

Afghan Homecooking
RECIPES

WIDA NIAZI



About



I came from Afghanistan in February 2022, almost nine months after the Taliban took control of my country on August 15, 2021. We are a family of five; myself, my three children (all boys) 13, 9 and one and a half years old and my husband. Leaving our country; loved ones and everything else behind was not an easy decision but we had to as my husband's life was at risk because of his work for years in support of the U.S. government in Afghanistan.

During the Taliban's first control of Afghanistan in 1995, I was studying school subjects at home having a private instructor because the schools, as now, were closed for girls that time too. After the Taliban's regime collapsed in 2001, I took the placement test at school and was admitted to grade 4th. I got married when I was in 11th grade and because of that I wasn't able to complete my last year of high school as I had to take care of my first child born in 2009. Like several families, we also moved to Pakistan because of the Taliban, where I completed my high school.

As a new refugee, besides thinking of how to build a new life here in the U.S, I was looking for an opportunity to also build a career so that I can help myself and my family. To become a professional cook was one of the career options I was looking for, as I happened to be good at cooking. I was lucky enough that I was introduced to Jewish Family where my dream of becoming a professional cook started to turn into reality after I completed a four month program on culinary skill development from Project feast under the guidance and teachings of my great teacher Kausar. I also got my first job in the food industry, and my drivers license right after that.

Ash Reshteh

Ash is a thick noodle soup with a long history of its origin partly being Iranian, Azerbaijani, Caucasian, and Turkish. It is mostly served in the cold season. I learned how to cook it from my mother who had learned it from our neighbors. My mother prepared it in two ways: in winter with soup and in summer without soup.

Yield: 6 servings

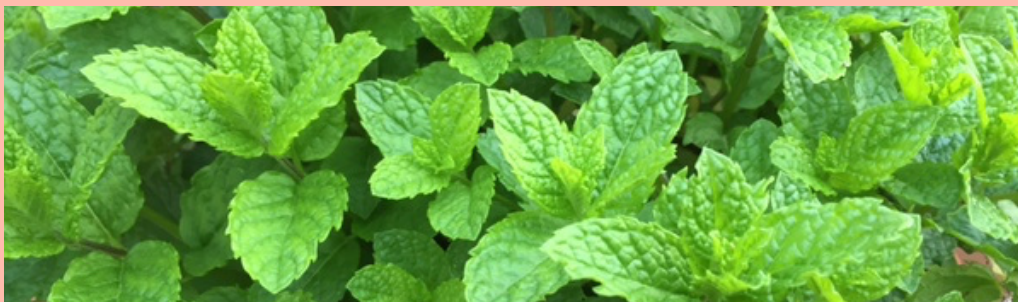
Ingredients

Meatballs

- ½ lb ground chicken
- ½ teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- ½ teaspoon coriander powder
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

Ash [soup]

- ½ cup vegetable or canola oil
- 1 lb spaghetti
- 1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 3 medium tomatoes, roughly chopped
- 1 cup boiled red beans
- 1 cup boiled chickpeas
- ½ cup finely chopped cilantro
- 1 cup finely chopped spinach
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 2 teaspoons garlic paste
- 2 teaspoons red chili powder
- 1 liter boiled water
- 1 cup whole milk yogurt, whisked
- 1 tablespoon dried or fresh mint



Ash Reshteh

Directions

Meatballs

In a medium bowl mix together the ground chicken, turmeric, cumin, coriander, and salt. Divide into small portions and shape into balls . Keep aside on a tray.

Soup

Heat the oil in a large pan on medium heat. Add the onions and garlic paste. Fry it for about 5 minutes, or until light brown. Then add the tomatoes, salt, and turmeric. Fry until the tomatoes break down. Add the boiled water and meatballs. cover and cook for 5 minutes.

After that add the red beans, chickpeas, cilantro, and spinach.

Add the spaghetti and chili powder, half-cover the pot, and cook for about 7 minutes.

Serve topped with yogurt and dried mint.



