

When the guests and their hosts have eaten, the men of the tribe take their places round the tray, pulling off pieces of meat and forming the rice into little balls which are skilfully flicked into the month by means of the thumb. The old men come first, followed by the young men and boys, the women and children and finally the dogs, until no grain of rice remains.

In less elaborate Arab hospitality guests are offered fresh khubz, butter or cheese and date syrup. The butter is made by shaking sour milk in a "shishwa" or sheep skin churn, and a man of importance does not sell such a product, but retains it for use in the tribe.

Hospitality takes a high place in the Arab world, and in the absence of the host, his son, his servant or his wife must offer food and drink to a guest. Failure to do so indicates a dislike of visitors and brings the man into disrepute with his neighbours. In the event of no food being available, if this is stated frankly, there can be no criticism, and the unfortunate host is excused from his obligations. Should a guest partake of food and then criticise adversely what has been offered him, he is insulting his host and sowing the seeds of future trouble.

A stranger may remain for three days without presence being questioned, but after that time an explanation is expected. Such passing guests bring news to isolated parts of the desert and the rate at which information is spread from one place to another is quite remarkable.

Among the residents of modern Baghdad the tribal customs of the Arabs have left their influence. There is still to be seen the traditionally lavish display of food, but such a cosmopolitan city has drawn its customs from the west as well as the east in recent years. Kuzi remains the main dish of any large meal but if the number of sheep offered is reduced this is offset by the increase in the variety of other dishes. A purdah pilau may be seen side by side with a potato salad garnished with mayonnaise, and a plate of cocktail sausages pierced with toothpicks may prove as popular as a dish of dolma. Indeed it is impossible to spend an evening in an Iraqi house without seeing the influence of west as well as east on the refreshments offered.

BREAKFAST.

The amount and variety of food, and the hours at which meals are eaten, vary with the inclinations and demands of every family. In former times the breakfast of the well-to-do Iraqi was often as it is to-day, preceded by tea or coffee in bed or on rising. The meal was taken before work and consisted of tea, savoury dishes, khubz, cream and date syrup or honey. Recently the European breakfast has invaded the east and eggs, butter, meat dishes, cream, jam and other delicacies are now enjoyed. Among the poorer classes tea and khubz are the staple fare. In Syria and the Lebanon olive oil, drained leban and summac or thyme with salt are offered. The bread is dipped in the oil and then in the herbs. Tea or milk is drunk.

In continental Europe breakfast may be a light meal but in England it is frequently more substantial than lunch. The American habit of eating fruit with breakfast has also been adopted in Europe and is generally followed by a cereal. Toast, marmalade or honey and coffee or tea complete the meal. There is a pleasant custom in some households of helping oneself to what one wants from the sideboard where the different foods are arranged, hot foods being kept warm by a small methylated spirit lamp beneath the breakfast dish, or on a hot plate. Many small American houses are fitted with what is known as a "breakfast nook", which is a narrow table with built in benches in one corner of the kitchen. In the rush of modern servantless life a quick breakfast may be had more conveniently with such an arrangement than when everything must be carried to the dining room. It follows that the kitchen of such a house is a bright and airy room, kept spotlessly clean and tidy. It is painted in gay colours, the windows have dainty curtains and the fittings and equipment are as attractive as they are efficient.

In the east as in the west dishes served at breakfast for instance, may also be eaten at other meals; but in order that the east and west may become familiar with each others customs, the recipes have been classified under the meal at which they would most usually be served.

1. 'Ajja.

4	tblsp. olive oil	1	tin chopped parsley.
8	eggs	2	small onions finely chopped
			Salt and pepper

Oil individual cake tins. Beat together the remaining ingredient, and cook in individual tins. When firm on top turn for a few moments. Serve hot or cold.

This makes a good picnic dish between slices of bread and butter.

2. 'Ajjat el Qarnabit.

1	cauliflower	2	eggs
1	tomato	$\frac{1}{2}$	tin milk or water
1	onion	$\frac{1}{2}$	tin flour
	Salt and pepper	$\frac{1}{2}$	tsp. baking powder
2	tblsp. chopped parsley		Frying oil or fat

Clean the cauliflower, cut in small pieces and boil in salted boiling water till tender. Chop the tomato and onion season. Mince the parsley and mix it with the beaten eggs, tomato and onion. Make a batter with the mixture and the remaining ingredients and make fritters by putting a spoonful of cauliflower into the batter and then frying the coated cauliflower until golden brown on both sides. Keep hot till all are ready.

This may be made with other vegetables such as potatoes or truffles.

