

Acquiring the Taste of the Middle East

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Middle Eastern-inspired
flavours in foodservice

The popularization of Middle
Eastern flavours and dishes in
CPG

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The proliferation of Middle Eastern flavours in foodservice



Coming to South Kensington: Ceru's bright Middle Eastern flavours

JOHN GREGORY-SMITH

Monday 28 November 2016 13:48

HALF

(54%) of US Millennials have eaten Middle Eastern food in the last three months (2017)

A QUARTER

(24%) of US Millennials have prepared Middle Eastern food at home (2017)

In recent years, foodservice in the West has passionately embraced Middle Eastern cuisine. Following a wave of Middle Eastern restaurant openings in London, even chain-restaurant Leon has incorporated Middle Eastern inspired dishes into their menus. In the United States, chef Michael Solomonov's Israeli-style restaurant has received much attention since its inception in 2008, and its profile rose further after the chef was awarded a James Beard Foundation Award for Outstanding Chef 2017.

People are cooking Middle Eastern food at home

Western consumers are also cooking Middle Eastern food at home, as illustrated by the popularity of these cookbooks.

FOOD | COOKBOOKS

The Best Cookbooks of Fall 2016

By THE NEW YORK TIMES SEPT. 27, 2016

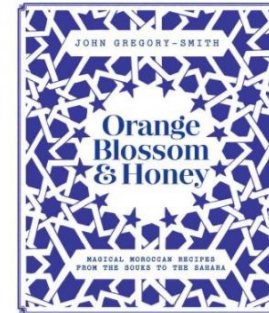


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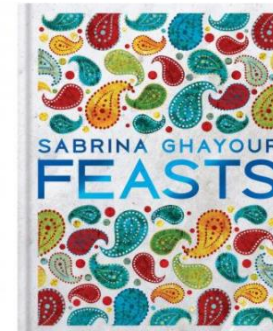
10 best new cookbooks 2017

From mouth-watering Middle Eastern dishes to student-friendly favourites, these are the recently published recipes you need for some kitchen inspiration

Orange Blossom & Honey: Magical Moroccan Recipes From The Souks To The Sahara by John Gregory-Smith: £19.99, Kyle Books



Feasts by Sabrina Ghayour: £20, Octopus



Food writer Sabrina Ghayour's latest book focuses on Middle Eastern dishes made for sharing at special occasions. The book is divided into breakfast and brunch, weekend feasts, quick-fix feasts, vegetarian feasts, lighter feasts, special occasions, comfort food and additional menu ideas. We love the huge selection of flavourful dishes such as chicken shawarmas, vine-baked sea bass and savoury pork and fennel baklava. There's a good variety of vegetarian recipes too, including spiced green bean & tomato stew and freekeh, tomato and chickpea pilaf. We love the adventurous flavour palettes of the desserts too, especially the cherry, dark chocolate and mint parfait, and fig and rose millefeuille.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/extras/indybest/food-drink/cookbooks/best-cookbooks-2017-new-for-students-beginners-vegetarian-vegan-healthy-baking-selling-a7365566.html>; https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/09/28/dining/best-cookbooks.html?ref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Fcookbooks&action=click&contentCollection=dining®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=collection

Rising interest of Middle Eastern flavours from ethical initiatives



There have been some notable ethical initiatives that helped raise awareness of Middle Eastern cuisine.

In light of Trump's controversial travel ban, one bookshop in San Francisco famously featured in its window display cookbooks from countries that would be affected by the legislation. The news went viral, with the image of their storefront discussed in major newspapers and recipe sites.

