

MARCH 2012

# Good Housekeeping

MIDDLE EAST

UAE

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# Sheryl Crow

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## Scents & Sensibility

Celebrated author and chef to the stars, **Ariana Bundy** shares her love of afternoon entertaining at home



Decorate with fresh blooms and petals to complement delicate, fragrant dishes

The moment you enter Ariana Bundy's home, it's clear she has a passion for all things fresh and beautiful. Golden sunlight streams in through large windows, showing the lush green garden beyond, while flowers are dotted around the room and dining table. The blooms are more than just a decoration to the Iranian-American 41-year-old chef—they're an integral part of Persian cuisine, her favourite thing to prepare when guests are coming over.

"It's the perfect thing to make when you're entertaining, since it's the best type of food to prepare in advance," she says. "It's a lot of work the day before, since the recipes are very intricate, but on the actual day of the event all you have to do is reheat it. It's actually better that way, since with a lot of dishes like the stews, it gives them more time for the flavours to steep together. Plus then you'll be able to dress up and relax on the day, without worrying about juggling instant-cooking to ensure the dishes all come out hot at the same time," she adds.

According to Ariana, stress is the worst ingredient for any event you're →

# 3 STEPS TO A GREAT GET-TOGETHER, ARIANA'S WAY

**1 Planning is key** "Try not to do things that keep you busy while guests are actually there, since you can't spend as much time with them that way—enjoying yourself is important! Preparing whatever you can in advance helps you be ready to entertain."

**2 Music is essential** Ariana believes it's key for setting the mood. "Paul always plays music by a Venezuelan band he loves called *Los Amigos Invisibles* when we have guests over, but I think lounge music or soul is great as well."

**3 Embrace international flavours** A keen traveller, Ariana's dream foodie destinations are Tokyo and Taipei, and she feels inspired by the cuisine in San Francisco, South Africa, Singapore and Mexico, often recreating those tastes at home.



## Mast O Khیار Cold Cucumber Soup

- 1 large cucumber, semi-peeled, seeded and diced, or 6 small cucumbers, diced
- 400g low-fat Greek yoghurt or crème fraîche
- 200g full-fat natural yoghurt
- 200g soured cream
- 50g raisins
- 4 tbsp roasted walnuts, chopped
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh mint
- ½ tsp dried mint
- 3 tarragon sprigs, finely chopped
- 2 spring onions, finely chopped
- 1 tsp sea salt, and fresh pepper to taste
- 1 tsp dried rose petals, to decorate

1. Mix all of the ingredients except for the rose petals together in a large bowl. If you're preparing this in advance, only add in the cucumbers at the last minute so they stay crunchy and don't give out too much juice. You can also slice the cucumber first, sprinkle it with salt, leave it for an hour in a colander, run it under the tap to remove the excess salt, dry the slices and then dice them. They'll be extra crunchy and will not go limp the next day in case you have any soup left over.

2. Sprinkle the soup with rose petals and fresh mint leaves to garnish and for a wonderful fragrance, and serve in individual bowls.

3. Serve cold. If you're serving it outside on a hot day, you can add in 3-4 ice cubes spread around the bowl. It will help cool it down while adding an interesting look, and won't affect the flavour.



### KEEP IT FRESH

Ariana grew up eating fresh produce from her grandparents' farm in Iran, and knows seasonal goods are the way to go. Make a tasty springtime snack by gouging out balls of juicy watermelon with a round butter-scoop, add in cubes of salty feta cheese for kick, and garnish with mint. Serve in a pretty glass.



Bring an international flair to your décor with keepsakes from travels



### AIR THINGS OUT

Leave a window or door open to air the house out while the food is cooking. This way, when the guests have arrived and the delicious dishes are being served, the wonderfully aromatic fragrances of their spices, herbs and flowers can really come through and be fully appreciated by everyone.

hosting. "Guests will feel it if you're stressed, and that's never good since it makes them uncomfortable," she says. As someone who's cooked for countless celebrities including Madonna, Tom Hanks, former US President Bill Clinton, and Brad Pitt, has prepared dishes for events like the Oscars, MTV Movie Awards and the launch of hit TV show *Sex and the City*, worked in some of the world's top restaurants and has written the best-selling cookbook *Sweet Alternative*, she's no stranger to stressful situations. But she takes it all in an organised stride, while also managing to be an excellent mum to her three-year-old son, Dara.

