

SYRIA

Emer O'Sullivan-Social Work Support Officer, Looked After Children's Team

SYRIA

Capital: Damascus

Population: 22.85 million (2013) World Bank

President: Bashar al-Assad

Continent: Asia

Prime minister: Wael Nader al-Halqi

Official language: Arabic

Arabic is the official language of Syria. Several modern Arabic dialects are used in everyday life, most notably Levantine in the west and Mesopotamian in the northeast. Kurdish (in its Kurmanji form) is widely spoken in the Kurdish regions of Syria. Armenian and Syrian Turkmen (Azeri) are spoken among the Armenian and Turkmen minorities. Other spoken languages are English, French,Circassia and Aramaic.



Religion: The largest religious group in Syria are the Sunni Muslims which make up around 74% of the population, of whom about 80% are native Syrian Arabs, with the remainder being Kurds, Turkomans, Circassians, and Palestinians. Sunni Islam sets the religious tone for Syria and provides the country's basic values.

Public Holidays 2016:

1 Jan	Fri	New Year's Day
8 Mar	Tue	Revolution Day
21 Mar	Mon	Mother's Day
27 Mar	Sun	Easter Sunday
17 Apr	Sun	Independence Day
1 May	Sun	Labour Day
6 May	Fri	Martyr's Day
7 Jul	Thu	End of Ramadan
8 Jul	Fri	End of Ramadan
9 Jul	Sat	End of Ramadan
11 Sep	Sun	Feast of Sacrifice
12 Sep	Mon	Feast of Sacrifice
13 Sep	Tue	Feast of Sacrifice
2 Oct	Sun	Islamic New Year
6 Oct	Thu	Anniversary of October Liberation War
12 Dec	Mon	The Prophet Muhammad's Birthday
25 Dec	Sun	Christmas Day

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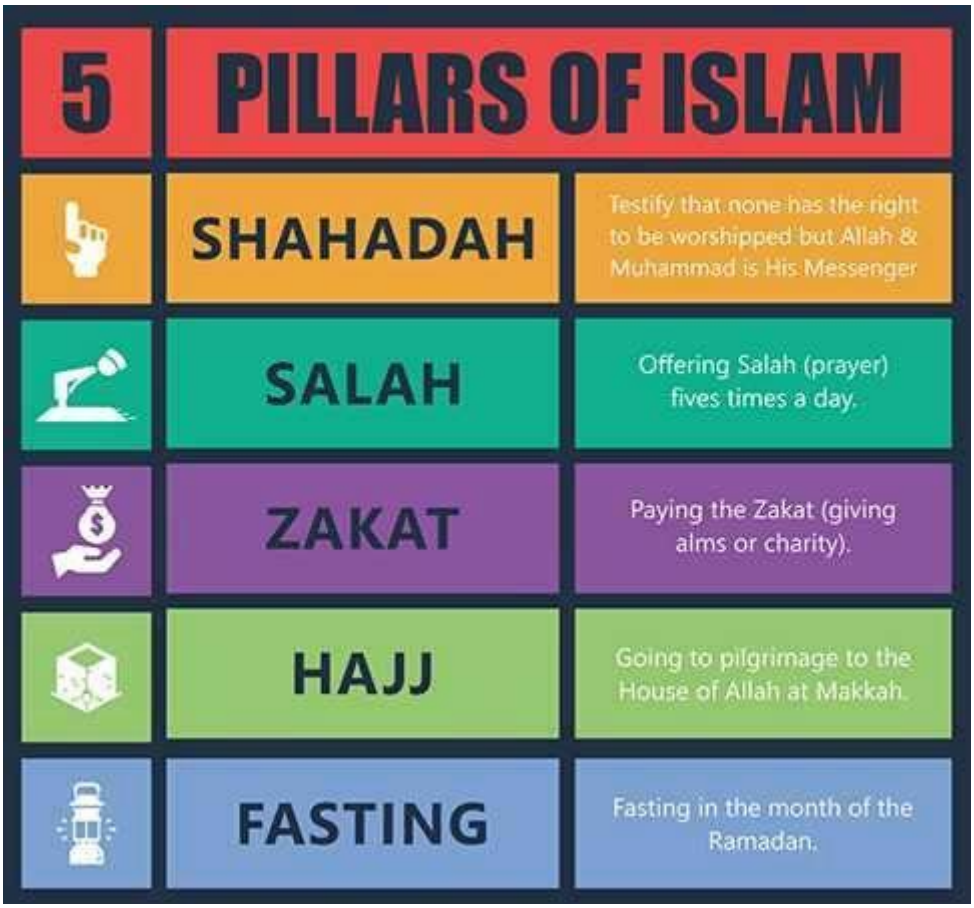
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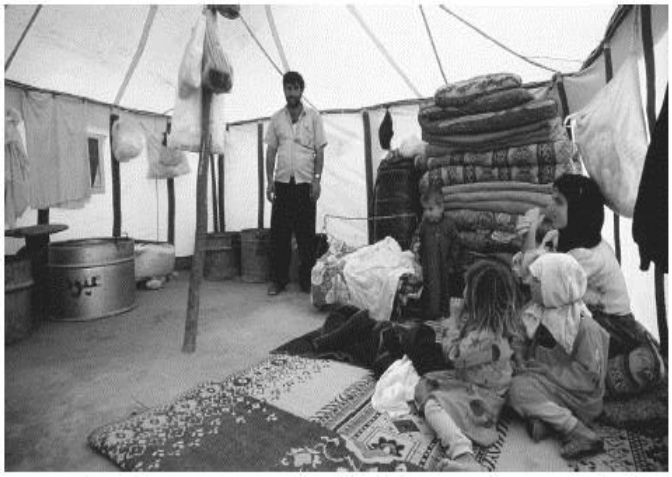
Religious Practitioners: There are no priests or clergy in Islam. Instead, there are people with the job of leading prayers and reading from the Quran, the Muslim holy book. The Quran, rather than a religious leader, is considered the ultimate authority and holds the answer to any question or dilemma one might have. There are also muezzins who give the call to prayer and are scholars of the Quran and spend their lives studying and interpreting the text.