3. Basturma.

4 large intestines	$\frac{1}{4}$ tin black pepper
7 k. mutton from the leg	$\frac{1}{4}$ tin cubebs
1 k. mutton breast fat	$\frac{1}{4}$ tin cardamoms
$\frac{1}{4}$ tin cloves	2 tbsp. cinnamon
	Salt and pepper

Clean the intestines thoroughly and soak overnight with lemon juice and salt. Dry with a clean cloth. Clean the meat and fat and mince them. Pound together the spices and add to the meat. Salt thoroughly. Mix well and stuff the intestines with the mixture. Sew up and leave under a heavy weight for 24 hours. The sausages should be hung in an airy place away from the sun and may be used after eight days. When serving cut into thin slices and fry without fat.

4. Brain.

1 brain	1 tbsp. vinegar
1 bay leaf	1 egg
salt and pepper	bread crumbs
$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. pepper corns	Frying fat

Soak the brain in water and clean thoroughly. Add the bay leaf, salt pepper and vinegar to some water and bring to the boil. Put in the brain, bring to the boil and cook for a few minutes. Allow the brain to cool in the water in which it was cooked. When cold cut into pieces, turn in beaten egg, breadcrumbs and seasonings. Fry till nicely browned.

5. Bully Beef Sausage.

2 12 oz. tins of bully beef	3 eggs
1 tin breadcrumbs	2 hard boiled eggs
1 tsp. finely chopped marjoram	4—8 pickled cucumbers if wanted
1 tbsp. chopped parsley	Fineely sifted bread crumbs or glaze
Salt and pepper	

Pound the meat thoroughly, all the tin of soft breadcrumbs, herbs and seasonings to taste. Mix well and add the three eggs. Shell the hard boiled eggs and fold the meat paste round them and shape like a sausage. If liked pickled cucumbers may be put in the meat also. Wrap in a floured cloth and boil for about an hour. When ready remove the cloth and sprinkle with sieved dry breadcrumbs or coat with glaze. Serves. 8.

6. Chilbir (Anatolian.)

8 poached eggs	Butter
Thick leban	Paprika
Garlic	Salt and pepper

Poach the eggs in hot salted water to which a little vinegar has been added. Have ready some thick leban flavoured with a trace of garlic and hot butter to which paprika has been added.

Cook and drain the eggs, season, dish on toast if liked, pour over the thick leban and over that pour boiling butter and paprika.

7. Croquettes.

1½ tins minced cold cooked meat or fish	¼ tin strong seasoned stock
½ tin mashed potatoes soft crumbs or boiled chopped macaroni	¼ tin milk, cream or other suitable fluid
2 tbsp. butter or cooking fat	Chopped herbs or spices
2 tbsp. flour	Salt and pepper
	Eggs and breadcrumbs

Mince finely any cold cooked meat, or fish. Add to the potatoes. Make a sauce by melting the butter, adding the flour and the stock and milk. Cook well. It is essential that the stock be strong and well flavoured. Finely chopped herbs such as parsley or marjoram may be added and if the croquettes are made of fish, lemon juice and a dash of nutmeg are an improvement. Season. Mix all together and the resultant paste should be very soft. Flour the hands and form into cakes of any shape wanted. Have ready a beaten egg to which a little milk has been added, or better 2 beaten eggs, and finely sifted bread-crumbs. Dip the croquettes in the egg and coat with crumbs. When all are done repeat the process. Fry in hot fat till well browned. The croquettes should be very crisp on the outside and very soft inside. Serve with any savoury sauce.

8. Eggs and Cheese.

4 eggs	Butter
¾ tin grated cheese	Salt and pepper

Butter a fireproof dish, sprinkle with a layer of grated cheese, break in four eggs and cover with the remainder of the cheese. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and bake in a quick oven till the eggs are not quite as much cooked as one wants. They continue cooking after removal from the oven.

9. Kidney Saute.

2 veal kidneys	2 tins mushrooms
1 tsp. salt	¼ tin butter
¼ tsp. white pepper	¾ tin brown stock
1 tbsp. flour	½ tin sherry or Madeira

Blanch the kidneys, that is put in cold salted water, bring to the boil and cook several minutes. Drain. When cold slice, season and turn in flour. Wash, pare and slice the mushrooms, and brown both in hot butter, shaking the pan frequently. Add the stock and cook for ten minutes. Add the wine, bring to the boil and serve very hot.

