

JOUKOWSKY INSTITUTE PUBLICATION 9.5

# THE JOUKOWSKY INSTITUTE COOKBOOK II



Dark and Stormy Ti' Punch Cypriot Brandy Sour The ACE Negroni Genziana Green Split-Pea Soup  
English Cheddar Scones Tuna Labneh Spread with Capers I-have-too-many-butternut Squashes  
Dip Waraq 'Einab / "Aate" / Dolma Batzina or Lazy Pie Strawberry Goat-Cheese Salad Jícama Salute  
Dakos Patatas a la Riojana Gigantes Thai Chili Brussel Sprouts Shadia Sauce with Onion Rings  
Pasta alla Gricia Pasta Puttanesca Pasta alla Norma Malloreddus alla Campidanese Tom Leppard's  
Gnocheeti Sardi Insanely Good Dissertation Tomato Sauce Pizza al Taglio Tumbet Imam Bayıldı  
Due's New Director Field Curry Chef Eric's Coconut Curry 'Montserratian' Black Bean, Spinach, and  
Corn Ant-  
**Compiled by** Sea Bass with Harissa Julia's (Inauthentic, but Tasty) Paella Mancarra  
**John F. Cherry** Stew Despretre Tex-Mex Chicken Fajitas Quick Ramen Noodle Chicken Pad Thai Easy Oven Fajitas  
**and Müge Durusu-Tanriöver** Molokhiya Mloukhiyya Trash Cabbage Okonomiyaki Molisan funnateglie Lebanese Shawarma  
Fried Kibben of Aleppo Easy All Nazik Max's Chili A Bowl of Red Cypriot Sheftalia Cochinita Pibil  
Slash's Birthday Cake The Workboot-Footed Contessa's Birthday Cake Monkey Bread Extra-Special  
Poundcake Customizable Bread Pudding JIAAW Seder Macaroons Tomato Soup Slow-Cooked  
Broccoli Soup Sinhalese Soup Melon and Avocado Salad Buckeyes Cauliflower Cake Eggplant  
and Chipotle Börek Hawaiian Style Manju Beet & Feta Galette Saag Feta Mushrooms in Red Wine

**THE**  
**JOUKOWSKY INSTITUTE**  
**COOKBOOK II**

compiled by

**John F. Cherry and Müge Durusu-Tanriöver**

The Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World  
Brown University  
Providence, RI  
2022

Joukowsky Institute Publication 9.5

Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World  
Brown University, Box 1837/60 George Street, Providence, RI 02912, USA

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#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The joukowsky institute cookbook / compiled by John F. Cherry and Müge Durusu-Tanriöver  
pages cm. – (Joukowsky Institute publication : 9.5)  
Includes no bibliographical references, but a couple of useful indexes.

1. Food. 2. Recipes -- tasty. 3. Cooking – social aspects. 4. Memory – places these dishes were first encountered. 5. People – members of JIAAW, 2006-2022. 6. Nostalgia -- past meals. I. Cherry, John F. and Durusu-Tanriöver, Müge

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# Lebanese Shawarma and the Origins of the Meat Wrap

**Brett Kaufman (Postdoctoral Fellow, 2014 – 2016 ) and Franck Salameh (Boston College)**

*It seems that just about every culture has its very own meat wrap, but what you may not realize is that many of them are connected. Shawarma — the delectable rotisserie of a whopping chunk of meat cooking and roasting while it gently spins — is a commonly found, but uncommonly tasty, Near Eastern dish. The origins of this term are unclear — it may come from the Turkish çevirme, meaning “turning,” “rotating,” “spinning” etc. This term is in fact a synonym of the adjective döner (rotary) accompanying kebab, perhaps to connote a rotary/rotating kebab. This is unlike the “shish” kebab which is a kebab roasted on a skewer, as opposed to the rotating “drill” of the çevirme or döner. Another option may be that shaverme is a distortion of the Syriac-Aramaic-Lebanese barme or barrayme, meaning “drill”, to denote the rotating movement of the meat (Hobeika 1939). The rotating nature of the meat on the vertical spit found its way west to Greece as a gyro, literally meaning “to turn around”, and we have inherited the English cognate verb “gyrate” / “to move in a circle” or “spiral”. Although today the shawarma meat is usually lamb, to accord with Islamic Halal dietary restrictions, when in Greece, pork becomes the preferred gyro filling. Much further west, according to Maronite tradition, Christian Lebanese migrants brought the cuisine to Mexico, which today can be found in a soft taco and other dishes with the meat named al pastor, also pork. Eastward, a shawarma type dish found its way to the Central Plain of China where it is called roujiamo (“meat folded into a bun”), with the meat traditionally served as lamb by Muslims, and pork by Han Chinese.*

## **INGREDIENTS** (for marinating 2 lb sliced meat)

If available, use a good old-fashioned spit or toaster, rotisserie-enabled. In any case, thinly slice the meat, and marinate 24 hours in a heavenly elixir. If a spit is unavailable, the best would be to roast the meat in the oven (see below), soaked in the marinade, until the marinade reduces to almost nothing.