Cook For Syria is a fundraising initiative from Unicef that celebrates Syrian cuisine in aid of the humanitarian crisis in the country. Participating restaurants develop dishes with a Syrian twist, and part of the proceedings goes towards Unicef's Syria Relief Fund. The campaign also targets home cooks, encouraging them to explore Syrian cuisine, and it has even spread to the CPG sector, with Jude's in the UK launching their Honey & Toasted Almond flavour ice cream as part of its support for #CookforSyria



Middle Eastern foods spread across categories in CPG

**Vegetable Tagine with Raisins
(Vitabio), Portugal**



**Lebanese Mezze Assortment
(Thiriet Plaisirs d'Ailleurs Liban),
France**



Shakshuka Sauce (Mina), Canada



As are “Middle Eastern-inspired” food

Persian Inspired Pork Meatballs
(Waitrose Easy to Cook), UK



Middle Eastern Inspired Seeded Flatbread
(Tesco Finest), UK



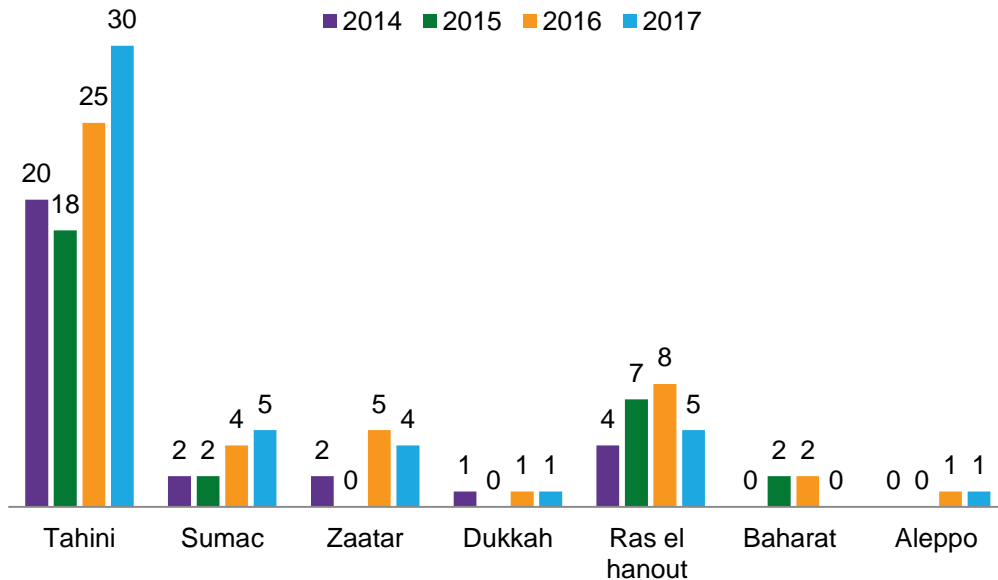
Berber Style Couscous
(Cousmos), Canada



Middle Eastern ingredients becoming part of the Western larder

The desire to whisk in some tahini into a dressing, or sprinkle some za'atar onto roast potatoes are no longer hindered by accessibility in the major cities in the West. Once seen as niche products in specialty shops, major retailers have picked up common Middle Eastern larder ingredients as demand grows. Their mainstreaming is also demonstrated by private label lines (notably in the UK) including the likes of sumac and ras el hanout into their portfolio.

NPD of selected Middle Eastern larder ingredients, Europe & North America



Asda, UK



President's Choice, Canada

Giving traditional spices a local twist

It is common for foodservice to give foreign dishes a local twist, but in CPG, traditional Middle Eastern products are for a large part kept authentic. The UK-based Dukkah Company makes a Coastal Dukkah featuring Cornish seaweed and Cornish sea salt. Entube utilizes Amazonian acerola berry to spice up its harissa.



Harissa Chili Pasta (Entube), Canada

The endless summers in Provence inspired me to reinvent the age old North African Staple Harissa. By introducing Amazonian Acerola Berry and other unique spices, the traditional recipe has been transformed from a Mediterranean ketchup to an exciting modern flavour bomb essential to the global kitchen.



Coastal Dukkah (The Dukkah Company), UK

Our Coastal Dukkah has fresh Cornish flavours to awaken your senses. It is seasoned with Cornish seaweed, Cornish Sea Salt, mint & cayenne for perfect fresh flavour with roasted hazelnuts and pistachios for good texture.