10. Kukue Sabzy.

½ k. chives	Salt and pepper
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6 eggs	Turmeric and saffron
$\frac{1}{2}$ tin finely chopped walnuts	Frying fat
$\frac{1}{2}$ tin Persian currants	4 tbsp. dry breadcrumbs

Chop the chives finely, wash and drain very thoroughly indeed. Beat eggs, add the walnuts and currants beat in the chives and season to taste. Melt some fat in a rather small pan, for the omelette must be thick, pour in the mixture and cook for five minutes either with charcoal on the lid of the pan or in the oven. Remove the lid, cut right across in two directions to expose the centre to the heat, turn to cook the other side and when ready serve immediately.

Leban. — *Yogurt*

Next to water, "leban" and "shenina" are probably the most universally drunk beverages in Iraq and women balancing tiers of leban boxes on their heads may frequently be seen in Baghdad. To the European leban looks like "curds and whey" and tastes sour. It is a culture of lactic acid bacteria and yeasts flourishing in symbiosis and causing fermentation of milk. The lactobacillus is a minute rod-like structure about ten thousandths of a millimetre in length and much narrower. It multiplies by breaking into two parts, each of which grows till it is the size of the original rod, this simple process of reproduction taking place about every half hour, so that in a short time a glassful of leban will contain many million of these tiny organisms, both living and dead.

The lactobacillus has two important characteristics. One is that it will grow at somewhat higher temperatures than many other organisms and therefore when making leban, if the milk is maintained at a temperature somewhat above that of the body the lactobacillus will flourish while other bacteria will fail to do so. Furthermore the organism is not killed readily by the acid which it forms the milk sugar. Many other bacteria which occur in milk, some of which may be disease producers, are killed by this acid. Leban therefore, providing it is mixed with clean water, is safer to drink than the milk ordinarily found in Baghdad.

The yeasts are small oval organisms which ferment the lactose of the milk, changing it to lactic acid alcohol. For the production of goods leban the alcohol fermentation is more important than the acid. The actual flavour of the leban is determined by the proportion of lactic acid and alcohol in the leban together with the products of other bacteria in the milk.

The custom of using fermented milk such as leban, kefir or yogurt probably originated in attempts to preserve milk. The acid formed prevents the rapid growth of putrefying bacteria and maintains the milk in state fit for human consumption for a longer period than would otherwise be possible.

When prepared under ordinary household conditions the milk must first be boiled to kill as many organisms in it as possible. This should be done even if the milk has already been boiled some hours previously, as

microorganisms develop rapidly in such an excellent natural food. When the milk has cooled to 42°C, that is when it is fairly warm to the touch but not unpleasantly so the "starter" is added. This should be kept from the previous day or obtained from a market vendor or neighbour, but too much must not be added or the acid in it will cause curdling of the milk. The starter should be of good flavour and whenever the leban has formed it should be chilled in the refrigerator, at which low temperature the growth of the organisms ceases and more acid is formed.

Bacteriologically Turkish yogurt is supposed to be somewhat different from leban, but those familiar with both say that the flavours are indistinguishable. A simple method of obtaining a starter for yogurt when none is otherwise available is as follows. Put a little fresh unboiled milk into a small bottle which has been well washed and sterilized in the sun. Keep the milk at 42°C until it has clotted then, using a boiled spoon, transfer a little of the clotted milk to another bottle in which is some fresh boiled milk reduced to a temperature of 42°. Keep at the same temperature but as soon as the milk is coagulated put into the refrigerator till the next day when it should be again transferred in the same way and held at 42°C until the milk has clotted. This should be repeated daily for about a week at the end of which a starter of good flavour should be ready for use with larger quantities of milk.

Sometimes leban has an unpleasant taste and slimy appearance, or it clots without tasting acid. This is because, through incorrect temperatures or heavily contaminated utensils, the essential organisms have lost control and some other bacteria have taken precedence in the milk. Many organisms cause clotting of milk but it is only certain ones which produce the desirable lactic acid and alcohol and the conditions must be such that they, not others predominate in the milk.

To wash the leban bowl after use and expect to keep milk fresh in it is asking for trouble. Simple washing, no matter how clean it looks to the human eye, does not remove all the bacteria from bowl, and if a few remain they soon start multiplying in thousands with consequent souring of the milk. To sterilise a bowl after using leban the simplest method is to wash it well and leave it in the blaze of Iraq's sun for half an hour. If the bowl be of mulberry wood, which is favourite in which to make leban, it should be left in the sun much longer. In the absence of sun the dish should be well boiled.

Leban may be made from the milk of sheep, camel, goat, buffalo or cow. The leban of goats' milk reputedly does not curdle when boiled whereas some cornflour or egg must be added to the others to prevent excessive curdling during cooking.