"Dara loves to cook with me," she smiles. "We make muffins together often, and I always set up a stool for him to sit on in the kitchen so he can watch me while I cook like I used to with my grandmother," she says. Her grandmother is the one who inspired her to become a chef, and her latest book, *Pomegranates and Roses*, pays homage to that with old family photos and her mother's recipes included in its →

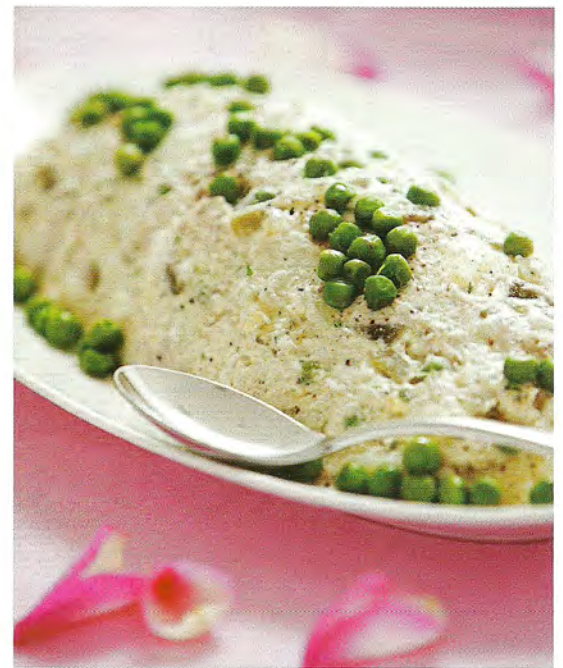


beautifully-illustrated pages. "This is more than just a cookbook to me—it's really a memoir with food telling the stories, and written from the heart. Persian food is very much a cuisine with recipes that are passed down through generations as they're tweaked and perfected from mother to child, and I'm looking forward to passing that on to Dara too. Cooking is in my blood!" she says. And it certainly is—her biological father (Ariana was raised by a different father) was a chef too, having created the first fine-dining French restaurant in Iran. "I'm always the one that cooks at home though," she laughs. "It's a nightmare—nobody ever cooks for me! I dream that my husband Paul will sometimes—he's actually an excellent cook who makes delicious roast lamb, but he always pretends he doesn't know how."

Ariana, who has been living primarily in Dubai for four years and spends part of the year living in Paris, also enjoys the local restaurant scene: "Paul and I love going out to eat, but we're always so busy that we're

### STRIKING GOLD

Formerly the head pastry chef at the super-chic celebrity haunt, *Le Mondrian Hotel* in Los Angeles, Ariana loves using edible gold leaf in cooking. "It instantly adds something special and makes things glamorous." Using glossy, gold, leafy shapes in your servingware will have a similar effect.



## Salad Olivier

- 500g chicken breasts on the bone, skin on
- 1 large onion, roughly chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- 250g mayonnaise
- 150g natural yoghurt, or crème fraîche or soured cream if you prefer to use those instead
- ½ tbsp Dijon mustard
- juice of 1 large lemon or 1½ limes
- 1½ tbsp white wine vinegar or mild cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
- 3 spring onions, or 10-12 chives, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1½ tsp salt and a few twists of ground pepper
- 1 large potato, cooked, peeled and cut into cubes
- 75g cooked peas, fresh or frozen
- 10-12 shop-bought Iranian pickles or gherkins, roughly chopped into ½-inch cubes
- 2-3 sprigs of fresh tarragon (or ½ tsp dried)
- 4 large eggs, hard-boiled and peeled

1. Cook the chicken on a very low heat in 125ml of water along with the chopped onions and bay leaves until soft, about 45-60 minutes. Once soft, reserve the liquid for another dish, take the flesh off the bones then discard the skin and bones. Leave the chicken to cool down, then chop it into 1-inch cubes.
2. In a large bowl, add the mayonnaise and yoghurt (or crème fraîche or soured cream), mustard, lemon or lime juice, vinegar, chopped parsley, spring onions or chives, and olive oil. Season and mix well.
3. Add the cooked potato, chicken, cooked peas, pickles and tarragon, and fold in until well-mixed, mashing it a bit along the way. Roughly chop the eggs and fold them in too.

**Cook's tip:** If the salad needs to be a bit creamier, resist adding more yoghurt or mayonnaise and just add a spoonful of the reserved chicken stock instead.



←  
Pretty flora in clear  
vases will remind  
guests to stop and  
smell the roses—and  
those in your cooking!



### CHILD-FRIENDLY

"I always buy furniture that has rounded edges, and check there isn't anything around they can bump their heads on. Kids love Persian food too—since it's mainly familiar ingredients cooked differently, they can explore new flavours without being intimidated. Plus it's nourishing, tasty and comforting!"



just usually too exhausted!"

"When we have guests, Paul prefers smaller, more intimate gatherings but in my opinion, the bigger the better," she says. "I love watching them enjoy themselves in a group. I think that also has something to do with my cultural roots—Iranian culture has a "more the merrier" philosophy!"

Ariana is keen on creating variety in her menus, and loves to make sure there is a mix of savoury and sweet options on offer. "There's a yin and yang with hot and cold foods, with runs especially true with Persian cuisine. It's all about taking common ingredients like vegetables that can be found in any supermarket, and pairing them with flavours like cinnamon, saffron and roses to turn them into something magical. It's very precise, and an art; 'subtle but amazing' is my mantra." ■

Ariana's new book, *Pomegranates and Roses: My Persian Family Recipes*, Dhs130, will be launched and available to buy at the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature from March 6-10.