Turning them into Western concepts

Some brands also westernize the ingredients into more familiar concepts. The pomegranate ketchup from Aphrodite is a take on the traditional pomegranate molasses. The Market District product also takes the humble harissa and turns it into a salsa.



Pomegranate Ketchup (Aphrodite), UK



This Moroccan inspired dressing is described as a blend of a unique Harissa paste recipe of red peppers, fragrant rose petals and smoked paprika with a warming chilli kick and zesty notes of Beldi lemon for the perfect accompaniment to lamb or roasted vegetables

Harissa Dressing (Sainsbury's Taste the Difference), UK

Adding Middle Eastern touches to Western staples

Middle Eastern flavours are so ubiquitous in the West, that they are now being incorporated to Western staples in CPG. UK retailer Waitrose has introduced a harissa beef lasagne, and also a Persian spiced christmas pudding featuring pomegranate liqueur, pistachios and Middle Eastern spices. Western consumers are evidently comfortable and intrigued by these flavours, though it is worth noting that Waitrose is a premium retailer, targeting a specific demographic, so these products are really being premiumized by the Middle Eastern touches.



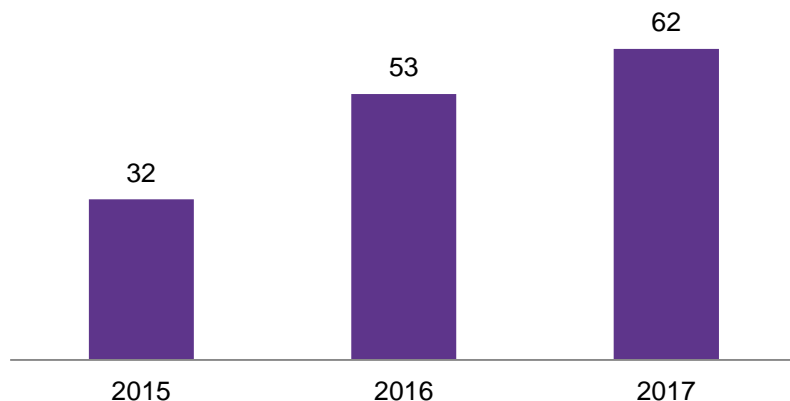
Harissa Beef Lasagne (Waitrose Mediterranean), UK



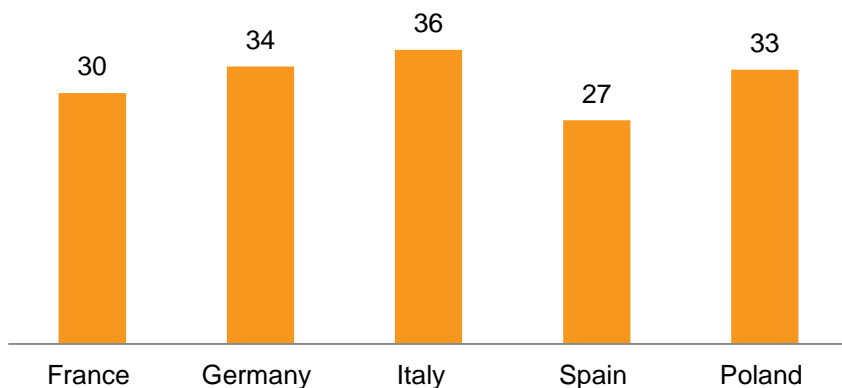
Persian Spiced Christmas Pudding (Heston from Waitrose), UK

Spotlight on harissa

Food NPD with "harissa" in product description, Europe & North America



% of consumers who prefer hot/spicy flavours in savory foods (2017)



There has been a boom of interest in hot sauces, stemming from foodservice. This combined with a growing interest in ethnic cuisine, has led to growing innovation in the CPG sector. Harissa's been under the limelight, prominently featured in not only the condiment sector, but across food.



