

# NUTRITION BITES

March 2022



CARE MANAGEMENT

## Celebrate a World of Flavors

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March is National Nutrition Month and this year the topic is: Celebrate a World of Flavors. This is the perfect time to spice up your plate, no pun intended, by experimenting with new flavors. Consider trying new spices, seasonings on foods or testing out a new recipe with ingredients you haven't tried before. Enjoy exploring

foods from various cultures as we travel the world highlighting some of their popular flavors and dishes.

### South Asia

South Asian cuisine, which includes India and surrounding countries, is very diverse, rich, spicy and flavorful. It is heavily influenced by region, what ingredients are locally available, traditions, religion and historical events. Certain foods like potatoes, tomatoes, chilies, peanuts and guava were introduced to the region and have become staples in the diet. Food from South Asia is known for the rich spices that give bold flavors. Some of the most common are chili pepper (introduced by the Portuguese from Mexico), black mustard seed, cardamom, cumin, turmeric, ginger, coriander and garlic.

Curry is very common in South Asian cuisine and is usually a thick sauce seasoned with spices that will vary based on region. It can contain fish, meat, poultry, vegetables or be eaten alone and is often served over rice. It can also be served with idli (steamed rice cake), dosa lentils (savory crepe made with lentils) and rice crepes.

Chana masala is a vegetarian dish with chickpeas serving as the main ingredient. It also typically includes onion, tomatoes, ghee (clarified butter), cumin, turmeric, coriander, garlic, chilies, ginger, lemon juice and the spice mixture garam masala (it varies by region but may contain fennel, bay leaves, black and white pepper, cloves, cinnamon, mace, black and green cardamom pods, cumin, coriander seeds and chili powder). In Bangladesh this dish is known as choctpoti and in Pakistan it goes by aloo chole and may contain potatoes too.

A tandoor is often used for cooking in Southern, Central and Western Asia and is commonly a cylindrical clay oven where food is cooked over a fire. This can be used to make many types of flatbreads such as roti and naan. It is also used to make popular dishes like tandoori chicken, where chicken is marinated in yogurt seasoned with spices and then cooked in the tandoor oven. In some regions samosas, dough stuffed with a savory filling such as potatoes and peas and formed into a triangular shape, are also baked in a tandoor.

### China

Chinese cuisine is very diverse, influenced by tradition and historical events. Ethnic groups, differing geography (mountains, rivers, forests and deserts), which impacts the available ingredients locally, as well as climate differences across the country ranging from tropical in the south to subarctic in the north play a large role in the diversity. For example, noodles are more popular in Northern China because wheat is widely grown and in Southern China rice



is popular because it was historically grown more there. Food is traditionally described by the color, smell and taste and evaluated by ingredients used, seasonings and knifework. Chinese food staples include rice, soy sauce, noodles, tea, chili oil and tofu along with chopsticks and the wok for cooking. Often the food we order at Chinese restaurants is based off traditional Chinese cuisine but adapted to local tastes and different from what is popular in China. Did you know the Hawaiian pizza was inspired by Chinese sweet and sour flavors?



Baozi, or bao, is a steamed bun made from yeast dough filled with a variety of meat or vegetarian fillings. You will find these served individually and ordered for take-away or a slightly smaller version of the bun served in a steam basket at a restaurant. An order of these is

also served with vinegar or soy sauce for dipping the baozi, plus chili and garlic pastes. Baozi would be the perfect compact meal for when you are on the go.

Dapanji translates to “big chicken plate” and is a popular chicken stew that likely originated in Xinjian, China in the mid-to-late 1990s. The dish was first served by restaurants along Xinjian highways as a quick meal for truck drivers, the dish then spread to the rest of the country. It is hearty and rich in flavor with bite sized pieces of chicken, bell peppers and potatoes cooked with onions, garlic, chili peppers, ginger, Sichuan peppers and spices. It is simmered in broth to make a savory and spicy stew that is served along with laghman (wide, hand-stretched noodles) and served family style.