Chapli kabab

Chapli Kabab is one of the street foods originally from Pakistan. This dish was brought to Afghanistan by those who had migrated to Pakistan. I learned to make them from my mother.

Yields: 8 kebabs

Ingredients

1 lb ground beef
1 yellow onion, small diced
1 cup fresh cilantro, roughly chopped
1 medium size tomato, small diced
1 bell pepper, small diced
1 serrano pepper, deseeded and small diced
½ tablespoon coriander powder
1 tablespoon minced garlic
1 tablespoon coriander seeds, toasted and lightly crushed
½ tablespoon chili flakes
1 egg
2 firm tomatoes, cut into ¼ inch rounds
2 cups vegetable or canola oil



Directions

Preheat the oven to 350F and keep aside an ungreased baking sheet.

In a large bowl mix the ground beef, onion, cilantro, tomato, bell pepper, serrano, coriander powder, garlic, coriander seeds, chili flakes, and egg.

Cover and let it rest at room temperature for 10 minutes. Divide the marinated meat into eight pieces and roll it into balls. Flatten each ball into thin rounds, top it with a piece of the sliced tomato and press it down.

In a frying pan, heat oil on medium heat, and fry the kebab for one minute on each side.

Transfer to the baking sheet, and bake for ten minutes or until internal temperature is 155 F

Note: The kebabs can be fully fried on the stove or baked in the oven and broiled to get a light char.

Borani Banjar

Eggplants cooked with tomatoes and onions, served with yogurt-garlic sauce and topped with lots of dried mint

Yields: 6 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 lb eggplant
- 1 medium size yellow onion
- 2 medium size tomatoes
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1 yellow bell pepper
- 3 of vegetable or canola oil for frying, or as needed
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup water, room temperature



Directions

Peel (optional) the eggplants and cut them into 3-inch thick strips. Peel and cut the onions into ¼ inch rounds. Cut the bell peppers and tomatoes into ¼ inch rounds.

Heat oil in a skillet on medium heat. Fry eggplant and onion together for about 5 minutes or until they are soft but not mushy. Transfer to a platter or a tray. Then fry the bell pepper for two to three minutes and transfer to a platter or tray. Transfer the oil into a bowl, leaving about 2 tablespoons. In the same pan, fry the tomatoes for two minutes and transfer them to another platter.

In the same pan make the sauce on medium heat by adding garlic and frying it for 1 minute. Then add tomato paste, turmeric, and salt and fry for 1 minute. Add ½ cup water, and transfer the sauce to a bowl.

In the same pan layer the cooked vegetables starting with eggplants and onions than a layer of bell pepper and tomatoes.

Drizzle the tomato sauce on top. Turn the heat on low to cover the pan and let it simmer for 10 minutes.

Serve hot with naan.

Chicken Wings with Green Yogurt Sauce

Chicken wings are not an Afghan dish, but actually from America, which was brought to Afghanistan. It was first cooked in restaurants and it became very popular among the people of the city. It became a part of home cooking as it was an expensive dish to buy from a restaurant.

Yields: 4 servings

Ingredients

Spice blend

2 whole dry red chilies
2 teaspoons cumin seeds
2 teaspoons fennel seeds
1 teaspoon black pepper

Chicken

2 lbs Chicken wings
1/2 cup whole milk yogurt
2 teaspoons garlic paste
2 tablespoons spice blend (Recipe below)

Directions

Spice blend

Dry toast all the spices in a pan on low heat for about 2- 3 minutes or until they start popping, changing color and aromas start floating. Cool and grind into a powder.

Chicken

In a large bowl marinate the chicken wings with yogurt, garlic paste, and two tablespoons of the spice blend. Cover over and refrigerate it for 1 hour.

Heat oil in a wok on medium heat, then turn the heat on low and gently drop the marinated chicken one at a time and fry for 15 minutes or internal temperature is 165 F; transfer the chicken into a strainer kept in a bowl or on a tray covered with a paper towel to drain off excess oil.

