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Land of diversity 中東繽紛食事

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With the Middle East embracing an assortment of states, peoples and traditions, its vibrant and varied cuisine – perfected over millennia and drawing from European, Asian and African traditions and ingredients – encompasses everything from spiced meats, to healthy salads, creative seafood dishes, delicious breads and perfumed desserts. 中東地區覆蓋眾多國家，由各種各樣的族群和傳統結合而成，形成豐富多姿而千變萬化的美食佳餚。中東菜吸收了歐亞非三洲的飲食傳統和食材，經過千年來的演變和改良，發展出獨具一格的惹味香肉、健康沙律、創意海鮮、滋味麵包和芳香甜品等。 **By Kee Foong**

Land of 中東 繽紛 食事 diversity



Opposite: Katmer and Tirit at Istanbul's Neolokal restaurant

This page: Night cafes in the narrow streets of Istanbul

對頁：伊斯坦堡餐廳 Neolokal的Katmer and Tirit菜式

本頁：伊斯坦堡晚上的咖啡店一景



Spices and niceties

Saffron and cardamom, aubergine and pistachio, rose water and pomegranate molasses ... all are ingredients redolent of fragrant spice bazaars in exotic lands, and recall the ancient Silk Road and *Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*. They are also staples of Middle Eastern cuisine, which is steeped in history and legend.

The Middle East is a jigsaw of nations and states at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa, and includes Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. It's a region of different peoples and cultures, and extremes in terrain, from harsh deserts and snow-capped mountains to islands in deep blue sea. Olive and lemon groves thrive in the Mediterranean climates of Turkey and the Levant states of Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon, and while not much grows in the Gulf states, they have access to plentiful seafood. Iran, although mostly arid, has a bounty of cereals, nuts and legumes, and was once the world's leading producer of premium caviar.

Accordingly, Middle Eastern cuisine reflects its manifold identities. Greg Malouf, Australian-Lebanese executive chef at Zahira restaurant in Dubai, says, "It's an extremely diverse cuisine that allows us to capture the food romance over many countries: Lebanon and its refreshing, citrusy, healthy style; Iran and its legendary pilafs and soups; Turkey and its spiced meats and variety of vegetables and salads; and Morocco with its depth of flavour and heat."

With most of its population being Muslim, pork is absent from menus in the Middle East. Lamb, mutton, beef and chicken are popular, and used for more than just grilled kebabs and shawarma (sliced, spit-roasted meats). Wheat, rice, barley and couscous, as well as beans and pulses, are integral, as are fruits and vegetables such as lemons, olives, tomatoes, aubergine and cucumber.

"One characteristic that unifies this whole region is using food to express feelings through warm, kind and generous hospitality," says Iranian-born Najmieh Batmanglij, a US-based authority on Persian food and a cookbook author. Globally, however, Middle Eastern food is largely under-appreciated, perhaps because many regard it as cheap street fare, or rustic home cooking. There are no Michelin Guides to the Middle Eastern countries, and no restaurants in the region on the World's 50 Best Restaurants list. Only one, Mikla Restaurant, in Istanbul, makes the top 100.



中東色香味

藏紅花和豆蔻、茄子和開心果、玫瑰水和石榴糖漿等，均教人聯想起中東國家氣味襲人的香料市場，或是遠古的絲綢之路和阿拉伯《一千零一夜》的故事。這些也是中東菜系的基本食材，植根於中東深厚悠久的歷史和傳統之中。

中東位處歐亞非三洲的交匯處，區內國家包括巴林、塞浦路斯、埃及、伊朗、伊拉克、以色列、約旦、科威特、黎巴嫩、阿曼、巴勒斯坦、卡塔爾、沙地阿拉伯、敘利亞、土耳其、阿拉伯聯合酋長國（阿聯酋）和也門，包含了眾多的種族和文化。

中東地形變化極端，既有乾旱的沙漠及積雪的高山，亦不乏矗立於湛藍大海上的明媚小島。屬地中海氣候的土耳其和黎凡特諸國（敘利亞、約旦、巴勒斯坦和黎巴嫩），盛產橄欖和檸檬；波斯灣國家農作物貧乏，但海產豐盛。伊朗多數土地乾旱不毛，卻出產大量穀物、堅果和豆類，更曾經是全球上等魚子醬的主要產地。