Rituals and Holy Places: The most important observation in the Islamic calendar is Ramadan. This month of fasting is followed by the joyous feast of Eid al Fitr, during which families visit and exchange gifts. Eid al-Adha commemorates the end of Muhammod's Hajj. The mosque is the Muslim house of worship. Outside the door, there are washing facilities, as cleanliness is a prerequisite to prayer, demonstrating humility before God. One also must remove one's shoes before entering the mosque. According to Islamic tradition, women are not allowed inside. The interior has no altar; it is simply an open carpeted space. Because Muslims are supposed to pray facing Mecca, there is a small niche carved into the wall that points to the direction in which that city lies.

Death and the Afterlife: A death is followed by three days of mourning during which friends, relatives, and neighbours pay their respects to the family. Female relatives of the deceased wear black for several months to up to one year or more after the death. Widows generally do not remarry and often dress in mourning for the rest of their lives.



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Gender Roles and Statuses: Division of Labour by Gender. Traditionally, wives in towns are responsible for running the household and are restricted to the home. Rural women often work in the fields in addition to performing domestic tasks. While women are legally allowed to work outside the home, there are significant obstacles. For example, the government's Moral Intelligence Department investigates women before allowing them to hold federal jobs. Only 11 percent of women of working age are employed outside the home; among those women, 80 percent work in agriculture. They also are represented in textiles and the tobacco industry, but only 1 percent of employed women have administrative or managerial positions. There are women in the national government, and in the capital a few women work in metal or electrical workshops. It is not uncommon for women to do piecework in their homes.

The Relative Status of Women and Men: While women are now entitled to receive the same education as men and to seek employment, the traditional attitude that views females as inferior beings prevails. A woman is considered the possession of a man rather than her own person. She is identified as her father's daughter until marriage; after the birth of a male child, her identity is transferred from the wife of her husband to the mother of her son.

Marriage: By Muslim tradition, marriage is arranged by the couple's families. While more leniency is now allowed, particularly in cities and among the upper classes, it is still extremely rare for a couple to marry against their family's wishes. According to the constitution, the state has assumed the duty of protecting and encouraging the institution of marriage. Nonetheless, the marriage rate has declined because of housing shortages, inflation, rising levels of education, bride money, and the prohibitive cost of weddings.

Although the state and the Muslim religion both oppose the current dowry system, it is deeply entrenched in the family structure. It places immense pressure on the husband and his family, who have to raise large sums of money, and on the bride, who often is forced to marry the suitor who can provide the biggest dowry. Syria was the first Arab country to pass laws concerning polygamy.