2 lb beef/lamb (prime rib usually, or any other marbled/fatty cut of meat)

¼ C wine vinegar

¼ C balsamic vinegar

¼ C freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 C EVOO

4 cloves of crushed garlic

1 T ground pepper

2 T kosher salt

2 T cinnamon

1 tsp allspice

1 tsp Lebanese “seven spices” (contains ground cardamom)

2 large onions, sliced thinly

## **DIRECTIONS**

Buzz all ingredients together (except the onions) to make them happy happy, then pour the mixture into the meat container. Make sure everybody is swimming and frolicking together (this may mean getting your hands dirty and massaging the meat and marinade mixture to make sure everything is copiously coated with the Love Elixir, i.e., marinade) and refrigerate for at least 24 hours. Longer is better.

*If using a spit*, remove the meat slices from the marinade, and thread the skewer through them, interspersing meat slices with the marinated onions. Turn on your gyrating implement, and watch the love happen. After it is slightly charred to perfection, you can slice off the meat as it roasts and toasts, making sure to include a bit of fat for flavor. While you let the now exposed meat continue to circulate and char, you can give your chopped-off meat a brief spin on a griddle, if you'd like it cooked more. *If roasting in the oven*, put the marinated meats and onions in a roasting pan, and roast at high heat, usually 450° F, for a little over an hour, or until the meat begins almost toasting and the marinade evaporates and thickens (this is where most of the love dwells.)

## **SERVING INSTRUCTIONS**

The best way of enjoying shawarma is in a wrap (called 'Aaroos in Lebanese, literally "bride", while a pita or laffa will do just fine) with tahini sauce (see below). The authors disagree over the use of hummus, with Salameh requesting you please not use hummus, while Kaufman is fine with that because he will have more hummus to himself. You may also spread *amba* sauce on your pita/laffa/'Aaroos. Garnish with chopped parsley, diced tomatoes, pickled turnips, and thinly sliced radishes, as well as your choice of cucumbers, tomatoes, onions (pickled or raw), pickles, french fries, and *tabboulé* (for a recipe of the latter see *JIC I*, Kaufman and A. Abdallah 2015, 27).

Wrap everything up, and *sahtein/bon appétit!* If you can finish a shawarma without sauce dripping down on your hands, or without condiments strewn on the table, it means you're a pro.

Best consumed with Almaza or Maccabee beer.

### *Bonus Tahini Sauce recipe:*

Tahini, meaning "ground sauce/paste" in Arabic, is an extremely unique topping on a variety of dishes. But it goes perfectly with shawarma. The Arabic term, however, is not applied uniformly throughout the entire Near East. In Lebanon, coastal Syria, and even Damascus, the term *tarator* is used, which in the Balkans is also used for a yoghurt-based sauce, similar to the Greek *tzatziki*. The concept is in fact similar, with yoghurt used in the Balkan *tarator* and Greek *tzatziki* instead of sesame paste for tahini. Moreover, *tarator* is accepted as a Levantine distortion of the French *traiteur* (old French *Traitier* or *Traiteur*, or Venetian *Trattór*) for "caterer" or "inn-keeper." It possibly connotes a type of food as a "treat" or a "special food" (hence the "garnish" that we use it for in these tasty of tasties shawarma wraps.) The modern French *traiteur* still refers to a provider of "special foods". We may propose that the English "treat" fits the meaning perfectly, and are certain you'll agree. Without that lemony paste tickling the taste buds, shawarma would hardly be the delectable "Traiteur's" tahini treat it is today. The following recipe is for making tahini sauce with canned or bottled tahini paste. To make tahini from scratch using sesame seeds would require a different process.

Blend or whisk: 2 C tahini, ½ C freshly squeezed lemon juice, 3 cloves garlic, pounded into a paste, 1 tsp salt. Add water or lemon juice to adjust taste and texture (should be a loose consistency, but not watery, and not as "pasty" as traditional hummus.)

### *References:*

Hobeika, Joseph. 1939. "Les vestiges Syriaques dans le dialecte Libano-Syrien" [Syriac Remnants in the Lebanese-Syriac Dialect] in *Al-Mashreq, Revue Catholique Orientale*. Beirut, Lebanon: Université Saint-Joseph, p. 291.

Kaufman, Brett, and Marc A. Abdallah. 2015. Tabboulé: Ancient Salad of Mesopotamia and the Levant. In *The Joukowsky Institute Cookbook I*, edited by J.F. Cherry and M. Durusu-Tanriöver: The Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World, Brown University, p. 27.