Leban is served in several forms. It may be eaten chilled with dates, date syrup or sugar and in this form is a summer substitute for the European

in a frying pan. pour in the omelette mixture, and when cooked fold over the omelette. Serve with a purée of tomatoes.

If wanted fill the omelette.

One type of filling is a medium white sauce to which chopped cooked, meat, fish, shell fish, or vegetables are added. Heat to scalding, spread on the omelette and fold it over.

Grated cheese, chopped hard boiled whites of eggs, finely chopped parsley, salt and pepper all bound with raw egg yolk make a good filling.

Another variation is minced cooked meat or flaked fish with chopped cooked onions, tomatoes, sweet green pepper, and seasonings.

An uncooked filling may be made with very finely chopped onion, tomato freed from seeds and drained, minced sweet green pepper and chopped boiled ham.

14. Porridge.

1 tin medium oatmeal or crushed boiled wheat (burghul) 4 tins water
Salt

Sprinkle the meal into boiling salted water, and stir for the first 5 or 6 minutes, to prevent lumps. Thereafter, simmer covered for half an hour or longer. Add more water if necessary.

If wanted soak the meal overnight. If crushed wheat is used wash and then soak overnight. A spoonful of oatmeal added to the crushed wheat is an improvement. Serve for breakfast with salt and milk, or even better, with cream. Some people prefer sugar instead of salt.

15. Qawurma.

1 young fat sheep Large earthenware jars
Salt and pepper

Clean the meat of fibrous tissues and bones. Chop the meat into small dice. Remove all the fat and fry separately discarding the fibrous tissue once the fat has been extracted. Add the meat to the fat and cook till soft. Season with plenty of salt and pepper. Have ready dry, warm jars. Pour the scalding mixture into the jars and continue stirring until cool in order that the meat may be well distributed in the fat. When cold cover. Will keep all winter. This is the oriental variety of "corned mutton".

16. Spiced Meat.

2	tbsp. curry powder	$\frac{1}{8}$	tsp. cayenne pepper
40	cloves	1	k. beef—rump steak
2	pieces of cinnamon 4" long	1	piece of tail fat
$\frac{1}{2}$	tsp. black pepper	3	small onions
3	tbsp. salt	1	bay leaf
1	head of garlic		

Mix everything except the last 4 ingredients, and pound thoroughly in a mortar. With a long sharp knife make a hole in the centre of the meat and rub inside with spices. Take the piece of fat, which should be about the same length as the meat, (any mutton fat may be used except kidney fat) dip it in spices and insert in the hole. Rub the spices all over the meat and tie round firmly with a long piece of string. Put the meat in a pan and three quarters cover with cold water. Add the onions, bay leaf and any remaining spices. Bring to the boil and skim once. Cover the pan tightly and put a piece of thick blanket over the lid. Cook in a low fire for 1½ hours. When ready take out the meat, allow it to cool, remove the string and slice.

17. Stuffed Pancakes.

1 egg	¼ k. minced meat
½ tin flour	Frying fat
Water	1 tbsp. parsley
Salt and pepper	1 medium onion

Beat the egg, add the flour and water gradually and beat till like thick cream. Season. Allow to stand for half an hour. Fry the meat, and the chopped parsley and grated onion and cook further. Season. Grease a small frying pan and cook very thin pancakes. This quantity make 16. Cook lightly, put on a spoonful of the meat mixture, fold in the ends, roll up and re-fry three or four at a time.

A richer batter may be made by adding a spoonful of butter and using milk instead of water. If double the quantity of batter is made when the pancakes are stuffed they may be re-dipped in batter and then re-fried. Any savoury fish, meat or cheese filling may be used for these.

Coffee Customs

The offering of coffee is the most usual form of hospitality in the Middle East. It is served at any time of the day particularly in the forenoons when much important business is settled over a cup or two of coffee, as was the custom in Britain two hundred years ago and still is, to a lesser extent, to-day. In Egypt, at the present time, the name of a business man's coffee house may be seen inscribed on his visiting card.

Coffee (*Coffea Arabica*) of which there are more than thirty varieties, is indigenous to Abyssinia, and has been used in that country since time immemorial. From there it was introduced into Arabia where it was known to exist in the 15th century and from whence it spread over the east during the next century. The stimulating and sleep dispelling properties of coffee were early appreciated by the Mufti of Aden, and according to La Roque*,

**Traité Historique de l'origine et du progrès du café, tant dans l'Asie que dans l'Europe; de son introduction en France, et de l'établissement de son usage à Paris.*