## Middle Eastern

Middle Eastern cuisine comes from the region of West Asia. Common ingredients include olive oil, olives, pita, honey, dates, sesame seeds, chickpeas, mint, parsley and rice. As with all regions historical events have shaped the ingredients and flavors of the local cuisine. This region is where wheat was first cultivated and then rye,

barley, lentils, beans, figs, pomegranates and dates soon followed. This region is also a crossroad between Europe, Asia and North Africa and has been a food hub and recipe exchange with a variety of different cuisines.

Dolma translates in to “something stuffed” in Turkish and is a family of stuffed dishes that are served warm or cold. This can range from stuffed eggplant and peppers to seafood and apples. Stuffing may include ground meats, rice and spices. One type of seafood variant is kalamar dolma (stuffed calamari) which includes a mixture of Halloumi cheese, onion, breadcrumbs, garlic and parsley that is stuffed into the whole tentacle then cooked in tomato sauce. The type of dolma you may be most familiar with is a sarma which are grape or cabbage leaves wrapped around a stuffing, typically a grain like rice, ground meat or both.

Falafel is a traditional Middle Eastern food made from ground chickpeas, formed into a ball or patty and then traditionally fried, though these can also be baked for a healthier twist. They can be served alone as a snack, on top of a salad or in a warm pita, which acts a pocket to hold the falafel, and topped with a variety of garnishes including pickled vegetables or hummus.

Tabbouleh has grown in popularity in Western cultures but originated in Lebanon and Syria and has become one of the most popular salads in Middle Eastern cuisine. This dish is a tangy salad made with finely chopped parsley, bulgur, tomatoes, onion, mint and seasoned with olive oil and lemon juice. Tabbouleh is traditionally served as part of a mezze, which is a selection of small dishes served as appetizers, alongside other foods such as baba ghanoush (baked eggplant mashed with olive oil, lemon juice and seasonings), hummus and pita.

## Filipino

Filipino food has been influenced by the history of the Philippines and draws inspiration from several cultures reflecting Spanish, Chinese, American and Pacific Island flavors. Foods tend to be centered around combinations of sweet, salty and sour flavors. Vinegar is a very common ingredient and not only provides flavor but helps to preserve food to make it last longer in the warm tropical climate.



Adobo is a very popular dish in the Philippines, and some consider it to be their national dish. Adobo refers to a method of marinating and stewing meat or fish in a mixture of vinegar, soy sauce and spices (often garlic, bay leaves and black pepper). Filipino adobo should not be confused with spicy Spanish adobo sauce. This dish is served over rice to absorb the tangy and flavorful sauce.

Ube is a bright purple yam that originated in the Philippines and is even sweeter than its bright orange relative the sweet potato. Ube has a slightly nutty, vanilla taste and pairs well with coconut; it is used in many Filipino desserts. One dessert ube halaya, sometimes called ube jam, is made from boiled and mashed ube, mixed with condensed milk or coconut milk and then chilled. It can be served cold and topped with things like grated coconut or used in other desserts like pastries and ice cream.

## Latin America

Latin American cuisine covers a large area of land which makes it extremely diverse and influenced by many cultures including Native American, African, European and Asian and encompasses everything from the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico and South America. Maize-based dishes are popular including arepas (a flat round maize dough that can be filled with a variety of ingredients and common to Colombia and Venezuela), tacos, tamales, tortillas and pupusas (a thick griddle cake from El Salvador and Honduras). You will also find varying types of salsa and other condiments which include guacamole, pico de gallo, mole, chimichurri and pebre. Mole is a traditional sauce or marinade from Mexico and can refer to a variety of different styles, but most often includes fruits, nuts, chili peppers and spices. Chimichurri is a sauce used in cooking and as a condiment on top of grilled meats in Argentina and Uruguay. It can be red or green and is made from chopped parsley, garlic, olive oil, oregano and red wine vinegar. Pebre is from Chile and contains chopped onion, coriander, olive oil, garlic and spicy aji pepper and used on breads or meats. Rice and beans are also staples of Latin American Cuisine.