中東菜也同樣豐富多樣。祖籍黎巴嫩的澳洲大廚Greg Malouf是杜拜Zahira餐廳的行政總廚，他表示：「中東菜極為多元化，黎巴嫩帶有柑橘香的清新健康風味，



伊朗馳名的香料飯和湯，土耳其的香肉和蔬菜沙律，以及摩洛哥層次豐富的香味和辛辣等，讓我們可以盡情融合各國的美食特色，取長補短。」

中東地區大多為回教國家，嚴禁吃豬肉，肉類因此以羊、牛、雞為主，但烹調方法千變萬化，絕不限於kebab和shawarma一類的巨型烤肉串。小麥、米、大麥和北非小米，還有各種豆類都是中東人的主食。常見的蔬果則有檸檬、橄欖、番茄、茄子和青瓜等。

生於伊朗、現居美國的波斯美食權威及烹飪書作者Najmieh Batmanglij指出：「聯繫整個中東地區的其中一大特徵是，中東人喜歡透過食物，以溫暖、親切和慷慨的款客之道表達自己的情感。」

可是，中東菜在國際上並未獲得應有的重視，原因或許是不少人視之為廉價街頭美食，或簡樸的家庭料理。《米芝蓮指南》至今仍沒有涵蓋中東國家，區內食肆在全球50最佳餐廳也榜上無名。唯一上榜的伊斯坦堡餐廳Mikla也只能夠打入百大之列。

The bounty of Iran



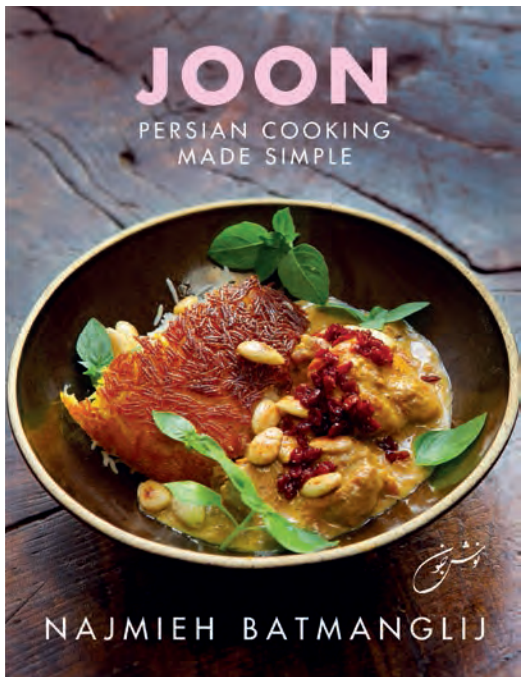
"Persian food has one of the oldest schools of cooking and has been the most influential in the region," claims Batmanglij. When speaking of her homeland, she says, she refers to "Persia for the culture and Iran for the country".

Throughout history, Iran was both conqueror and conquered, spreading its cuisine but also absorbing others. "Iran was a country in the centre of the Silk Road, looking both east and west, to China and Italy," says Batmanglij. "Persian cooking both influenced and was influenced by the countries along the Silk Road."

Although ingredients such as rice, bulgur wheat, sesame and many spices are commonly found throughout the Middle East, Batmanglij says Persian food differs in "how much attention is given to the delicacy of the dishes, both in its taste and spicing, as well as in the aroma and appearance of the dishes".

Iran is the world's biggest producer of saffron and pistachios, and a leading grower of raisins, so fruits and nuts are frequently used in Persian cooking, including in Khoresht Fesenjan, a classic duck dish made with pomegranate juice and molasses, and ground walnuts. The star ingredient in jewelled rice, a celebrated Persian dish, is the tart red barberry.

The best-known proponents of Persian cuisine tend to be people who were born in Iran, but whose families emigrated to the United States or Britain. They are often women who learned to cook at home, including Batmanglij, Ariana Bundy and Sabrina Ghayour. All are authors of bestselling cookbooks.



