



LEBANESE FOOD

Perspective for Foodservice

Daymon

Introduction to the Lebanese Cuisine



The Lebanese Cuisine is a Mediterranean cuisine referring to the gastronomy of Lebanon, a region immersed in Levantine flavours and techniques.



Lebanese food is very focused on the **mezze concept**, an eating style of sharing foods among people, similar to Spanish tapas. Indeed, it is usually referred to as the Middle East tapas.



LEBANESE CUISINE HISTORY

Lebanon is situated at the crossroads of the East and the West, with a rich and diverse culinary and cultural heritage. Its cuisine has evolved, with visible influences from the various foreign civilisations that have passed through the region, such as the Ottoman Empire or, more recently, France. The Ottoman Empire introduced a variety of foods that have become staples in Lebanese cuisine, including baklava, lamb dishes, Turkish coffee, pickled and stuffed vegetables, and labneh (a type of yoghurt). Meanwhile, the French introduced treats such as cheese and various pastries.

Introduction to the Lebanese Cuisine

A TRENDY CUISINE

The Lebanese diaspora is estimated to be larger than the resident population in Lebanon. The spread of the Lebanese population worldwide also expanded Lebanese cuisine, making it one of the global trends.

With **Lebanese people moving to various countries worldwide over the years**, their food has spread to new regions, making it a well-known cuisine.

As **consumers seek new experiences linked to their desire to travel**, they are more willing to try world foods, which has also leveraged Lebanese cuisine.

73%

Growth in transactions of Turkish, Levantine and Persian restaurants in 2023 compared to 2020 (Global Data)

This is also impacting other cuisines such as Turkish, Persian, and Syrian.

92%

of the consumers in the UK have eaten world cuisines in the last 3 months (Mintel)

According to Mintel, one of the **flavour trends in 2024 is the tastes of the world**, as global flavours continue to add adventure to everyday eating routines. This shows that travelling through taste will be key.

KEY INGREDIENTS



Lebanese dishes usually use simple ingredients cooked using simple methods such as grilling, frying, baking, or vertical roasting. Lebanese cuisine's core ingredients include, among others, various condiments and seasonings, such as parsley, olive oil, grains, such as chickpeas or lentils, fruits and vegetables, such as lemon, eggplant, meat and seafood, with poultry, and lamb among the most popular.

Traditional Lebanese Ingredients

CONDIMENTS & SEASONINGS



Sumac is a spice with a sour, acidic flavour like lemon juice. It is used to flavour dry rubs, spice blends such as za'atar, and salad dressings. Sumac is also used as a garnish to add a splash of bright colour or a hint of acidity to a dish before serving.



Za'tar is a spice blend made from ground za'atar, sesame seeds, dried sumac, and salt. Sometimes, when it's hard to find ground za'atar, recipes replace it with comparable herbs, such as thyme or oregano. It is used to season meats, roasted vegetables, dips, garnish bread, and soft cheeses like labneh.



Pomegranate molasses is a thick pomegranate juice preparation. It is a sweet and sour condiment that may be used in various meals and marinades to bring brightness and acidity. It can be blended into whole-grain stews, drizzled over kebabs and roasted vegetables like eggplant.



Rose water is water that has been infused with the distilled aroma of rose petals. Modern rose water is created via steam distillation, which involves steeping rose petals in water to extract their essential oils. It is used in the Lebanese cuisine to season meat dishes.



Orange blossom water is like rose water but uses fragrant, orange solid blooms. This flavour is associated with Lebanese pastries, including baklava. It is also a key element in Lebanese café blanc, which consists of hot water with orange blossom water and a sprinkle of honey.



Parsley is a bitter herb used in many Mediterranean cuisines. It is also typical in Lebanese cuisine, especially when preparing and seasoning the tabbouleh.

Traditional Lebanese Ingredients

SAUCES & PASTES



Tahini paste is made of ground sesame seeds. It can be combined with other ingredients, such as garlic and olive oil, to create a savoury, silky tahini sauce, or it can be used to balance flavour and give nutrients to sweet foods. Tahini is rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals.



Sauces are essential in Lebanese cuisine, pairing dishes like kafta, shawarma, and falafel. The most popular are toum (a garlic sauce) and tarator (a garlicky cucumber yoghurt). They are typically served as a dip with various breads, drizzled with olive oil and topped with za'atar or mint, or in sandwiches.



