

I was born in Mexico from different backgrounds – my mother is an American Jew with an Ashkenazi background, which applies to Jews coming from Eastern Europe, such as Germany, Poland, Romania and Russia. My father was born in Mexico from a Sephardic Jewish family, which includes those Jews who originally lived in Spain and were expelled during the Inquisition, forcing them to immigrate to other countries such as Holland, Portugal, Turkey, Greece and the Middle East.

The heritage that all of these countries remained with these immigrants was tremendous, and especially influential in their food. The Syrian Jews came to Mexico at the beginning of the 20th century, with the family members coming at different times. The first to come worked to earn money and then to bring the rest of their family who were waiting in Syria. The political, social and economical conditions in Syria were very bad, and the families lived under tense and difficult situations. Mexico, on the contrary, was considered to be a promising country because of its religious, social and working conditions.

Many of the Syrian Jews who boarded the boats tried first to go to the United States, but the borders were closed to immigrants at certain times, so they went to the next country, which in their case was Mexico. If this country had closed their borders, then they went to the next country, and in this way, many Latin American countries were populated with Jewish immigrants.

The Syrian Jews in Mexico have prospered in many aspects and have left a large impression in many different areas, especially in the culinary field.

What I find quite interesting is the fact that, even though there are no recipe books in many families, family recipes continue from generation to generation, with the grandmothers who transmit these exquisite traditions and creations. Also, I find it fascinating to see when the grandmothers begin to notice that they were getting older, they felt the need to pass on their cooking secrets. There are, however, many recipes that have been lost because they were never passed on.

When one leaves their country of origin, they take only the most essential things, but what was always missed and recreated in our new country was always the home-cooked food from our origins.

Living in Mexico all of my life, I had the good fortune of enjoying the typical Mexican food, as well as the holiday food of Syrian Jewish origin. My aunt prepared the biggest feasts on our Rosh Hashanah (New Year), Pésaj (pascua) and in many other occasions.

I would like to share with you a delicious recipe that I got out of a book called *Sefra Dayme*, which was written and published in Mexico by four grandmothers of Syrian origin from the city of Damascus in honor of the 100 years of the community in Mexico. They gathered the recipes from all of their families during their lives, and the community helped them to create a spectacular book. They used the best food photographer and food designer from Mexico. When they finished the book, they sent it to a food book contest in Paris. They received the incredible news that they were finalists in the international recipe book contest category. To their surprise, they received first place in the regional cuisine category.

Mix meat, cinnamon, pepper, salt, egg, matza, ½ cup water in a bowl. Shape into extended meatballs 3 inches long, hollow them out by forming them around your finger, stuff with some pine nuts and close them. They can be frozen at this point if wanted. Fry onions in a frying pan until they are well done and crunchy, and drain them on paper towels, then put aside. In the same frying pan, add the meat pieces for frying. Take them out, and put them on a plate. Add the tomato sauce to the frying pan, along with salt and chicken bullion, cooking it for 4 minutes on a low flame, and then cover. Add 2 cups of water, the tamarind syrup, lime juice and sugar and continue cooking for 10 more minutes. Strain the sauce into another sauce pan, and add the cooked meat pieces (if needed add a little more water) and cook them for 25 minutes. Add the cherries, and cook for another 15 minutes. Check the seasoning. There should be plenty of sauce. Serve the dish on an extended plate by placing the mixture over pita bread, topped with fried onion and garnish with parsley. 🇲🇽

## Kebab with Cherries

Recipe serves 12 to 14

2.2 lbs. of hamburger meat

¼ tsp.. cinnamon

Pinch of pepper

Salt to taste

1 egg

½ cup of matza meal or bread crumbs

2 ½ cup of water

½ cup of White pine nuts

2 onions cut in strips

½ cup of corn oil for frying

1 cup of tomato sauce

2 tsp. of powdered chicken bullion

¾ cup of tamarind syrup (can be found where Arabic food is sold)

Juice of 2 limes

2 tsp.sugar

2 cans of black cherries in water or 2.2 pounds of fresh pitted cherries o 2 cups of dried cherries

Pita bread cut into four parts

1 cup of fresh parsley for decoration



# Jewish Syrian Food in Mexico