

**THE FEARLESS OLIVE**  
BY REEMA ISLAM



# Post-Eid table spread



Eid maybe over, but the mood for festivities certainly isn't. And what better way to celebrate that festivity than with recipes ranging from the bustling streets of Fez in Morocco to my maternal grandmother's kitchen and a Turkish friend's midnight endeavours on the island of Crete! As we struggle to keep our sanity intact amidst the craziness that the coronavirus has brought with it, I sincerely wish you all a pleasant holiday and may your sacrifices go a long way. Eid Mubarak!

## STUFFED KOROLA KEEMA

*My maternal grandmother in Lahore always loved feeding us with this famous rendition of korola or bitter gourds, and although I don't remember her flavours, my mum has valiantly tried to emulate her mother through this dish. I hope it adds a diversity to your Eid table this year.*

### Ingredients

4 large bitter gourds or korola  
1 kg mince beef  
Pinch of turmeric powder, coriander powder, cumin powder, cardamoms and clove powder  
6-7 tomatoes, skinned and chopped  
1 cup tomato purée (otherwise you can blend fresh, skinned tomatoes or use half cup if using canned purée)  
3-4 large onions, diced  
3-4 cloves chopped garlic  
Oil for frying the bitter gourds and for cooking the meat

### Method

Scrape or lightly peel the top parts of the gourds and make a side slit (they need to look like little bags so cut them lengthwise). Shell out the seeds and insides. Keep the insides on one side but discard seeds. Wash them and mix with the salt and leave aside

for about 15-20 minutes. Wash off the salt thoroughly; then pat dry and fry lightly for about 3-4 minutes until slightly browned.

Keep aside and prepare the meat.

Sauté the onions until translucent, then add garlic and ginger. Cook for 2 minutes, add the turmeric powder; cook for up to 2 more minutes before adding the meat and continue to heat until it has browned.

Add cardamoms, coriander and cumin powder and the shelled-out insides of the gourd halfway before the meat is browned. After this, you may add a bit of sugar and sprinkle of clove powder and cool the meat a bit.

Take a needle and thread it, then fill in the fried bitter gourds with the keema. Fill them up enough so you can close them and sew the openings, taking care that the meat is not spilling out. Make sure you have enough meat left in the pot for a gravy. Add tomato purée to the rest of the meat and gently place the filled gourds inside and cover it. Let it simmer on a low heat for about 15-20 minutes so the gourd absorbs the flavours.

**Serving:** Serve with a generous helping of chopped herbs and preferably a few hours after it has cooked as the gourd absorbs the flavours of the curry the longer it stays immersed.

## MOROCCAN STUFFED SPLEEN TIHANE

*Moroccans, like the rest of the Arab speaking belt or North Africans, love their offals and especially, stuffed ones. I once shared a family favourite Osban, stuffed cow intestines from Libya but today I attempt to bring you something from Morocco, where the city of Marrakesh, is the only city inscribed in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage, simply for its food.*

### Ingredients

1 veal or beef spleen, trimmed of fat  
500g ground beef or lamb (or a mix of the two)  
1 cup half-cooked white rice  
½ cup chopped pitted olives  
2 medium onion, diced  
2 tbsp chopped garlic  
1½ cups fresh herbs like mint or coriander etc.  
2 tbsp tomato paste  
2 tbsp red chilli paste  
2 capsicums, chopped  
¼ cup lemon juice  
1 heaped tablespoon ground cumin and paprika, or cayenne

### Method

Mix all the ingredients together — rice, beef, spices, tomato paste, lemon juice etc. Take the whole spleen and trim away the fat and from the front end, make a straight horizontal cut so it has only one rounded edge on the opposite side. The other side is now straight so you can dig in with a small knife and slowly inch your way in, making space. The inside of the spleen is incredibly spacious so fear not and charge ahead!

You can easily make a nice hollow to stuff your rice-meat mix into it. Once properly stuffed, sew the ends and you may pat it into a round shape or leave it flat. Oil a deep baking dish and in a pre-heated oven (at 180°C), place the spleen and bake for about 1 hour. Lower the heat to (120° C) after 20 minutes and when you insert a fork, it should easily go inside.

**Serving:** Serve this on a bed of chopped herbs and salad and slice the spleen like a meatloaf.

## TURKISH LIVER DISH

*While researching food heritage in Crete, my*

*archaeologist friend from Turkey and I had to prepare a meal from our countries, so my humble chicken curry joined her liver dish. This rustic dish was not just simple, but it also reminded me of home.*

### Ingredients

250g liver  
2-3 large eggplants, roasted, peeled, and seeded  
Flour for coating  
Olive oil for frying  
Olive oil for mixing with the purée but you can use 2 tbsp mustard oil too  
1 tbsp roasted sesame and coriander seeds  
½ cup pomegranate seeds  
½ cup coriander and mint leaves, chopped  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
Pinch of za'atar or you can use oregano powder; pinch paprika  
½ tsp garlic paste  
2 tbs lemon juice

### Method

Add a pinch of salt to the flour and coat the washed liver, which has been chopped into bite sized pieces, then fry it lightly for about 4-5 minutes until it has browned. Mash the eggplant pulp and add olive oil and lemon juice or mustard oil. Mix it with garlic paste, herbs, salt and pepper.

**Serving:** Serve the eggplant mash in an oblong deep dish and sprinkle a few drops of olive oil on top of it, then some za'atar/oregano powder, paprika, the herbs and the pomegranate seeds. Make a deep well in the middle and place the liver there. The idea is to eat it while dipping it into the eggplant mixture.

**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed**  
**Food and Styling: RBR**