伊朗：慷慨大地

Batmanglij聲稱：「波斯菜系擁有歷史最悠久的烹飪傳統，也是區內最具影響力的菜系。」說到她的家鄉，她表示「波斯代表一種文化，伊朗則是國家。」

回顧歷史，伊朗既曾征戰四方，亦曾被外國入侵；既曾將自己的美食帶到他國，亦曾汲取他國的烹飪精髓。Batmanglij說：「伊朗位於絲綢之路中央，東望中國，西眺意大利。波斯菜因此影響了絲綢之路一帶的國家，也同樣受到這些國家所影響。」

Batmanglij指，中東各地菜系均離不開米飯、碎小麥、芝麻和各種香料，波斯菜在當中的分別在於「菜式的細緻程度，不管是味道和香料運用，還是香氣和色相等各方面，均以精緻見稱。」

伊朗是全球最大的藏紅花和開心果產地，也是葡萄乾的主要生產國，因此波斯菜中不時以水果和堅果入饌，以石榴汁、糖漿和核桃碎炮製的經典鴨肉菜式Khoresht Fesenjan和必然用上紅伏牛花子的波斯名菜「寶石飯」，均是好例子。

波斯菜倡導者中最出名的，似乎都是在伊朗出生但隨家人移居到美國或英國的女性，如Batmanglij、Ariana Bundy和Sabrina Ghayour。她們將在家裡學得的廚藝發揚光大，撰寫成暢銷的烹飪書。

Opposite, from top to bottom: Making rose water in Oman; the spice bazaars of the Middle East; slicing shawarma in Iran

This page, from top to bottom: Najmieh Batmanglij with her Saffron-flavoured Steamed Rice with Golden Crust; her cookbook Joon

對頁上圖起：阿曼人在製造玫瑰水；中東的香料市集；在伊朗的烤肉店
本頁上圖起：Najmieh Batmanglij與其表面金黃香脆的藏紅花蒸飯；她的烹飪書《Joon》

Lebanon: land of plenty



Chef Malouf says he has ambitions to “lift Lebanese food out of its ordinary comfort zone and put it on a pedestal”, adding, “Lebanese food has been described as the ‘pearl of the Arab kitchen’. It’s not just about falafel, baba ganoush and tabbouleh. It’s much more than that and it needs to be elevated to a greater status.”

At Zahira, Malouf serves up modern takes on Lebanese and Middle Eastern dishes that do not compromise on authenticity. “I look at traditional dishes architecturally and layer them a bit more,” the chef says, “but aim to always keep the integrity of the dish. That’s very important.”

On the menu are classics like tabbouleh and falafel, given a twist with the use of hazelnuts and shredded pickled turnips. Malouf’s go-to ingredients include sumac, za’atar, labneh (strained yoghurt), flower waters and filo pastry, which can be found in the signature dish of pie-like duck bisteeya, its filling cooked in sweet spices and almonds.

Sweets are important and include kunafa, made with soft white cheese topped with cracked semolina and baked to form a hard crust, and katayef, a pancake-like pastry filled with cream or crushed walnuts and almonds, and then deep-fried and served with syrup. Baklava, a flaky pastry usually associated with Greece, is also popular in Lebanon.

While wine is not normally associated with the Middle East, Lebanon is increasingly gaining attention for its tipples. Most vineyards are in the Beqaa Valley, in the east of the country, where high altitudes and cool weather make it possible to grow grapes. Red varieties such as cabernet sauvignon, merlot, grenache, shiraz and cinsault do best, and leading wineries include Château Ksara (the country’s biggest producer), Château Kefraya, Ixsir, Massaya and Château Musar (arguably the most recognised globally).



黎巴嫩：富饒之地

大廚Malouf雄心壯志地說要「提高黎巴嫩菜的地位，讓它名揚天下。黎巴嫩菜餚被譽為是『阿拉伯菜的珍珠』，除了炸豆餅falafel、茄子蘸醬baba ganoush和小麥碎蔬菜沙律tabbouleh外，還有其他琳琅滿目的美食，應該享有更高的地位。」

Malouf主理的Zahira，主要供應新派而不失正宗口味的黎巴嫩和中東菜式。他強調：「我會分析傳統菜式的結構，然後加入更豐富的層次，但同時必須保留菜式的正宗風味，這點非常重要。」

餐廳的招牌菜小麥碎蔬菜沙律和炸豆餅就是好例子，他在這兩道傳統經典名菜裡加入榛子和醃蘿蔔絲。Malouf喜歡採用鹽膚木粉sumac、雜錦香料za’atar、過濾乳酪labneh、花水和酥皮等材料，餡料以甜香料和杏仁煮成的招牌菜鴨肉批bisteeya就用上以上全部食材。

這裡的甜品亦不容錯過：在白色軟芝士上灑滿粗粒小麥粉烤成的kunafa，表面香脆，樣子像熱香餅的katayef，餡料為忌廉或核桃碎及杏仁，油炸後蘸糖漿吃；果仁酥餅baklava是希臘甜品，但在黎巴嫩也廣受歡迎。

