

Cook the Book: 'The New Persian Kitchen'

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"What exactly is Persian food?" **Louisa Shafia** asks on the first page of her new cookbook, *The New Persian Kitchen*. She delves into a beautiful description of a colorful desert garden full of brilliant fruits, blooming flowers, and enchanting spices, but the question was already answered by the book cover and pages within: an abundance of kebabs, cheese, saffron rice, and rose petals. The striking combination of flavors—from tangy limes and sumac, sweetly floral roses and saffron, super sweet dates and earthy handfuls of turmeric—lends Persian cuisine a novelty not often found in our hyper-connected world.

Jumping into Shafia's book isn't challenging in the slightest. There are a few ingredients for which to hunt, but the cooking techniques and clear directions in most of the recipes will, ultimately, be familiar. The most demanding recipe, and one of the most iconic in the Persian repertoire, is for *tahdig*, the name for both the crisp and crackling layer of rice on the bottom of the pot and the technique for cooking it, is given a six-page treatment.

Shafia's approach to cooking across all cuisines is one of health and balance, so many of the recipes in *[The New Persian Kitchen](#)* make use of whole grains, gluten-free flours, and vegetarian substitutes like tofu and tempeh. As such, she presents a mix of tradition and innovation on each page. Some recipes, like her lamb kebabs and pomegranate walnut stew represent traditional approaches to Persian cuisine; while others, such as the sweet and smoky beet burgers, incorporate time-honored flavors into cleaner, simpler recipes. Shafia's food tastes fresh and new, and cooking through her book is the perfect way to welcome the sunny days of spring.

This week, we'll eat our way through a variety of Persian dishes. We'll start with a **Garlicky Eggplant and Tomato Spread** and **Roasted Stuffed Artichokes with Mint Oil**. Then we'll move on to **Jeweled Brown Basmati Rice** and **Quinoa** before making **Turmeric Chicken** and an **Herb and Kidney Bean Stew**.

Win 'The New Persian Kitchen'

Thanks to our friends at Ten Speed Press, we have five (5) copies of *[The New Persian Kitchen](#)* to give away this week. All you need to do to win is tell us about your favorite use of Middle Eastern ingredients in the comments section below.