Family Chef: A taste of home

Dolma

by Saeeda, Ashti camp, Erbil, Iraq

Difficulty: Hard
Preparation time: 1 hour
Cooking time: 45 minutes

Ingredients:
1 minced bulb of garlic
½ kg onions
(hollow out the inside)
3 green peppers
(hollow out the inside)
¼ kg zucchine
(hollow out the inside)
¼ egg plant
(hollow out the inside)
¼ kg vine leaves
1 can tomato paste
2 cups rice
½ kg meat cubes
3 teaspoons of all spice
2 stock cubes
1 cup of Sumac juice (Sumac mixed with a cup of water)

Mix the allspice with rice, minced garlic, tomato paste, meat cubes and stock cubes in a bowl.

Stuff the hollowed out onions, zucchini, green peppers and eggplants with the stuffing mix.

Place each stuffed piece neatly side by side in a large pot.

Take a small bundle of the stuffing on each grape leaf, fold in the sides and roll up tightly to form finger-like rolls. Then layer each one on top of the stuffed vegetables in the pot.

Pour one cup of Sumac juice onto the stuffed vegetables then cover the pot.

Place the pot over high heat and bring to boil then leave to simmer on a low heat for 45 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Once cooked, take the cover off the pot and let it cool for 10 minutes.

Serve with a yogurt drink.

Meet the Chef

Welcome to The World Food Programme's (WFP) Family Chef series. Explore the culinary treasures and cooking abilities of refugees who benefit from WFP's cash-based transfers, an initiative that allows individuals to buy the food they need to cook their traditional dishes.

Saeeda Nouri, 45, is one of tens of thousands of Iraq's Christians who fled religious violence in Mosul, Iraq in June 2014. She now lives with her husband and youngest son in Ashti Camp for displaced Iraqi families in Erbil, in the Kurdish region of Northern Iraq.

WFP's Marwa Awad visits Saeeda to hear her story and learn about one of Iraq's most famous dishes.

When it became apparent that her neighbourhood would fall into the hands of militants, Saeeda and her family left everything behind to seek safety. .

Saeeda is surprisingly cheerful as she tells the story of the family's harrowing journey through the night to escape Mosul. Not knowing whether she would see her husband and son again as they were in separate cars, she spent the entire journey praying they would all make it. Her optimism for the future keeps her going, despite the fact she may have no home to return to.

Saeeda has turned the caravan into a replica of their home back in Mosul. Plastered on one of the walls is a large poster of the Virgin Mary, baby Jesus and a white dove flying nearby. Under one of the caravan's windows, stands a bookcase with the few books they managed to rescue from their home before it was destroyed.

In the back of the caravan is a kitchen, full of spices and kitchenware neatly organized to make space for a small oven, which the enterprising mother uses to bake bread. She recently bought a small silver fridge to remind her of home:

"I had a large silver fridge in my house. It was brand new and I barely had time to use it before we fled. I bought this small one …It reminds me of home," she said.

Always looking to help others, Saeeda, whose name means 'Happy' in Arabic, shares her little fridge with the neighbours, who use it to store leftover food. This recipe for Dolma is one of Saaeda's favourite recipes from home:

Story by Marwa Awad
wfp.org/familychef