

RECIPES FROM BAGHDAD

with an
Introduction
by

Her Majesty the Queen Mother of Iraq

Edited by

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with the assistance of

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Foreward.

.....The art of cooking and the work of the Red Cross in aid of whose funds this book is published, are international, and they also have this in common, that they both make for good feeling and good fellowship.

In this country of Iraq, through which so many nations have passed, the kitchen has become international in a special sense, as each race has left traces of its culinary art, and visitors to Iraqi homes meet the kind of dishes they have read about in the Arabian Nights: chickens sauced with cream and walnuts, lambs stuffed with nuts and raisins, and ducks braised in pomegranate sauce. It has been difficult for those who have enjoyed such delicacies to make them for themselves, as they are seldom recorded in writing.

This little book of oriental and occidental recipes will fulfil this need, & will also be a tribute to eastern readers from the treasury of western cookery. It is the result of friendly co-operation between Iraqi and British housewives, with help from the ladies of other nations. A great deal of time and trouble has been taken to ensure that the recipes are exact and easy to follow—in fact many of them have been tried out on long-suffering husbands and have only found their way into this book when suspicion has given way to approval.

Most grateful thanks are due to Her Majesty The Queen Mother of Iraq, who has shown so much interest and practical help and who has written the introduction to the book, and to Her Majesty Queen Nafisa who has also contributed recipes. Thanks are also due to Mrs. Beattie, the editress of the book, and her hard-working committee; and lastly to the other donors of recipes.

Margaret Cornwallis
Baghdad — March, 1945.

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Contents.

Introduction	7
Cooking and Shopping in Baghdad	9
The Measure of Success	12
Table of Equivalent Weights and Measures	12A.
Spices and Herbs	13
Hospitality	15
Breakfast	16
Leban	20
Coffee Customs	24
Lunch	27
Afternoon and Evening Fare—Afternoon Tea	50
Bread and Scones	51
Cakes	55
Cake Icings and Fillings	71
Finger Fare	73
Confections and Preserves	80
Deverages of Baghdad	87
Cocktails Self-Taught	90
Coffee	92
Cups	93
Liqueurs	94
Sharbats	95
Soups	97
Fish	104
Fowls and Game Birds	111
Meats	120
Vegetables	126
Salads	139
Sauces	142
Puddings	147
Index	

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Introduction

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The art of cooking has become a respected art in this present age, distinguished from previous ages by precision, perfection, skill and speed. It would be wrong to think that it is an easy task to produce a work on this delicate art, which has so close a bearing on human life; while to consider superfluous a new work on cookery suggests unsound judgment and imperfect knowledge. Indeed, humanity has inherited from past generations but few works dealing with the preparation of food and its cooking on scientific lines, such as would ensure a combination of daintiness, palatability, variety and originality. This is due to the difficulty of recording in a scientific manner exact proportions of the various ingredients and precise methods of preparation which would guarantee a successful and appetising dish.

Following their entry into settled life and civilization, the Arabs were foremost among the nations in their interest in cookery, the introduction of new dishes and the recording of recipes. This enthusiasm for the art of cooking was not confined to women to the exclusion of men; nor to the common people to the exclusion of the select. For instance, the Caliph Ibrahim, son of the Caliph Mahdi and brother of Harun ar Rashid, was one of the Arabs who wrote a book on cookery in which he mentions how to prepare dishes with precision and artistry; while Arab literature, particularly "Kitab al Diyarat" by the distinguished writer Al Shabashti, still delights us with the story of how the great caliph Abdullah al Mamun commanded his friends and his brother Al Mu'tassim Billah each to cook a dish of food, while he himself would also do so. According to that story each successfully produced a dish and appetising vapours rose up from the cooking pots, except from that of Mu'tassim who had been tricked by one of his retainers and induced to add pickle water to his pot. As a result the dish produced a revolting odour, upon smelling which the Caliph Al Mamun enquired as to the source, to be told that it was his brother's pot. Al Mu'tassim felt much discomfited and greatly ashamed, and is said to have borne such a grudge against the retainer who had thus deceived him that, on his succession to the Caliphate, he contemplated ordering his execution.

Arab history has preserved for us "Kitab al Tabkh" (The Cookery Book), a work by Muhammed ibn al Hassan ibn Muhammed ibn al Karim, known as Al Katib al Baghdadi, who died in the year 637 of the Hijra (1239 A.D.). In the preface to this book, printed in Mosul in 1353 A.H. (1934 A.D.), he writes: "Worldly delights consist in food, drink, dress, perfume and music, of which the best and most important is food, in that it constitutes that which sustains and maintains life and helps to build up health, the fundamental basis for action." "Kitab al Tabkh" gives the recipes for over one hundred and twenty different kinds of choice and delicious dishes.

I recalled all this upon reading the excellent and fascinating book on oriental and occidental cookery suggested by Lady Cornwallis, wife of His Excellency the British Ambassador in Iraq. Having gone through the pages of this book—a scholarly, artistically executed and exceedingly interesting work—I find that it meets an urgent need and fills an existing deficiency. I was delighted with the variety of dishes dealt with and I admire the accuracy and originality with which the recipes are explained.

While food may be a subject of interest to others it is a subject of the eating of good food, digestion; or, to those not found in the study of the This Book lays no claim to accidental recipes. It is the residents of many nations the most tasty preparation normal conditions, may be time consuming in preparation much domestic help, and has been made to include stuffed roast camel, in vogue sheep, the sheep with tu

The actual preparation same is traditionally different an occidental mistress and ing the dish once cooked pot simmers for another modern appliances have of the family, and it is Furthermore those who ing hot yet not completely after twenty minutes in demands on the cook or measure are required oriental cookery and an oriental cook.

"Recipes from Bag cookery and household cupboard should be dry well that while a larder