Serve with green yogurt sauce.

Green Yogurt Sauce

Green yogurt is a famous sauce served with almost every dish.

Yields: 4-6 servings

Ingredients

1 ½ cups whole milk yogurt
2 serrano peppers, stems off
4 garlic cloves
1 cup cilantro, roughly chopped
2 teaspoons salt, or to taste

Directions

In a medium bowl whisk the yogurt and keep aside. Blend the serrano, garlic, cilantro, and salt and mix it with the yogurt. Transfer to a bowl and serve immediately or transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate until ready to use.



Khichdi Quroot

Khichdi Quroot is one of the original dishes of the Herat Province of Afghanistan which has been introduced all over the country. People prepare it differently and it is mostly served in cold seasons. A traditional and popular Afghan dish. It is Sticky medium-grain rice cooked with mung beans and onions and served with Quroot (yogurt)

Yields: 4-6 servings

Ingredients

Rice

1 ½ cups of mung beans
4 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil
2 medium size yellow onions, thinly sliced
2 teaspoons of garlic paste
1 teaspoon turmeric
2 teaspoons salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon coriander seeds
1 ½ cups of mung beans
1 ½ liter water
2 cups Risotto

Yogurt sauce

1 cup hung yogurt or Greek yogurt
1 teaspoon garlic paste
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons dried mint

Directions

Rice

In a medium pot add oil and heat on medium heat. Add the onions, and garlic and fry for 2 minutes. Add the turmeric, salt, black pepper, and coriander seeds, and fry for 2-3 seconds and water and mung beans. Cover the pot, and cook the beans for 10 minutes or until they are half soft. Add the rice, mix, cover, and cook it on low heat for 20 minutes.

Yogurt Sauce

In a small bowl mix the hung yogurt or Greek yogurt, garlic, salt, and dried mint. Serve with Khichdi.

Ashak

Ashak is a famous Afghan dish that is served in households and restaurants. Families mostly make it for special occasions. I learned how to cook this particular dish from my mother who had learned it from our neighbors. Since my mother cooked it, it was very delicious, making me interested in learning how to cook it.

Yield: 10 servings

Ingredients

Dough

3 Cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon salt
1 teaspoon yeast
1 tablespoon vegetable Oil
2 Cups water

Beef Sauce

1 Medium size yellow onion, finely chopped
3 Medium size tomatoes, finely chopped
2 Tablespoons tomato paste
1 lb ground beef (substitute with 1.5 cups of split pea lentils, boiled until half cooked)
1 tablespoon salt
1 tablespoon black pepper
1 tablespoon turmeric
1 tablespoon smoked paprika
1 tablespoon ground garlic
1 Cup vegetable oil
½ cup Fresh cilantro, finely chopped, for garnish

Filling

1 lb leek, washed and finely chopped
1 tablespoon salt
2 tablespoon vegetable oil

Garlic Yogurt

1 lb whole milk yogurt
2 Garlic cloves
1 Teaspoon salt
½ Cup water
2 tablespoons dried mint

Ashak

Directions

Dough

Mix the flour, salt, oil, and yeast in a bowl. Keep adding water until you have a soft dough. Cover with a towel and plastic wrap and leave on the counter for 30 minutes.

Beef Sauce

Heat oil in a pan on medium heat. Add the onion and fry until brown, then add the tomatoes, tomato paste, and salt. Cook until they soften, then add the spices and ground beef/lentils, mix and cook for 5 minutes. Add the water, lower the heat, cover and leave until the meat/ lentils are cooked and release the oil, about 15 minutes.

Filling

In a small bowl mix together the leek, salt, and oil. Keep aside.

Divide the dough into 4 pieces. Shape each into a smooth ball and roll it into a thin round shape using a rolling pin, roll balls into large circles, then cut with a round cookie cutter. Add 1 tablespoon of the leek mixture on one half of the circle and then fold the remaining half on it, like an empanada. Prepare all the dumplings in the same way.