Ropa vieja originated in Spain but is considered one of the national dishes of Cuba and is popular in other parts of Latin America and the Philippines. The dish is a slow-cooked stew and includes stewed beef, tomatoes and a sofrito base. Sofrito ingredients and style are influenced by region but typically includes garlic, onion, peppers and tomato sauteed in oil, made into a sauce and used in cooking. This is then served with rice and black beans in Cuba. In Colombia and Venezuela this dish is often used as a filling in arepas.

Empanadas are originally a dish from Spanish cuisine, but variations can be seen across Latin America, especially in Chile where they are a staple of their national cuisine. Empanada translates to the Spanish verb “empanar” meaning to coat with bread which is a perfect description of this crescent shaped treat. Dough is folded over a filling which can range from meats, cheeses, tomato, corn and other ingredients and then the turnover can be fried or baked for a healthier version. In Argentina each region has its own characteristic version of an empanada. In Belize they are known as panades made with masa (corn dough) then stuffed with fish, chicken or beans and topped with cabbage or salsa and frequently sold as street food. Ecuador has a sweet version called empanadas de viento (wind or air empanadas) where thinly rolled dough is filled with cheese, cooked and then rolled in sugar. Once cooked this Ecuadorian variety is hollow on the inside for which the word “viento” in its name comes from.



The foods we explored today are just a small sampling of the wide variety of foods around the world. You can see how historical events, such as exploration and trade, has had an influence on flavors and created some similarities among world cuisines, but at the same time each has also remained unique with its own distinct style. I hope you feel inspired to try something new or add some new flavors into your favorite dishes!





# Featured Recipe

## Baked Falafel Sandwiches

For complete recipe and nutrition facts: [Eating Well](#)

Preparation time: 40 minutes

Total time: 40 minutes

Servings: 4



### INGREDIENTS

Canola or olive oil cooking spray  
1 (15-ounce) no salt added chickpeas, rinsed  
½ cup chopped fresh parsley  
½ cup chopped fresh cilantro  
½ cup grated red onion, plus 1 cup thinly sliced  
½ cup panko breadcrumbs  
1 Tbsp tahini  
1 tsp grated lemon zest  
2 Tbsp lemon juice, divided  
1 tsp ground cumin  
¼ tsp salt  
1 large clove garlic, grated or minced  
1 cup thinly sliced cucumber  
1 ½ Tbsp olive oil  
4 whole wheat wraps  
2 cups loosely packed arugula  
1 large tomato, sliced  
1 recipe Tahini Sauce with Lemon and Garlic

### TAHINI SAUCE WITH LEMON AND GARLIC

3 Tbsp tahini  
3 Tbsp warm water  
2 Tbsp lemon juice  
1 Tbsp olive oil  
1 small clove garlic, grated  
¼ tsp salt

### Directions

Stir tahini, water, lemon juice, oil, garlic and salt together in a small bowl.



## Featured Recipe (cont.)

### Baked Falafel Sandwiches

For complete recipe and nutrition facts: [Eating Well](#)

Preparation time: 40 minutes

Total time: 40 minutes

Servings: 4



#### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with foil and coat with cooking spray.
2. Pulse chickpeas, parsley, cilantro, grated onion, breadcrumbs, tahini, lemon zest, 1 Tbsp lemon juice, cumin, salt and garlic in a food processor until a coarse meal forms, scrape down sides as needed. Shape the mixture into 4 cup (½ inch thick) patties (about ½ cup each). Arrange on baking sheet, coat top with cooking spray. Bake 10 minutes, then flip patties and coat with cooking spray. Continue baking until gold brown, 10-12 minutes.
3. Meanwhile combine sliced onion, cucumber, oil and remaining 1 Tbsp lemon juice in a medium bowl. Let stand at room temperature, stirring occasionally for about 20 minutes.
4. Remove patties from oven, let cool 5 minutes and then cut in half.
5. Place wraps directly on oven racks; bake until just warmed through, about 1 minute.
6. Add arugula to cucumber mixture and toss to combine. Top warmed wraps with arugula mixture, falafel halves, tomato slices and tahini sauce. Then roll up burrito-style and enjoy.

