



PHOTO THIS SPREAD  
Hummus Restaurant.

# FOOD CULTURE GE



Israel

WHERE ON EARTH

ISRAEL



# GETS REAL IN ISRAEL

by ELYSE GLICKMAN

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD Desert scenery near the Dead Sea; View from the Mamilla Hotel.



“*FOOD TRENDS* can be as ephemeral as the latest fashion and decor. When I visited Israel in 2011, the food mood was adventurous and optimistic, with dazzling, high-concept, farm-to-table cuisine exciting chefs and diners both. Now, the paradigm seems to have shifted to a craving for simpler pleasures and more approachable, home-style food.

Security and familiarity are being embraced in the uncertain world of 2019. North Americans are clamoring for elevated variations of childhood favourites — fried chicken, grilled cheese sandwiches, chunky soups, large hearty salads, and other throwback foods. A similar phenomenon is taking place in Israel. Restaurants that traded on international flair and reinvented local provisions, such as Herbert Samuel and Carmella in Tel Aviv, have shut their doors. Restaurants now drawing the biggest buzz are fueled by chefs’ and restaurateurs’ memories of what their mothers, grandmothers and other relatives created in their home kitchens. Fine examples of these include Jerusalem’s HaMotzi and Tel Aviv’s Yulia.

In Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and the Dead Sea area, the simplest staples such as hummus and babaganoush are being widely embraced. What keeps things interesting is that every chef has

a different expression of these — and other — staples, based on what they loved as a kid, which shows how timeless, interesting and diverse the ‘basics’ can be. This in turn has awakened a collective desire to rediscover foods and institutions that may be on the verge of being lost to time, technology and changing tastes.

Tel Aviv’s Sarona Market (opened in 2015), is a good place to see how residents embrace Asian and Mexican street foods, Italian pasta, seafood, French bistro cuisine, Portuguese roasted chicken and Moroccan sandwiches. Manicured stalls selling Israeli wines, olive oil, spices, sweets and dried fruits are interspersed. All of the vendors source foodstuffs from Israel’s leading markets, including Machane Yehuda, Carmel Market, Tel Aviv Port Market, Hatikva Market, Levinsky Market and Haifa’s Wadi Nisnas Market. *Taste of Sarona* food tours are offered for a

small fee so visitors can see how Israel's top raw ingredients make their way into the massive global spread.

Generations-old institutions such as Tel Aviv's Carmel Market and Jerusalem's Machane Yehuda, where many hawkers dole out samples of their traditional offerings, are, understandably, among the most popular tourist destinations. But trendiness has found its way in up to a point, with several squeaky clean stalls (including one dedicated to Kosher-certified designer donuts) buttressing utilitarian spice and produce stands. To help visitors identify the true landmarks and newer establishments reviving classic food and drink in more imaginative ways, former New Yorker Inbal Baum founded Delicious Israel in 2011, while Urban Adventures launched their own food tours in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

According to San Francisco-bred guide Ilana Butrimovitz, The Delicious Israel mission is to show "what it truly means to be an Israeli by engaging with those who call the Holy Land home."

The two-and-a-half hour *Levinsky Market Tour* through Tel Aviv's less touristy Florentin neighbourhood takes on a definitively personal tone. Butrimovitz covers the

neighbourhood's edible history, shaped by Turkish, Greek and Iranian immigrants who settled there beginning in the 1920s. This leads to conversation about memories of her grandmother teaching her how to cook, as well as being a former resident of the area. She waxes poetic on how she's seen newer places, such as a street-art-festooned, hummus-only restaurant, blend into the neighbourhood in a harmonious way that does not scream "gentrification." We sample this spot's award-winning expression of a basic hummus recipe and its contemporary updates.