雖然中東通常不會讓人聯想到葡萄酒，但黎巴嫩出產的葡萄酒近年卻漸受注目。當地大部分酒莊均位於東面的Beqaa Valley，高海拔加上清涼氣候非常適合種植葡萄。當地種植的紅葡萄品種以赤霞珠、梅洛、歌海娜、西拉和索神品質最佳。馳名酒莊則包括全國最大的葡萄酒生產商Ksara酒莊，以及Kefraya、Ixsir、Massaya和相信是國際上最為人熟悉的Musar酒莊。

This page, from top to bottom: Chef Greg Malouf of Zahira; his Eggplant and Pumpkin Tagine ‘Royale’ with Preserved Lemon, Angel Hair Noodles, Harissa and Tournedos; Citir Kabak (citrus squash), also at Neolokal

from top left: Midye Börülce (mussels and cowpeas) at Neolokal; the restaurant’s interior; Citir Kabak (citrus squash), also at Neolokal

其嫩茄子南瓜配檸檬蜜餞、天使麵、辣椒醬和蒜香汁
對頁左上圖起順時針：Neolokal餐廳的青口及牛豆菜式Midye Börülce；餐廳內部裝潢；以及其柑橘菜式Citir Kabak

Foong: Land of diversity ??????



A taste of Turkey



Seat of the Ottoman Empire, which lasted some 600 years until the early 20th century, Turkey boasts a grand cuisine influenced by the many cultures once under its rule. Straddling Europe and Asia, with coastline along the Mediterranean, Aegean and Black seas, it is also self-sufficient, with arable land and plentiful access to meat, seafood and other produce.

Founded by Syrian-Turkish chef Maksut Askar, Neolokal restaurant, in Istanbul, champions the food of Anatolia (the Asian part of Turkey). Askar subscribes to the Slow Food philosophy, and its Ark of Taste, which is a catalogue of endangered heritage foods. “I source my ingredients, stories and recipes from all around Anatolia,” he says. “We work with local farmers, producers, artisans and storytellers from this region.”

Askar updates traditional recipes with contemporary twists – and in a sustainable way that, he hopes, will help ensure their longevity. “If we do not protect our food culture, heritage and traditions,” the chef insists, “the generations to come will not have anything left.”

Herbs such as parsley, sorrel, mint and sage feature throughout the Neolokal menu, as do turmeric, paprika and other spices. Yoghurt is used in several dishes, from a reinterpreted kofta with minced meat and pine nuts, to a main of pulled beef in duck juice and pistachio filo.

While Turkey may not have the profile of Lebanon when it comes to wine, the wine list at Neolokal is exclusively Turkish and showcases a breadth of styles and varieties, including indigenous narinced – a white grape from Central Anatolia – and cabernet sauvignon from the Marmara region.



土耳其：地大物博

土耳其鄂圖曼帝國屹立600多年，直到20世紀初才瓦解，土耳其菜因此深受屬地的其他飲食文化影響。土耳其橫跨歐亞，三面環海（地中海、愛琴海和黑海），不僅可耕土地充足，肉類及農產品充裕，海產也十分豐富，完全可以自給自足。

伊斯坦堡的Neolokal餐廳由敘利亞裔土耳其大廚Maksut Askar創辦，供應安納托里亞（坐落亞洲的土耳其地區）菜式。Askar推崇慢食哲學，並藉著「美味方舟」計劃，致力挽救瀕臨消失的傳統味道。他說：「我從安納托里亞各地搜集食材、飲食故事和食譜，並與區內的本地農夫、食品商、工匠和說書人合作。」

Askar會將傳統菜餚加以改良，加入現代元素，希望藉此讓這些佳餚傳承下去。他深信：「如果我們不保護自己的飲食文化、歷史和傳統，後世會一無所有。」

Neolokal的菜式喜歡採用歐芹、酸模、薄荷和鼠尾草等香草，還有薑黃、辣椒粉和其他香料。乳酪見於多道菜式，包括以肉末和松子炮製、重新演繹kofta肉丸的菜式，以及以鴨汁烹調的手撕燜牛肉和開心果酥餅。

土耳其葡萄酒雖不及黎巴嫩馳名，但Neolokal供應的本土佳釀，口味及種類豐富，涵蓋來自安納托里亞中部的本土白葡萄narinced，以至馬爾馬拉區的赤霞珠。





Eating in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE is a relatively new country that came into being less than 50 years ago, so – according to Nabila Alshamsi, Consul-General of the United Arab Emirates to Hong Kong – Emirati cuisine flies under the radar when compared to Persian, Turkish and Levantine fare. “In the past, it was so simple: the main diet consisted of rice and fish, as meat was too expensive,” says Alshamsi, adding that the situation has since changed significantly, thanks to the wealth created by the UAE’s vast oil reserves.