Limited Magic of the Orient with Harissa Spread (Brunch), Austria

Giving ordinary Western foods a kick with harissa



Harissa Cashew Butter (Eliot's Adult Nut Butter), US



Harissa Olive Oil (Sonoma Harvest), US

Roasted peppers, garlic, spices and extra virgin olive oil create the perfect balance of spicy, sweet and savory. Kick up the flavour in soups, meat, eggs, pasta or any other favorite dish!



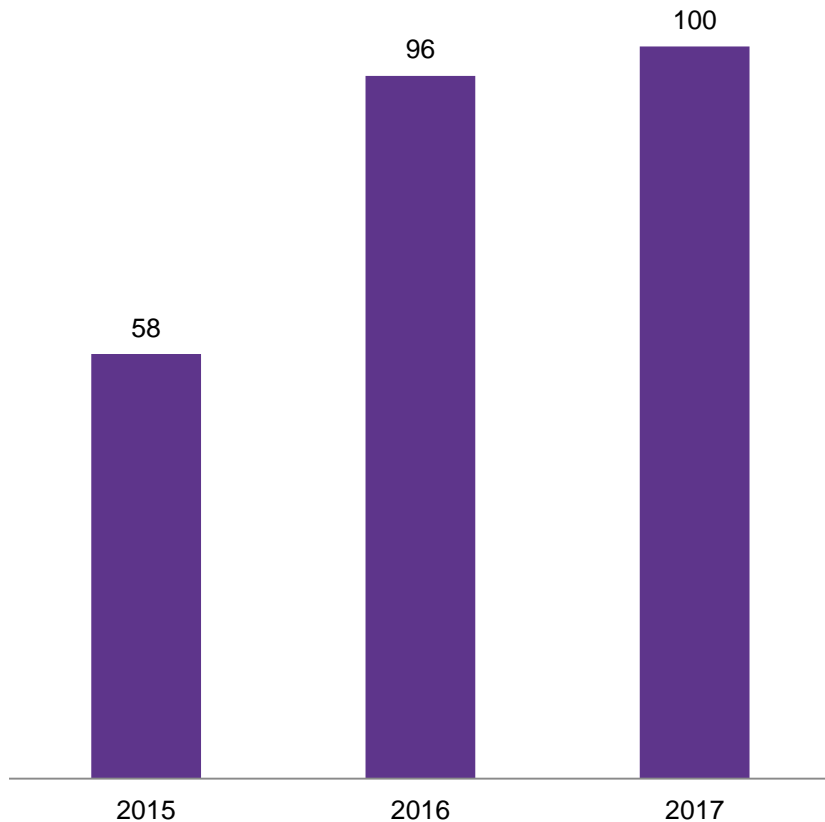
Harissa Hummus Flavour Rippled Potato Chips (Presiden't Choice World of Flavours), Canada



Spiced Cashews & Roasted Nut Selection (M&S), UK
Features **harissa spiced caramelised cashews**

Spotlight on tahini

Food NPD with "tahini" or "sesame paste" in product description, Europe & North America