The tour thoroughly covers the quarter's surprising diversity. A Turkish family-owned deli serves up handmade mezze and olives. There's a tiny Greek-Jewish bakery whose owner won international acclaim for the simple cookies and small pastries he's been producing for decades. Café Levinsky 41, an urban-chic stall with a big buzz surrounding their coffee, also serves up a *gazoz* palate cleanser. This refreshing non-alcoholic herb and soda cocktail, made with whatever herbs, fruits and flowers are market-fresh that day, washes down a Persian-owned shop's *boureks* (flaky pastry pies crafted with phyllo dough), vegan »





versions of traditional Persian desserts from another generation-old shop, and herbs and spices at the peak of freshness.

Avid cooks and experienced Israeli travellers craving deeper exploration can delve into the comprehensive half-day Eat Tel Aviv tour, which extends from the historic and rustic Jaffa Flea Market to upscale Neve Tzedek, the Yemenite quarter and a few hidden corners of Carmel Market. Delicious Israel's Eat Jerusalem tour looks beyond the well trodden Old City to Machane Yehuda, the largest outdoor market in Israel and a reflection on how diversified Kosher food has become.

The *Jerusalem Street Food* tour offered by Urban Adventures also provides well researched information on where to take in full meals after getting the lay of the land on their walks. Buried in the Arab quarter of Old Jerusalem's maze is Abu Shukri, which offers a satisfying luncheon of hummus, a few eggplant-based dips, and Turkish coffee to finish off, all for about \$15 (30 shekels) per person.

Jerusalem's Adom, opened in April 2001, successfully survived changing times thanks to the open minds of chefs Moti Davis and Elran Buzaglo, and a recent move to a larger location at the First Train Station, an outdoor cultural centre built on the foundations of Jerusalem's Old Train Station. The expansive non-kosher menu covers some of the timeless high-points of Mediterranean cuisine, especially pasta, seafood and fish from the area. In addition to its airy brasserie-style and open-concept kitchen, Adom has a unique way of presenting its wine collection. Rather than offer up a list or a phone book-sized directory, a sommelier presents the guest with a recipe card file box with tabs separating the varietals and blends.

HaMotzi also relocated, from an alley off the Mahane Yehuda Market to an ancient building on nearby 113 Jaffa Road that served for 150 years as the Etz Haim (Tree of Life) Seminary. The interiors — featuring tiled tables, a giant mural and family recipes painted on the wall — do more than complement owner/chef Avi Levy's mixed Israeli and Algerian roots. As a whole, it is a moving tribute to the »



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD  
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT  
Old Jerusalem bakery;  
Sarona Market vendor; Yafo  
Park in Tel Aviv; Flowers  
decorate an old car at Cafe  
Levinsky 41; Abu Shukri's  
owner; Yulia fish kebabs;  
Old Jerusalem street food;  
Yulia grilled fish; Mamilla  
Rooftop salad; Carmel  
Market; In the kitchen at  
Adom; HaMotzi chef Avi.



SERVES 4

## Signature Seafood Ceviche

*A CEVICHE LIKE NO other, from Yulia restaurant in Tel Aviv, is a showcase for Israel's bounty of fresh ingredients.*

**Grouper** 100 g, cubed

**Yellowtail** 100 g, cubed

**Albacore Tuna**  
100 g, cubed

**Fresh Orange or Grapefruit Juice**  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup

**Avocado**  $\frac{1}{2}$ , cubed

**Red Onion**  $\frac{1}{2}$ , sliced

**Papaya** 1 small, sliced to thin strips

**Coriander** 1 bunch, finely chopped

**Radishes** 4 small, sliced in thin strips

**Mix of Grapes, Strawberries, cubed Watermelon and Honeydew Melon** 200 g

**Extra Virgin Olive Oil** 2 Tbs

**Salt and Pepper** to taste

**Dried Red Chili Flakes** to taste

**Fresh Lemon Juice** to taste

**1** **COMBINE** the fish cubes with the orange or grapefruit juice and allow to stand for a few minutes.

**2** **ADD** the fruit, vegetables, coriander and olive oil and thoroughly mix everything together.

**3** **SEASON** to taste with salt, pepper and chili flakes.

**4** **FINISH** with a generous splash of lemon juice.

**5** **SERVE** in a large bowl and garnish with a coriander sprig.



*...Generations-old institutions such as Tel Aviv's Carmel Market and Jerusalem's Machane Yehuda are among the most popular tourist destinations...*