While dishes such as shawarma are ubiquitous in the UAE, traditional foods tend to be rice or stew-based, with the use of cardamom and turmeric drawing comparisons with Indian food. This can be seen in machboos, a chicken and rice dish with similarities to biryani, and marqoq, a type of curry.

At Bhar restaurant, at the Renaissance Downtown Hotel, Dubai, Chef Mohanad Al Shamali bases his cooking on his Syrian mother’s recipes, but he incorporates local influences. Signature dishes include sayadieh (a Levantine fish and rice dish) and crispy soft shell crab in saj bread with garlic mayonnaise and harissa, which plays on old and new.

While the chef tries to source ingredients regionally, necessity dictates that some must be imported. “Thanks to fast and reliable transportation,” Al Shamali says, “it’s now easier than ever for many ingredients to remain fresh and retain flavour.” 🍷

This page, clockwise from top left: Bhar at Dubai’s Renaissance Downtown Hotel; chef Mohanad Al Shamali; Bhar’s Char-grilled Octopus, Spicy Green Chilli Zhug and Smoked Potato

Opposite, from top to bottom: Claudia Roden’s The New Book of Middle Eastern Food; hummus and chickpeas common to many Middle Eastern cuisines

本頁左上圖起順時針：
杜拜Renaissance Downtown酒店內的Bhar餐廳；大廚Mohanad Al Shamali；Bhar的炭烤八爪魚配辣椒蒜蓉芫茜醬及燻薯仔

對頁上圖起：Claudia Roden的烹飪書《The New Book of Middle Eastern Food》；中東菜常見的鷹嘴豆蓉和雞豆



阿聯酋：年輕新貴

阿拉伯聯合酋長國立國不到50年，其駐港總領事Nabila Alshamsi表示，阿聯酋菜系與波斯菜、土耳其菜和黎凡特菜相比，的確較不為人熟悉。他說：「過往，由於肉類昂貴，阿聯酋菜以飯和魚為主，菜式非常單調。」但他補充說，自從阿聯酋發現大量石油後，國家財富倍增，現在情況已經不可同日而語。

雖然大家想到阿聯酋，就會聯想起shawarma烤肉包，但當地的傳統食品其實是米飯或燉菜，並且喜歡以豆蔻和薑黃調味，有點像印度菜，例子包括與印度香飯biryani相似的雞肉香飯machboo和咖喱marqoq。

位於杜拜Renaissance Downtown酒店的Bhar餐廳，大廚Mohanad Al Shamali將從敘利亞裔母親那裡學到的食譜加以改良，結合當地烹調特色，創造出獨有的菜餚，包括黎凡特魚飯sayadieh，以及新舊並蓄的香脆軟殼蟹包配蒜蓉美乃滋和辣醬。

Al Shamali雖然會盡量在中東地區搜尋食材，但必要時也會進口部分材料。他說：「幸好現代運輸既快捷又可靠，進口食材也能夠保持新鮮又不失風味。」🍷

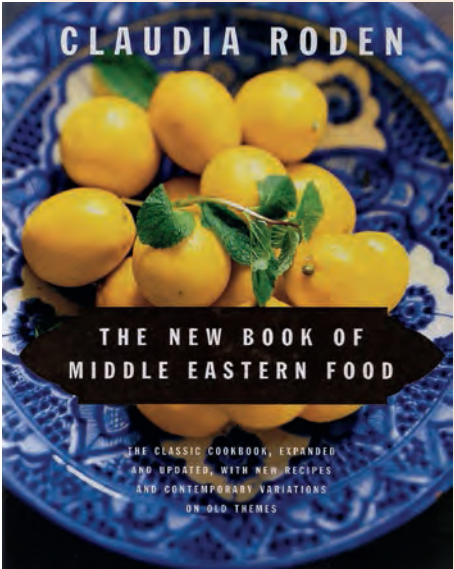


Middle Eastern Intricacies

The cuisine and culinary traditions of the Middle East span further than the region’s borders and its use of spices and skills that inform its distinctive cooking style have influenced gastronomy far afield