Fine Sesame Tahini (Mighty Sesame Co.), US

Tahini's especially popular in dressings

**Fresh Cauliflower in Tahini Sauce
Salad (Kibberia Real
Mediterranean), US**



**Roasted Cauliflower & Aubergine
(Urban Deli), Sweden
Contains a tahini dressing**



**Tahini Zoodles (Natsu True
Freshness Lunch Box), Germany
With a creamy, spicy tahini sauce**



Tahini's compatibility with chocolate

Chocolate Halva Spread
(Brooklyn Sesame), US



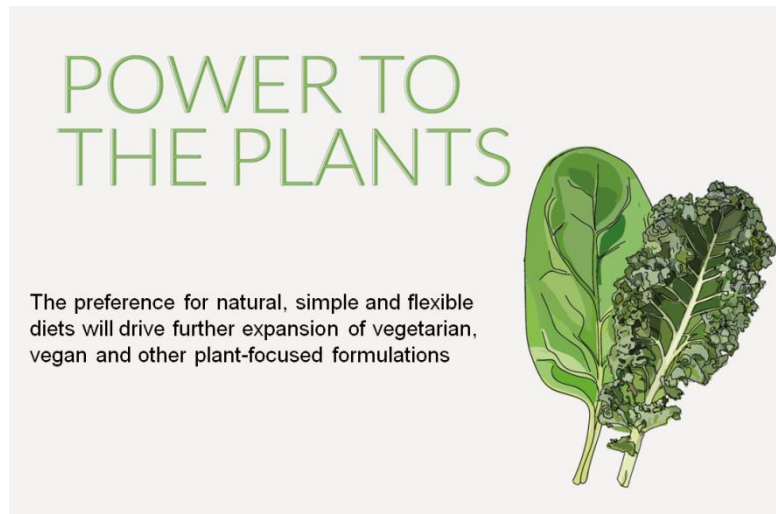
Chocolate Sesame Spread (Soom Foods), UK



Tahini Dark Milk Chocolate
(Mulaté), UK



Middle Eastern food flourishes under “Power to the Plants”



The Western affinity with Middle Eastern food is also tied in with its bountiful vegetarian and vegan options. Mintel’s wider trend Power to the Plants outlines the consumer tendency towards adopting more plant-based diets, which are catered by many traditional Middle Eastern dishes.

Falafels, namely, has become a favorite amongst vegetarians/vegan. European retailers such as Waitrose, Lidl, and Albert Heijn all sell vegetarian sandwiches and salads that feature falafels as the main ingredient.

- 13% Of German 25 – 34 year olds claim to be vegan (2017 Q4)
- 31% Of Spanish consumers are incorporating more vegetarian foods into their diets (2017 Q4)
- 55% Of Italian consumers regularly have meat-free days (2017)



Roasted Falafel & Spinach Wrap (M&S Spirit of Summer), UK

Getting creative with falafel formulations

With falafels becoming increasingly common in Western supermarket shelves, brands are standing out with interesting flavour innovations. These include using different base ingredients, such as pumpkin and beetroot, to replace some of the broad bean/chickpeas. Some products are even including fillings.

Smashin' Pumpkin Falafel (Tesco Wicked Kitchen), UK



Falafels with Beetroot (Hälsans Kök), Sweden



Falafel with a Tomato Centre (Ma Vie Sans Gluten), Belgium



121 Number of side dish NPD with falafels in Europe & North America between 2015 & 2017

Middle Eastern style salads are proving to be popular in CPG

168 Number of salad and side dish launches mentioning tabbouleh in Europe & North American between 2015 & 2017

The rising popularity of tabbouleh and other “Middle Eastern” style salads can also be attributed to this plant-based trend. Tabbouleh also carries the additional bonus point from the use of bulgur, which appeals to consumers as it is an ancient grain.



**Vegetables Rich Taboule
(Bonduelle), France**



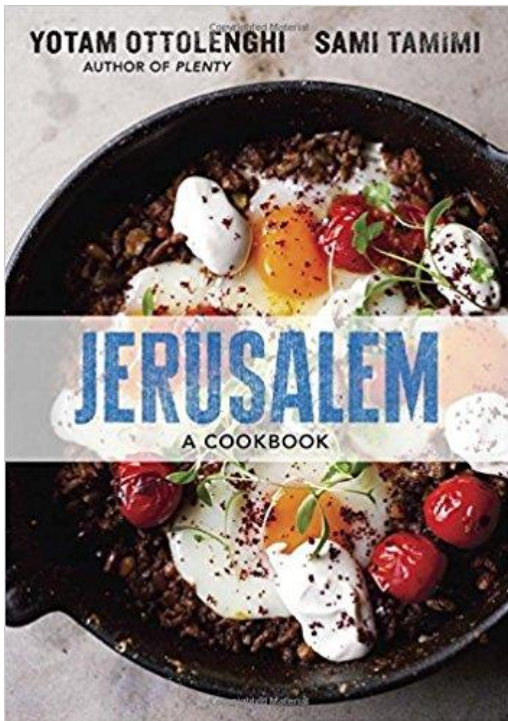
**Moroccan Spiced Butternut Salad
with Roasted Carrot Dip (M&S),
Czech Republic**



