

By Fadi
Kattan and
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MAFTOUL MARMAON

When Elizabeth, a Chilean-Palestinian philanthropist and TV host, and I tried to think of a recipe that links Palestine to its diaspora – a recipe that changed with time yet remained a favorite among Palestinians who had left to faraway places in the early 1900s – *maftoul*, came to our minds, or more specifically, *marmaon*. (*Maftoul* is the general name in Palestine, and *marmaon* is very specific to Bethlehem.)

Elizabeth asserts, “*Marmaon* is very popular among Chilean Palestinians. It reminds us of our original home in Bethlehem, Palestine. This is a quicker version than the original *marmaon*, adapted to our faster life style. It is basically pasta, cooked in a tomato sauce made of chicken- or meat broth and garnished with whatever meat that we choose to use.”

“We cannot do it every day in the traditional way because we don’t have the time. And even though my grandmother would rise from her grave if she knew I’m still doing the “fake *marmaon*,” we love it, and it makes us long for Palestine! *Marmaon* is a dish we serve either as a quick dinner or, in the more elaborate version, when we are having a family gathering. It is always there!”

“Our family business is a meat processing company where the sausages are our ‘stars.’ So in my house, *marmaon* and sausages are a perfect match! They are extremely tasty, with pine nuts and parsley, and they are spicy! And since you can find delicious sausages in Bethlehem, we thought that combining *marmaon* with sausages will be the perfect marriage between the Palestinians in Palestine and the Palestinians in the diaspora. After all, Fadi performs his magic by masterfully transforming traditional Palestinian cuisine, adding touches of the modern world. What we are presenting to you is a sublime dish that pleases not only our palates but also the ones of our children.”

We sincerely wish that everyone will enjoy our *marmaon* recipe!

Ingredients

- 18 Palestinian lamb or beef sausages
- 100 g chickpeas
- 500 g fresh tomatoes
- 1 onion
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 150 g tomato concentrate
- ½ liter water
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground dried chili
- 1 small onion
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 500 g dry maftool/marmaon
- 1 liter of chicken stock
- 50 ml olive oil
- parsley (to garnish the dish)



Method

1. Prepare the tomato-chickpea sauce

- a. Cut the onion into small cubes
- b. Cook the onion in olive oil until translucent, then add the chopped tomatoes
- c. Reduce the heat and let simmer until the tomatoes wilt
- d. Dilute the tomato concentrate in the water, pour over the onion and tomatoes
- e. Add the chickpeas and simmer until the sauce thickens
- f. Rectify seasoning with salt and pepper

2. Cook the *marmaon*

- a. Chop the onion, place into a pot together with the olive oil
- b. Start cooking on low heat and add the spices
- c. Once the onions and spices are well mixed, add to the *marmaon*
- d. Stir well to coat the *marmaon* with the spices and oil
- e. Over a pot of steaming water, place the *marmaon* in a colander and cover tightly
- f. Leave to steam for 20 to 30 minutes
- g. Once the *marmaon* is cooked, place in a pot and slowly add the hot chicken stock until the *marmaon* stops absorbing it and fluffs.
- h. Toss the cooked *marmaon* in some more olive oil, rectify salt.

3. Cook the sausages and plate

- a. Palestinian lamb or beef sausages are fatty, so grill over a ribbed pan or over a very hot barbecue rack
- b. Once the sausages are cooked, plate a large spoon of the *marmaon*, add the tomato-chickpea sauce, lay the sausage on top, garnish with parsley