Israel

Israel, while predominantly a Jewish state, has no clearly definable Israeli or Jewish cuisine. The food here (falafels, pita bread) is different to Jewish fare in the US or Europe (bagels, matzo balls). It is, in fact, similar to Arabic cuisine and evolved to suit the climate and available produce. In his *Jerusalem* cookbook (2012), celebrated Israeli-British chef Yotam Ottolenghi observes that hummus is a staple of local Palestinians and Jews, and it is “impossible to find out who invented this delicacy and who brought that one with them. The food cultures are mashed and fused together in a way that is impossible to unravel.”



The Maghreb

The Maghreb refers to the region of North Africa that includes Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, has a mostly Muslim population and witnessed long periods of Arab rule through history. Maghreb cuisine is considered a pillar of Middle Eastern food by many authorities, including cookbook author Claudia Roden. In her seminal *The New Book of Middle Eastern Food* (2000), Roden describes North African cooking as one of the region’s four major culinary styles, “particularly the splendid fare of Morocco, with its heady mix of hot and sweet, orchestrated to perfection in its couscous dishes and tagines”.

Halal and kosher food

Halal is the Arabic for “permissible”, as prescribed by the Koran. In practice, this means that an animal must be healthy prior to slaughter, which must be performed by a Muslim. Consuming blood is forbidden, as is pork. Any food, including rice and vegetables, cannot be prepared with any product that is not halal, including lard. The use of alcohol is also prohibited.

Kosher food is prepared according to kashrut, or Jewish dietary laws. They forbid the consumption of certain animals and animal by-products. Pigs, rabbits, shellfish, reptiles and birds of prey may not be eaten. Rules regarding the killing of animals for food are similar to halal laws, except that a Jew must carry out slaughter. It is important for chefs to understand the rituals of different food cultures around the world. ICI educates students about halal and kosher food, and the new ICI campus will have a halal kitchen.

錯綜複雜的中東

中東菜餚和烹調傳統並未受地域所限，它獨有的香料運用和烹飪技巧，影響無遠弗屆

以色列

以色列人口主要為猶太人，但當地卻沒有清晰明確的以色列菜或猶太菜。這裡的炸豆餅和中東包等美食，與美國和歐洲猶太人常吃的麵包圈及麵包丸子湯等猶太菜迥然不同，更近似因應當地氣候和農產品而加以改良的阿拉伯菜。祖籍以色列的英國名廚Yotam Ottolenghi在2012年出版的烹飪書《Jerusalem》中提到，當地猶太人和巴勒斯坦人都以鷹嘴豆蓉為主食，而「這道佳餚到底是誰創造的，又是誰引進的，已無從稽考。在這裡，美食文化已融為一體，根本已難分難解。」

馬格里布

馬格里布是指非洲北部包括阿爾及利亞、利比亞、毛里塔尼亞、摩洛哥和突尼西亞一帶。這些國家均曾長時間被阿拉伯統治，國民主要信奉回教。不少飲食權威都視馬格里布佳餚為中東菜的一分子，烹飪書作者Claudia Roden是其中之一。她在2000年出版的烹飪大作《The New Book of Middle Eastern Food》中，形容北非菜是中東地區四大主要菜系之一，「特別是無與倫比的摩洛哥菜，甜和辣的配搭使其北非小米菜式couscous和tagine燉肉幾臻完美。」

清真及猶太飲食

Halal源自阿拉伯文，意思是「可允許的」，即是符合《可蘭經》規定。實踐上，Halal通常用來形容食物，即中文裡所說的清真食物，指食用動物被屠殺前必須健康潔淨，而且要由回教徒負責屠宰。任何食物包括飯和菜，都不能夠與非清真的食品如豬油等一起烹調。此外，酒和血跟豬肉一樣，都是回教禁物。

Kosher猶太食品則必須符合猶太教的飲食教規，嚴禁食用部分動物和動物副產品，包括豬、兔子、貝類海產、爬蟲類和猛禽。宰殺食用動物的規例與清真律法相若，但必須由猶太人負責屠宰。

了解世界各地飲食文化的習慣和禁忌，對廚師來說極為重要。因此國際廚藝學院亦有教授關於清真和猶太飲食的知識，新校舍內更設有清真廚房。

