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Learn to Roll Palestinian Maftoul in Kifl Haris



Since we launched Ahlan Palestine and began to tour villages, cities, and refugee camps to share with the world what it truly means to be a Palestinian, we have been introduced to more than just picturesque landscapes, nature reserves, and historical sites. We have also become friends with many Palestinian women who have shared with us and taught us how to make the most famous and iconic Palestinian dishes.

In this postcard, we share our experience of learning how to prepare Palestinian *maftoul*, a traditional festive food that is closely associated with our culture and a must for tourists looking for an authentic experience of Palestine and its cuisine.

Maftoul is a traditional Palestinian dish after which many annual festivals are named, a perfect winter dish, comforting and hearty, loaded with aromatic spices. Associated with both the Levant and the Maghreb, it is similar to Moroccan couscous but made with flour instead of semolina – and might have been brought to Palestine by Moroccan migrants.

When we decided to visit the village of Kifl Haris in the northern West Bank, located six kilometers west of Salfit, we were invited to a local family's home to eat *maftoul*.

We were delighted over the invitation but even more excited when we entered the kitchen to see a woman hunched over a big silver bowl, about to prepare the *maftoul* from scratch.

Kefaya welcomed us with motherly affection and invited us to sit next to her as she rolled the *maftoul*, encouraging us to roll up our sleeves and dig in.

There are different methods to make *maftoul*. Kefaya started by drizzling olive oil in the bowl, sprinkling white flour over it, and then using her fingertips and palms to lightly roll the mix. Adding a touch of water and another sprinkle of white flour, she repeated the process, rolling and mixing the ingredients until we started to see small balls forming. When a portion of the mix became the right size, she gently scooped it into another bowl and continued the process.

Sitting crossed-legged on the floor, with our hands and arms covered in white flour, we talked about life in Palestine, our dreams and ambitions, our families and work, joking continuously about our poor *maftoul*-rolling skills. The atmosphere made us appreciate why

our grandmothers considered *maftoul* a festive food and frequently prepared it on special occasions and holidays when the whole family gathered. To prepare large quantities, women used to sit together for hours, sharing stories and memories and singing traditional songs. We felt blessed to have had the opportunity to connect with our heritage and learn this skill, considering that more and more Palestinians, including our own families, are now buying ready-made *maftoul* rather than making it at home.

Kefaya then steamed the *maftoul* in a steamer pot over a deliciously aromatic chicken broth with chickpeas, but not before burying one chopped onion, coated in a mix of cumin, salt, black pepper, and mixed spices, in the *maftoul*. She explained that this is a special trick to give the dish more flavor. And how right she was!

Once the *maftoul* was fully cooked, we scooped it onto a platter, soaked it with the seasoned chicken broth, and sprinkled the cooked chickpeas on top. Kefaya served it with pickled cucumbers, olives, and the cooked chicken she had basted with olive oil and roasted in the oven.

This experience encouraged us to explore our Palestinian cuisine even further and share it with anyone who is traveling the world in search of the best culinary experience. We are so proud of our Palestinian mothers and grandmothers who are preserving our heritage every time they cook a meal for their loved ones.



Malak and Bisan are the founders of Ahlan Palestine, a travel blog that promotes tourism in Palestine. You can watch them roll maftoul step by step if you visit their Instagram page @AhlanPalestine.