«ways his mother and grandmother's values and recipes kept him grounded during and after his difficult youth. It's also probably no accident that the two-level space anchored by a partially open kitchen also makes it one of the most family-friendly among chef-driven restaurants. The arrangement of such aromatic appetizers as Algerian *Maakooud* (leek and potato pie) and *Quara Dil Khut* (fish balls in spicy Algerian sauce) and mains like *Boulettes* (Algerian meatballs coated in semolina with cabbage and onion) and Lamb *Tffiya Arraias* (a pita stuffed with lamb and lemon confit) are stylish yet anything but intimidating.

After more than a decade, Jerusalem's Mamilla Hotel, which ingeniously splices together an ancient building with modern luxury interiors, still holds the title as the trendiest hotel in the area. This is in part to its Rooftop Restaurant, which draws beautiful young professionals, seasoned government executives, and families in celebration mode with dishes that theoretically can be enjoyed anywhere in the world, but take full advantage of the country's year-round growing season. The property's more casual Happy Fish, meanwhile, taps into the family kitchen zeitgeist for a kosher menu enlivened by home-grown Israeli herbs.

In Tel Aviv, restaurateurs Micha Sol and Danny Eitan (known for such establishments as Boya, Bebaleh and YAM) recognized that a few creative but solid Mediterranean fish and seafood recipes, flanked with fresh Israeli staples, could be a recipe for something enduring. Yulia, the resulting concept, has been thriving since 2006 with an indoor/outdoor setting that allows the food to be the star of the show. Under the direction of chef Roman Diamant the reliance on locally sourced everything keeps every dish clean, flavourful and memorable.

Something similar has happened in the Dead Sea region, with a brand new strip of upscale hotels. Recent development has reinvigorated the area with contemporary architecture that plays off the austere-yet-sparkling beauty of the salt water body and Moav Mountains. Nicely maintained beaches flanking the hotels add an extra dimension of pleasure beyond the healing powers of the Dead Sea's water and mud. At the Isrotel Dead Sea Resort and Spa it is interesting to observe at both breakfast and dinner that the first items to disappear off the Zer Hazahav Restaurant's buffet are the rustic regional appetizers and mains rather than the international specialties. It figures. 



PHOTOS THIS PAGE  
FROM TOP Old  
Jerusalem; Wall  
detail at Hummus  
Restaurant.



Delicious Israel Tours  
[www.deliciousisrael.com](http://www.deliciousisrael.com)

Urban Adventures  
[www.urbanadventures.com](http://www.urbanadventures.com)

Sarona Market  
[www.saronamarket.co.il](http://www.saronamarket.co.il)

Yulia  
[www.yuliatlv.co.il](http://www.yuliatlv.co.il)

Rooftop & Happy Fish/Mamilla Hotel  
[www.mamillahotel.com](http://www.mamillahotel.com)

Adom  
[www.adom.rest](http://www.adom.rest)

HaMotzi  
[www.hamotzi.co.il](http://www.hamotzi.co.il)

Abu Shukri  
63 Al Wad (Hagai) St, Muslim Quarter, Jerusalem  
Dead Sea Region

Isrotel Dead Sea Resort and Spa/Zer Hazahav  
Restaurant  
[www.isrotel.com/isrotel-hotels/dead-sea/isrotel-dead-sea](http://www.isrotel.com/isrotel-hotels/dead-sea/isrotel-dead-sea)

Los Angeles-based writer **ELYSE GLICKMAN**'s last  
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