Domestic Unit: The family is the primary social unit. An older male, usually the father or grandfather, has the ultimate authority and is responsible for providing for the other family members. It is customary for several generations to live together in the same house. Particularly for women, who are not allowed to leave the home, family provides the primary or only social outlet and relationships with other people. An estate passes from the father to the oldest son in a family. Traditionally, not only property is bequeathed, but social and political position as well.

Syrians identify very strongly with their families, both immediate and extended. While kinship ties have weakened somewhat with urbanization and modernization, the clan mentality is still a strong influence in the nation's political system.

Socialization: Child Rearing and Education. Children are highly valued as a blessing from God. The more children one has, the more fortunate one is considered, as children provide extra hands to work in the fields and ensure that their parents will be taken care of in old age. Children are treated with a great deal of affection. The bond between mother and son (especially the oldest son) is particularly strong.

Primary education is mandatory and free for six years. Middle school, which begins at age thirteen, marks the end of mixed-sex education. Most schools are run by the state, which combines a French structure with the rigid discipline and rote learning of the Islamic tradition.

Etiquette: The etiquette in Syria is most like the same throughout the Middle Eastern. Men and women are separate unless for special gatherings. Syrians like to talk. Syrians have an art of conversation which you need skill to do. Men talk and also tease each other but in a way of joking. When talking you stand close, speak loudly and gesture with hands and head. Greeting in Syria have a huge significance. Also when greeting someone you shake hands, hug or

give a kiss on the cheek. Syrians are also very affectionate. Both women and men kiss, hug and hold hands with people from the same gender. This is very common in Syria and can be seen mainly in public places.



Food in Daily Life: Wheat is the main crop and one of the staple foods. Vegetables, fruits, and dairy products also are eaten. Lamb is popular, but most people cannot afford to eat meat on a regular basis. **Islam proscribes the consumption of pork**, and other meats must be specially prepared in a method called ***halal**** cooking. In middle-class and wealthier homes, meals are like those eaten in other Middle Eastern countries: roast or grilled chicken or lamb with side dishes of rice, chickpeas, yogurt, and vegetables. A mezzeh is a midday meal composed of up to twenty or thirty small dishes. These dishes can include hummous , a puree of chickpeas and tahini (ground sesame paste); baba ganouj, an eggplant puree; meat rissoles; stuffed grape leaves; tabouleh (a salad of cracked wheat and vegetables); falafel (deep-fried balls of mashed chickpeas); and pita bread. Olives, lemon, parsley, onion, and garlic are used for flavouring. Popular fruits that are grown in the region include dates, figs, plums, and watermelons. Damascus has a number of French restaurants remaining from the time of colonial rule.



Tea is the ubiquitous drink and is often consumed at social gatherings. Soda is also very popular, as is milk and a drink made by mixing yogurt with water, salt, and garlic. **Alcohol consumption is rare, as it is forbidden by the Islamic religion**, but beer and wine are available, as is arak, an aniseed drink that also is popular in other Middle Eastern countries.

Halal*: Halal is Arabic for permissible. Halal food is that which adheres to Islamic law, as defined in the Quran. The Islamic form of slaughtering animals or poultry, dhabiha, involves killing through a cut to the jugular vein, carotid artery and windpipe. Animals must be alive and healthy at the time of slaughter and all blood is drained from the carcass. During the process, a Muslim will recite a dedication, know as tasmiya or shahada.

Food Customs at Ceremonial Occasions: Food is an important part of many celebrations. During Ramadan, each day's fast is broken with an evening meal called iftar. This meal begins in silence and is consumed rapidly. Eid al-Fitr, the final breaking of the Ramadan fast, entails the consumption of large quantities of food, sweets in particular. Food is also a central element at weddings, parties, and other festivities.



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Store Cupboard Staples:



1. Tahini- used in dressings, sauces, dips, even baked into flatbreads and cakes, nutty, rich sesame-seed paste is essential to Middle Eastern cuisine. *Can be purchased from UK supermarkets.*

2. Pomegranate Molasses- The juice of sour pomegranates is reduced to make this sweet-tart syrup that adds a layer of complexity to everything. *Can be purchased from Ocado.com*

3. Aleppo Pepper-Prized for bringing mild and fruity heat to almost any savory dish, this Syrian spice is now popular around the world. Look for coarse flakes, without seeds. *Can be purchased online via Amazon.co.uk*

4. Rose & Orange-Flower Water-These fragrant waters are distilled from the Damascus rose and the Seville orange tree, respectively. *Can be purchased from Waitrose*

5. Baharat Spice Mix -*This is not widely available in the UK but can be made as followed*:

- 4 parts paprika
- 4 parts ground black pepper
- 1 part ground coriander
- 1 part ground cloves
- 1 part ground cardamom
- 1 part ground cumin
- 1 part ground cinnamon
- 1 part ground ginger
- 0.5 part ground allspice
- 1 part ground dried chilli (optional)

Please see Appendix 1 for full shopping list and translations.