**Lebbanese Tabbouleh (PG &
Hans Vänner), Sweden**

The Ottolenghi effect

Yotam Ottolenghi, a British-Israeli celebrity chef, is coined as “the man who made vegetable sexy”. He has brought Middle Eastern flavours to the mainstream via his recipe column in the British national newspaper The Guardian, his best-selling cookbooks, TV programs, and restaurant empire in the UK. The global soar of Middle Eastern food is often attributed to the “Ottolenghi effect”. Ottolenghi’s food often put vegetables at the forefront, and has inspired brands to develop Middle Eastern style salads and vegetable dishes.



The Western love affair with hummus

The 2017 “hummus crisis” in the UK highlights the popularity of the dish. Hummus has a relatively long history in the UK, with it being first featured in a major retailer (Waitrose) in the 1980’s. In spring of 2017, the hummus shelves of retailer Sainsbury’s were empty, causing outrage on social media. Hummus made up over 40% of dip launches in the West in the last two years, and is also seen in snack and ready meal products.



Smoked Houmous (Tesco), UK

9

Number of hummus variants launched by private label Tesco in the UK since 2016

37%

Of hummus launches in North America & Europe in 2017 were from private labels

44%

Of US consumers purchased hummus in the six months to November 2016 (rising to 57% for Millennials)



Houmous with Green Pesto (Lidl), Italy

Elevating hummus with flavour innovations

Just as seen previously with falafels, the proliferation of hummus is forcing brands to think more creatively to stand out in the market. Flavour innovations in this category range from seaweed to candied mandarin, and some have even ventured out into the sweet space with flavours such as chocolate and caramel.



Delighted by Hummus, US



**Pumpkin n' Spice Hummus
(Western Family), Canada**



**Seaweed Houmous (Me Too!
from Ramona's Kitchen), UK**

Beyond the chickpea...

Lentils Houmous (La Compagnie des Bocaux), France



Edamame Hummus (Lantana), US



Hemp Hummus (Themptation), UK



Giving hummus an extra health twist



GuacaLoco Hummus with Guacamole and Spirulina
(Love Hummus), Italy

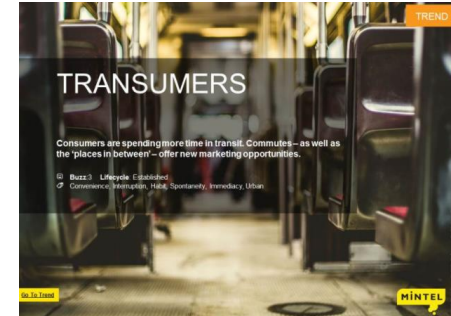


Cashew Hummus & Classic Crackers Snack Pack (Jùs
by Julie), US

Said to be **sprouted** and naturally **fermented with live probiotic cultures** for a better taste and nutrition.

Hummus as an ideal snack

Aside from its vegan appeal, hummus also appeals to the snacking cohort. Instead of three proper meals a day, Western consumers are increasingly opting for several snacks throughout the day, and hummus is well positioned as a healthy dip to be paired with their chips and carrot sticks.



Traditional Organic Hummus Snack Cups (O Organics), US



Organic Hummus Chips with Rosemary (Trafo), Germany



Hummus Sandwich (Wasa), Poland



Traditional hummus & Pretzels (7-Eleven), US



121 Number of snack NPD with a mention of hummus in Europe & North America between 2016 & 2017

Conclusion

Power to the plants

Many Middle Eastern staples like falafels and hummus bode well with consumers who seek to adopt more plant-based diets. Following this, other Middle Eastern dishes that are vegetable-heavy could also prove to be popular.

Updating with Western touches

With the ingredients and dishes that have become ubiquitous on Western supermarket shelves, brands are giving them Western touches.

Fitting into Western lifestyles

Some brands have taken the dishes and snack-ified them to fit the current transumer trend. Some have given Middle Eastern staples a healthy updates, turning them into trendy superfoods.

