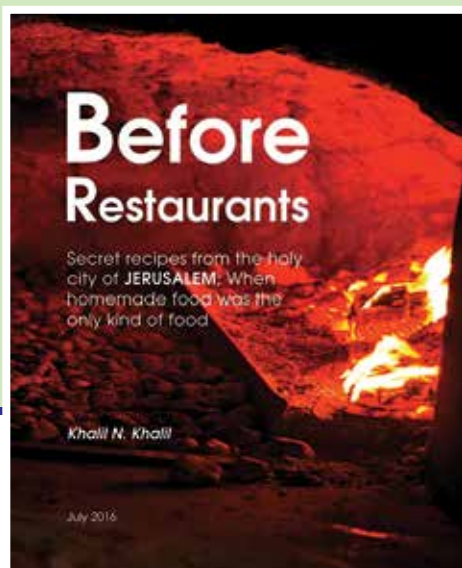


## Before Restaurants

Secret Recipes from the Holy City of Jerusalem

By Khalil N. Khalil

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Searching for a snack on a late October afternoon, just around the end of olive-picking season, I found an old, thick, heavily used wooden bowl filled with crushed green olives on the rustic table in my grandmother's kitchen. They were mingled with lemon chunks and little cuts of fennel stalks that were barely visible in the heavily salted mixture. Age marks were deliciously visible on both lemons and olives. When I tasted some of the olives, the combination of authenticity, simple ingredients, and love overwhelmed me; it was beyond all my expectations! Never would I have thought that something so simple could make me consider changing all my eating habits. When *teta* (my grandmother) said, "We prepared olives this way when I was young," she sent me off on a culinary journey: I started to collect recipes not only from *teta* but from all the elderly people I could find. I knew there was hidden knowledge buried with the old generation that I didn't want to lose.

So I began to hang around small traditional shops in the old city, waiting for elderly people to pass by. I would ask them for the oldest recipes they could think of, soliciting the secret preparation tricks they had learned from previous generations. At six in the morning I would visit bakeries to learn authentic bread-making methods. After a while, I had collected a large number of traditional and rare recipes that I felt demanded respect – and thus, the idea of a cookbook was born.



*Made with lentils, rice, and caramelized onions, this alternative, centuries-old Middle Eastern take on a nourishing vegetarian dish will delight and satisfy you – and the thought of meat will not even cross your mind.*



*This particular aromatic condiment can be added to any recipe that goes well with garlic and enriches the flavor of the entire dish.*

In this recipe collection you will find rare tips and tricks for the preparation of bread, appetizers, and main meals, as well as stunning old-fashioned desserts, all dishes with signature flavors and spices. Because cooking is an art, none of the elderly people who shared their recipes welcomed the concept of measurements and specific quantities; instead, they recommended: "Use your hand; it will tell you how much is enough." This mentality creates a natural connection with food and is an accurate indicator of a good cook. For beginners, though, I have specified quantities. Adding your own twist to these centuries-old recipes will not only make your cooking experience more pleasurable, it will fashion your own personal connection to the (re)creations of an ancient civilization.

Presented for everyone to enjoy, all recipes come from the region surrounding Jerusalem. The dishes featured were photographed around my grandfather's house to give readers an authentic impression of the origin of these recipes. This cookbook offers not only wonderful, original family recipes that document the cooking methods and techniques of the Holy Land, it also contains heartwarming stories and information on ancient lifestyles that will lead you to a deeper understanding of Palestinian culinary culture and enable you to sail back in time with a breathtaking selection of old photographs of the region and its people.