



Qallayat Bandoora



By Bettina Ezbid

I truly discovered this dish only last year, during the lockdown – after having lived in Palestine for a quarter of a century. It is as simple as it is popular and has replaced crepes as my family’s favorite special breakfast dish. You can find it also on lunch tables or prepared over an open wood fire to crown a hike or celebrate a lazy day spent in nature, sipping tea under an olive tree.

Qallayat bandoora (tomato pans) lends itself to many variations. My friend Carol fills a baking dish in the early morning, places it in the oven, and cooks it on very low heat until lunchtime, when the tomatoes are fully cooked and deliciously caramelized. Whether we cook the tomatoes in the oven or on the stovetop, my daughter insists that fresh green chili pepper and garlic should be added towards the end and cooked only slightly, whereas my son prefers to add cinnamon and fresh ginger; both of them like the tomatoes cooked rather well, which takes about thirty minutes on medium heat. We tend to go somewhat easy on the amount of olive oil we use, but sometimes we top the tomatoes with eggs cooked sunny-side up, in which case the dish is called *shakshouka*. In all cases, the result is delicious. Feel free to experiment and involve your children or grandchildren.

I am sharing a recipe that takes only minutes to prepare and is based on that of Amal Merrie, the famed cook in my husband’s circle of friends whose dishes are cherished by all. She recommends using a generous amount of olive oil to enhance the dish’s flavor, prefers that the tomatoes not be overcooked, and fries the chili pepper and garlic in the first step.

I use about 400 grams of tomatoes per person for a full breakfast. How much chili pepper you use depends on your taste and the sharpness of the pepper. We love garlic, but the amount we use also depends on our plans for the rest of the day...



Ingredients

- Tomatoes
- Olive oil
- Green or red chili pepper, sliced
- Garlic (whole, sliced, or pressed)

Preparation

Heat the olive oil in a pan.

Add the sliced chili pepper and garlic, and simmer for a couple of minutes.

Add the thickly sliced tomatoes and cook uncovered for a few minutes on high heat.

Reduce the heat to medium and cook uncovered for ten or fifteen minutes.

Add salt and spices to taste.

If you’d like a heartier meal, add eggs and continue cooking until the white turns opaque and the yellow has your favorite consistency (you can cover the pan).

Serve with fresh bread (for dipping) and hot tea, enjoy!