Please also see Appendix 2 for some typical Syrian Recipes.

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Brief History

Syria fell to the Ottoman Turks in **1516** and remained a part of their Ottoman Empire for four centuries. During this period, Syria witnessed great deterioration in economic, social, and political fields. In 1916, the Arabs took the opportunity of World War I to revolt against the Turkish rule. Arabs received British military help and promises that after the War ends, Arab countries will be granted full independence. On 6 May **1916**, the Ottoman authorities hanged tens of Syrian national leaders in Damascus and Beirut. This day is still celebrated in Syria and Lebanon as the Martyrs' Day. The Arab armies under leadership of Sharif Hussein of Mecca soon achieved victory over the Turks, and in early 1918, Arab and British armies entered Damascus ending 400 years of Ottoman occupation.

Later in 1918, Syria was declared an independent kingdom under King Faisal I, son of Sharif Hussein. However, France and Britain had their own plans in mind. In an agreement known as the Sykes-Picot agreement, they decided to divide the Middle East into French and British 'spheres of influence'. Syria was to be put under French mandate. In early 1920, French troops landed on the Syrian coast, after several battles with poorly equipped Syrian rebels, they managed to get the country under their control. In **1923**, the League of Nation officially recognized French mandate over Syria.

In the spring of 1967, severe clashes erupted on the borders between Syria and Israel. In April, Israeli officials publicly threatened to invade Syria. Those threats were among other major events that led to the Six Days War between Israel and its neighbouring Arab countries. On 5 June 1967, Israel started its war against the Arabs, first by invading the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula and the West Bank of Jordan and then on June 10, the Syrian Golan Heights. Within two days of fighting, Syria had lost the strategic region including its main city of Quneitra. On June 11, the warring parties accepted the UN's call for cease-fire. Later in 1967, the UN security council issued its famous 242 resolution calling for complete Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in the Six Day War, in exchange for peace talks and Arab recognition of Israel 's right to exist.

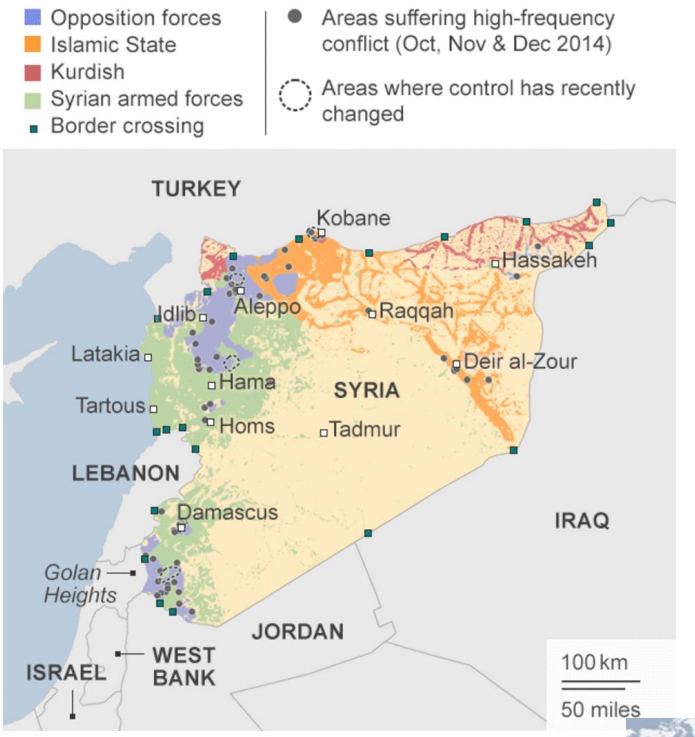
After the Gulf War, Syria accepted the US invitation for an international peace conference on the Middle East. The conference, held in Madrid in November 1991, marked the launch of bilateral Arab-Israeli peace talks. The talks were based on the UN resolutions calling for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967, and on the so-called 'land for peace' formula. However, they were stalled for years because of Israel's continuous refusal to give back any Arab territory. The Arab position was more weakened when the Palestinians and the Jordanians signed separate peace agreements with Israel in 1993 and 1994. Syria and Lebanon, however, vowed to sign peace together or sign not. Syria continued to support the Lebanese resistance fighters led by Hizbollah against the Israeli occupation forces in South Lebanon. In May 2000, Hizbollah succeeded in driving Israel out of Southern Lebanon after 22 years of occupation.