Labneh is a bitter Middle Eastern dairy spread made by straining yoghurt until it reaches a creamy, cheese-like consistency. It is often garnished with olive oil and herbs and served as part of a mezze.

LEGUMES AND GRAINS



Bulgur is a whole grain made from cracked wheat. It's packed with vitamins, minerals, and fibre. In Lebanese cuisine, it can be found in meat dishes like kibbeh and salads like tabbouleh.



Chickpeas are a staple in Lebanese cuisine, being used to prepare well-known dishes such as falafel and hummus. Chickpeas are high in fiber, protein, and healthy fats and have a low glycemic index.



Mujadara, a well-known Lebanese dish is made of lentils. Lentils are low in sodium and saturated fat and high in potassium, fibre, folate, and antioxidants. It is one of the key ingredients of Lebanese culture.

Traditional Lebanese Dishes

APPETIZERS & MAIN DISHES

Due to the mezze concept, the different dishes might be considered appetisers or main dishes.



BABA GANOUSH

Dip made from roasted or grilled eggplant



FALAFEL

Deep-fried balls usually made from chickpeas



FATTOUSH

Salad with fried pieces of pita bread



HUMMUS

Dip made from cooked, mashed chickpeas



KAFTA

Meatball seasoned skewered on a stick



KIBBEH

Meat croquettes seasoned with herbs and spices



MANAKEESH

Flatbread with Zaatar as topping



MUJADARA

Lentils and rice with caramelized onion



PITA

Flatbread



SHAWARMA

Meat Wrap



TABBOULEH

Parsley salad with tomatoes and bulgur wheat



WARAK

Stuffed grape leaves with meat and rice

Traditional Lebanese Dishes

DESSERTS



ASHTA

Clotted Cream



BAKLAVA

Pastry made with phyllo dough, nuts and syrup.



KNAFEH

Pastry (kataifi) soaked in syrup attar with cheese



MA'AMOUL

Buttery date filled cookies



MAFROUKEH

A layer of semolina topped with ashta cream and nuts



MAHALABIA

Rose water and orange blossom milk pudding



NAMMOURA

Semolina coconut cake drizzled with a sugar syrup



SFOUF

Tumeric Cake



ZNOUD EL SIT

Fillo dough filled with a thickened cream (ashta)

DRINKS



ALMAZA BEER

Beer



ARAK

Distilled alcoholic drink favored in the Middle East



AYRAN

Yogurt with chilled water and seasoned with mint

Why is it relevant?

Lebanese food is famous throughout Europe, not just because of globalisation but also because it is tied to consumer trends. Consumers today are more conscious about their health, seeking tastier solutions without sacrificing their health and wellness, even when dining out. Furthermore, consumers value quality time together and new experiences that enable them to connect with different cultures.

LEBANESE CUISINE TREND ASSETS

HEALTH

Lebanese food is known for being healthy because it is based on fruit and vegetables, nuts, seeds, whole grains, and olive oil.

TOGETHERNESS

Lebanese cuisine is based on the mezze concept, which involves sharing food with others and bringing a sense of togetherness.

EXPERIENCE

Besides the sensorial experience, due to the colours and scents, it also provides a travel-through food experience.



As a trendy cuisine, **Lebanese cuisine influences people's perception of other Levantine cuisines** like Syrian or similar cuisines such as Turkish and Greek. Indeed, there are several dishes that are similar and common among cuisines, such as the Baklava.

Why is it relevant?

LEBANESE CUISINE HEALTH ASSETS

Lebanese cuisine is part of the Mediterranean diet, and is usually well-known for its health credentials. It is rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, seafood, white meats, and healthier fats like olive oil.

01

Rich in Vitamins

For example, parsley has vitamin K, mint is vitamin C-rich, and lentils and garlic are abundant in vitamin B.

02

Rich in Minerals

Tahini is rich in calcium and manganese. Lemon is high in potassium. Garlic is high in manganese, selenium, phosphorous, calcium, potassium, iron and copper.

03

Rich in Antioxidants

Lebanese cuisine is also rich abundant in spices and condiments, with most of them being rich in antioxidants, such as parsley, thyme, cumin, and saffron.

04

Rich in Fibre

Lentils and chickpeas are high in fibre, improving gut health and reducing blood sugar levels and cholesterol.

