville oranges or lemons and Seer Torshi.

Polo be taadig

Perfectly fluffed rice with a golden crust

Iranians take a lot of pride in cooking rice. The recipe below may make you feel like you're creating a really complicated dish rather than just plain rice. But, as the name suggests, it takes plain rice and elevates it to something special: an elegant aromatic dish that you would happily eat on its own. Iran grows some of the best rice in the world. Alas, there isn't enough to export, so you must pay a visit to savour its wonderful varieties. The recipe, of course, works just as well with other rice.

600g (3 cups) basmati rice, such as Tilda or Pari
2 tbsp sea salt

FOR THE TAADIG:

50–75g (2–3oz) melted butter, ghee or safflower oil, plus 1 tsp extra for the topping
11/2 tbsp natural yoghurt

1/4 tsp saffron threads, pounded

TO DECORATE:

1/3 tsp saffron liquid, made from 1/4 tsp saffron threads pounded then dissolved in 1 tbsp hot water

1 Fill a large bowl with water and add the rice. Wash rice by stirring it with your hands.

Discard the water and repeat rinsing rice 5 times until the water runs clear. For super-fluffy long-grain rice, soak it in the amount of water you are going to cook it in – 2 litres (3½ pints) 8 cups – with the salt, for a minimum of 2 hours and up to 24 hours.

2 Fill a large non-stick pan with 2 litres (8 cups) cold water and bring to the boil. Add the rice, let the water come to the boil again and cook for approximately 6–8 minutes. (If you have pre-soaked your rice, add it to the pan with cold water, bring to boil and cook for 6–8 minutes.) The rice may take a little less or a little more time depending on the thickness of the pan and the power of the heat, so test the grains halfway through. Quickly pick out a few grains with a fork and crush them between your fingers, without burning them. The grains need to be soft on the outside but still hard on the inside, or al dente, and they should be double their original size.

3 While the rice is cooking, stir gently a couple of times so that it doesn't stick to the bottom of the pan. The next step is optional but worth noting: add 250ml (8fl oz) 1 cup cold water to the pan to lengthen the grains. Bring back up to the boil. Once the rice is cooked, without wasting a minute, drain it through a very fine-meshed sieve. Pour a couple cups of cold water over the rice to cool it and set it aside. Set rice aside and remember not to touch it at all.

4 In the same pan, briskly heat the melted butter, ghee or oil over a medium-high heat with 75ml (1/3 cup water), yoghurt, saffron and 2 ladles of rice. Mix well and spread over the bottom of the pan to create the crust. Then begin adding the rice a ladleful at a time. Gently shape the rice into a pyramid as you add it in order for the heat to circulate throughout the pan for it to not make the rice mushy.

5 Poke 4–5 deep holes in the rice, with a chopstick or the handle of a spoon, making sure it hits the bottom of the pot, then cover. Let the rice cook on high heat for about 5–7 minutes. It will sizzle and make all kinds of sounds.

6 Fill the kitchen sink with 5cm (2in) of cold water. Remove the pan from the stove, and place it in the sink. This helps loosen the famous golden crust or taadig. Take the lid off, spoon out a ladleful of rice and mix with the saffron liquid. Gently ladle the rice on to a serving dish and decorate with the saffron rice. Using a spatula, lift chunks of the crust off the bottom of the pan and place on top or serve on the side.

Iranian women check to see if the rice is ready for the next step by wetting their fingers and ever so quickly touching the side of the hot pan. If it makes a 'Jez' sound as we say in Persian, remove the lid and add 125ml (4fl oz) ½ cup water and 1 tsp butter, ghee or oil. Wrap the lid in a clean tea towel or 2–3 paper towels. Cover the pan, making sure the fabric or paper towel is wrapped up around the handle so that it doesn't catch fire. Reduce the heat to its lowest setting. Allow it to cook for about 50–60 minutes undisturbed.



Seer torshi

Aged pickled garlic

Pickled garlic is like wine: the older the bottle, the better it is! We have some at home that is 20 years old. The bulbs are black, soft and sweet, and taste a little like aged balsamic vinegar. But Seer Torshi is best eaten when it is around six to seven years old. You can buy it from Middle Eastern shops but it will be young and crunchy. Pickled garlic comes from the north, in the Caspian region of Iran, where they eat lots of garlic as it goes very well with the climate and the 'cold' fish dishes of the region.

500g (1lb) garlic bulbs, fresh

1.2 l (5 cups) white wine vinegar, white grape vinegar or white vinegar

- 1** Clean and dry garlic bulbs and peel off one layer of skin.
- 2** Place bulbs in sterilized jars and cover with vinegar.
- 3** Seal and store in a cool dark place for at least 2 months before eating.