Add 1 inch of water in the steamer basket pot; coat the basket with oil or cooking spray. Arrange the dumplings in the basket without touching each other and cover the pot and bring them to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and steam for 15 minutes.

Garlic yogurt

In a large bowl whisk the yogurt. Add the garlic, salt, water and mint and mix.

To serve

Place 6-8 dumplings on a serving plate, and top with ground meat, drizzle with yogurt and garnish with cilantro. Enjoy!



Bolani

Bolani is a stuffed flatbread usually filled with a mix of potatoes, cilantro, and green peppers, but can also be filled with pumpkin, red lentils, or chives. It is served with a green chutney and enjoyed as a side dish, or as a snack with a cup of tea.

Yields - 8 bolani

Ingredients

For Dough

Ingredients

- 3 Cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon active dry Yeast
- 1 teaspoon Salt
- 1 cup Warm Water
- 1 cup vegetable or canola oil for frying

For Potatoes

- 5 Medium yellow potatoes
- 1 Cup Cilantro, finely chopped
- 2 serrano Peppers, deseeded and finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon Salt

Directions

Dough

Mix the flour, salt, and yeast in a bowl. Keep adding water until you have a soft dough. Cover with a towel and plastic wrap and leave on the counter for 30 minutes.

Potatoes

Boil the potatoes until they are soft, and then peel and mash them in a medium bowl. Add the cilantro, serrano peppers, and salt and mix together

Divide the dough into 8 pieces. Shape each into a smooth ball and roll it into a thin round shape using a rolling pin, about 8-10 inches in circumference. On one half of the circle spread the potato mixture and then fold the remaining half on it, like an empanada.

Put enough oil to grease the pan and heat it on medium heat. Fry the bolani for 3-4 minutes on one side or until both sides are cooked and golden brown. Repeat for all the bolani. Serve hot with green chutney.



Green Chutney

Green Chutney is famous in Afghanistan and is served with all of the dishes, particularly Bolani. It is a very common recipe in northern Afghanistan. It is also widely used with street food.

Yields: 4-6 servings

Ingredients

1 medium tomato, cut into 4 pieces
2 Cups cilantro
4 Garlic cloves
3 Tablespoon Lemon Juice
1 Tablespoon salt
2 Serrano Peppers
1/2 Cup water

Directions

Blend the tomato, cilantro, garlic, lemon juice, salt, serrano and water into a thick sauce. Transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate up to two weeks.



Afghani Doogh/Lassi

Doogh is a refreshing, savory, salted yogurt drink from Afghanistan and is served cold, especially in the hot months of summer.

Yields: 4-6 servings

Ingredients

3 Cups whole milk yogurt
2 tablespoons fresh mint leaves, torn into pieces
2 tablespoons finely chopped cilantro
2 tablespoons green onion
2 teaspoons minced garlic
2 teaspoons dried mint
1 cucumber small diced cucumber
1 tablespoon salt
3 cups of cold water

Directions

In a large bowl whisk the yogurt and add mint, cilantro, green onion, garlic, dried mint, cucumber, salt, and water. Mix together and serve.



Mango ice cream

Mango Ice Cream was brought to Afghanistan from China. It is mostly served in the warm season and has different flavors, including mango. For sanitation considerations, most people prefer preparing it at home.

Yields: 4 servings

Ingredients

2 yellow mangos peeled and chopped, divided
1 cup whole milk
½ cup sugar
1 cup whipping cream
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 tablespoon pistachio, slivered

Direction

In a small pan mix together the milk and sugar, and cook on low heat until half, stirring often .
Transfer it to a small bowl, cool down, cover, and refrigerate.
Puree half of the mangoes and keep them aside.
In a medium bowl whisk the cream using an electric beater, for about 2 minutes.
Then add the vanilla, milk, and sugar and mix it for three minutes.
Now add the mango pulp and mix it together using a spatula. Transfer to an airtight container, and top with the remaining mango and pistachio.
Cover and freeze it for 10 hours.

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