05

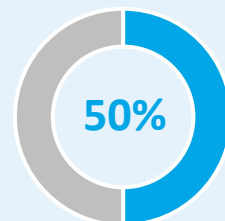
Healthy Fats

It relies on olive oil, which can lower cholesterol, control blood sugar and boost heart health. It is also rich in Omega 6 fatty acids, which improve brain health.

KEY CUISINE FOR DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

Many Lebanese dishes are naturally vegetarian, with legumes and grains such as bulgur wheat, chickpeas, and lentils being an essential source of protein in Lebanese cuisine.

Many Lebanese foods are also gluten-free, as many dishes revolve around greens and rice, so there are plenty of tasty gluten-free options.



Around 50% of mezze
(Small Lebanese dishes)
are vegetarian or vegan.

Lebanese Cuisine in Foodservice Operators

LEBANESE RESTAURANTS ARE RISING IN EUROPE, BECOMING MORE POPULAR

- Lebanese cuisine is becoming more popular in Europe, with most countries experiencing growth in Lebanese restaurants.



- Spain, Italy, and the United Kingdom** are the regions with the most Lebanese restaurants, representing 62% of Western Europe. (Global Data, 2023)
- Lebanese restaurants are growing in all the Western European countries**, with a stronger growth in the Austrian market (+15% vs 2020). (Global Data, 2023)

Compared to 2020, the number of Turkish, Levantine, and Persian restaurants in Western Europe increased by 8% in 2023. (Global Data)

Top Menu Items in Lebanese Restaurants in Europe (Global Data)

0.62%



Falafel



0.33%



Tabbouleh



0.32%



Hummus



0.23%



Labneh



Lebanese Products in Foodservice Wholesalers

Product Examples in selected categories

CONDIMENTS & SEASONINGS



Parsley



Sumac



Zaatar



SAUCES & PASTES



Hummus



Labneh



Tahini Paste



LEGUMES & GRAINS



Bulgur



Chickpeas



Lentils



Lebanese Key Ingredients in Foodservice

Product Examples

OTHER PRODUCTS



Bread (Lebanese)



Falafel Mix



Rose Water



PREPARED FOOD



Falafel



Lebanese Chickpeas Salad



Shawarma Rolls



DRINKS



Lebanese Wine



News about Lebanese Cuisine

Lebanese chef Alan Geaam: From below zero to hot property in France's culinary scene



Alan Geaam grew up in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, but in 1999 he decided to move to France, as he always admired French Food and ambioned to learn about cooking in Paris. It was not an easy move, in his twenties, he traveled by himself, he didn't speak French, he didn't know anyone, and his visa was valid for just seven days. "I had 200 Francs — that's 30 Euros — in my

pocket," Geaam recalls. He started working in cleaning, and at night, he worked in a Lebanese snack bar, helping and learning with the chef. "I was a young Lebanese man with no money and no education," he says. "I started from zero — even below zero." In 2017, Geaam opened Restaurant Alan Geaam, a fine-dining concept fusing Lebanese cuisine and a sophisticated

French style. The following year, something happened. "I got a phone call at 6:30, and they told me, 'Welcome to the Michelin family. You got a star this year,'" he said. Besides being an honoured Michelin star, Geaam has received several mentions from the French press, such as Le Figaro and Libération.

Summary

Lebanese cuisine is rooted in history and tradition. Historically, it was impacted by the different civilisations that passed in Lebanon, being heavily influenced by the Ottoman Empire and French cuisine. Currently, it is a trendy cuisine in Europe, impacted by the immigration wave and by people's increasing desire to travel. Indeed, travel through food has been one of the significant trends in Foodservice, with world foods rising.

Key Highlights

- ✓ Lebanese dishes usually use simple, high-quality ingredients cooked in simple methods such as grilling, frying, or baking.
- ✓ Lebanese cuisine's core ingredients include various condiments and seasonings, olive oil, grains, fruits and vegetables, poultry, lamb, and seafood.
- ✓ Healthy credentials, the feeling of togetherness, and a sensorial experience are the three critical pillars of relevance to Lebanese cuisine among European consumers.
- ✓ Lebanese cuisine, as part of Mediterranean cuisine, is known for its health properties. It is rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fibre and prioritises healthy fats like olive oil.
- ✓ Lebanese cuisine is well-suited for different dietary requirements, with many dishes being naturally vegan and gluten-free.

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For more information, please contact us
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