

CHEF TO THE STARS

Award winning TV Chef and cookbook author Ariana Bundy was brought up in New York, London, Switzerland, Paris and Iran. **dv** chats with the globe-trotter who now calls Dubai her home.

She's cooked for President Clinton, Tom Hanks, Brad Pitt and Madonna. Her latest book, *Pomegranates and Roses: my Persian family recipes*, won the 2012 Gourmand World Cookbook Award in Paris and is also shortlisted for the Best Cookbook of the Year by Guild of Food Writers Awards 2013. In this beautiful cookery book-cum-culinary memoir Ariana Bundy pays tribute to the rich cultural and culinary heritage that has shaped her approach to life, cooking and eating. It evokes the sensual, exotic pleasure of Middle Eastern flavours, using pomegranate seeds and juice, rose water and rose petals, fragrant herbs and spices to create enticing dishes full of colour and elegance. Bundy has appeared on TV shows such as BBC Good Food Live, Taste, Top Billing and FOX. Head Pastry Chef for the Mondrian Hotel in LA, she graduated from Le Cordon Bleu and Le Notre in Paris, trained at Fauchon Patisserie and attended the European Business School in London. Also the author of *Sweet Alternative* a gluten-, dairy- and soy-free dessert cookbook, Bundy is currently working on her third cookbook which will feature regional Persian dishes.

Where are you more at home, London or Dubai?

Though we have a home in London, I spend most of my time in Dubai now which I consider my home.

Dubai boasts a vibrant food scene. what do you think is missing?

Persian haute cuisine of course! And Japanese home cooking, Mexican regional food and great-tasting organic healthy Californian cuisine.

Do you plan to open your restaurant in Dubai soon?

I've been approached on many occasions and even though I run away from the idea (as the long hours will take me away from my family) I may be tempted once my son is old enough. It's also in my blood as my father was a well-known restaurateur. I love making people happy through food and watching them enjoy themselves, which for me is what a restaurant is all about.

If you had to cook a special meal for your family, what would you serve?

Zereshk Polo - it's comforting, delicate tender chicken in saffron and onion jus, fluffy rice and studded with sweet and sour barberries. The most satisfying and easy-to-prepare food in the world.

Your favourite recipe from *Pomegranates and Roses*?

I often get asked that but how could a foodie answer a question like that? I'm a food-obsessed individual; I think, sleep and breathe food!

Which was the most challenging menu you've had to create for a celebrity?

Dairy-free and gluten-free desserts which led me to write my first cookbook, *Sweet Alternative: desserts without gluten, dairy or soy*.

One celebrity you would like to cook for?

The Dalai Lama, who is said to occasionally eat a little meat despite being a monk!

Where was your last holiday?

Kashan, a jewel of a city, renowned for its architecture, silk carpets and production of the most incredible smelling rose water in the world.



How do you explore a new city?

Food markets are the first places I go to and also supermarkets. I spend more than half my time there and the rest with my head deep into hotel and restaurant menus.

What are your travel must-haves?

My big cashmere shawl, my colloidal silver spray and my Frownies (small sticky papers which you put on your forehead so as not to frown at night).

Do you travel light?

I'd like to think I do but my husband thinks otherwise!

How do you overcome jetlag?

Lots of freshly pressed green organic juice: parsley, celery wheatgrass, cucumber, a little apple and ginger and cool refreshing coconut juice. These two work wonders.

You never leave home without?

My Dr Hauschka hand cream and my iPhone.

Your favourite restaurant in Dubai?

Table 9, chefs Nick and Scott's amazing eatery.

One basic cooking technique that every cook should know?

That saffron is best ground and diluted in a little hot water before being added to food. This way the stems or strings release their true flavour and go a long way. Also, always add saffron to dishes 10 minutes before the end of the cooking time so that the aroma doesn't evaporate.

One ingredient that you cannot do without?

Persian rose water from Rabee, the only brand that truly captures the smell of Persian roses. I use it in cordials, in desserts, in savoury dishes, on my pillow in hotel rooms and even as a tonic for my face. It's not overpowering at all and has so many health benefits.

The most versatile ingredient in your opinion?

Rabee rose water again! I use it in so many of my ingredients in my book, from sweet to savoury dishes! **dv**