Syrian-Israeli peace talks reached a dead end in **1996** with Israel refusing to discuss the complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights. In late 1999, Israel signalled its will to accept such move, and the talks were resumed in the US, this time at a high level between Foreign Minister Farouq al-Sahara'a and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. The talks were again stalled in early 2000 when Barak tried to exclude the northeaster shore of the Lake Tiberis from the proposed Israeli withdrawal plan. Syria made it clear that no single inch of the Syrian soil will be given away.

On June 10th **2000**, President Assad died of a heart attack. His son, Bashar al-Assad was elected President on July 10th.

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The current violence in Syria began in **March 2011**. The Middle Eastern country has been crippled by a brutal civil war. Since then, the United Nations estimates more than 100,000 people have died in the clashes between President Bashar al-Assad's government and rebel forces who want him out.



Humanitarian crisis:

The escalating violence and IS advances have had a significant humanitarian impact on Syria and its neighbours.

Syria is now the world's biggest internal displacement crisis, with more than seven million people forced from their homes but remaining in the country.

Meanwhile, more than 4 million people have fled the country's borders, mainly taking refuge in surrounding countries.

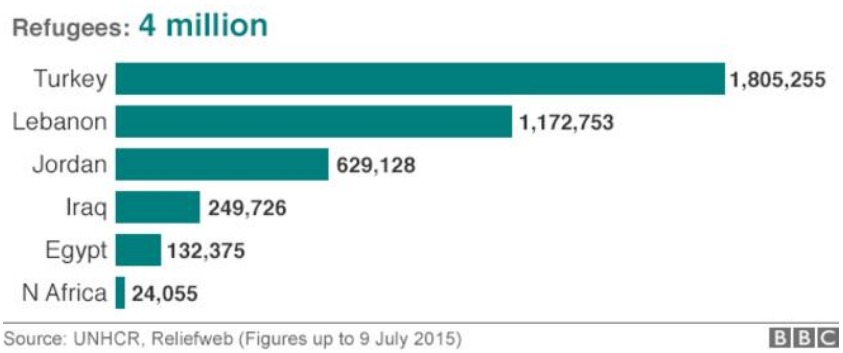
Turkey and Lebanon have each taken in more than one million Syrians, while Jordan, Iraq and Egypt have become home to hundreds of thousands more.

The most vulnerable children are those who remain inside Syria, who are at risk of death, injury and illness on a daily basis. The humanitarian needs are incalculable. Many Charitable Organizations have so far helped thousands of children and family members with food, safe water, medicine and shelter

On 7 September the Prime Minister announced an expansion of our existing Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. Through this expansion, we expect to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection during this Parliament. This is in addition to those we resettle under our Gateway and Mandate programmes, and the thousands of people who receive protection in the UK under normal asylum procedures.

The UK are working closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to identify some of the most vulnerable displaced Syrians and bring them to the UK. This scheme is helping those in the greatest need who cannot be supported effectively in the region by giving them protection and support in the UK. The criteria for acceptance under the scheme will be expanded to ensure more of those in need are resettled.





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Appendix 1.

Syrian Grocery List — La Liste de Garde-Manger Syrienne — مكونات الطعام السوري

Vegetables	Les légumes	الخضروات		Fruits	Les Fruits	الفواكه
cabbage	chou	ملفوف		Apples	Pommes	تفاح
cucumbers	concombres	خيار		banana	Banane	موز
green beans	haricots verts	فاصولياء		cherries	Cerises	كرز
Corn	maïs	ذرة		dates	Dattes	تمر
peas	petit pois	بازلاء		figs	Figues	تين
onion	oignon	بصل		grapes	Raisins	عنب
cauliflower	chou-fleur	قرنبيط		mandarins	Mandarines	يوسف
green pepper	poivron vert	فليفلة خضرا		melon	Melon	شمام
carrots	Carottes	جزر		oranges	Oranges	برتقال
eggplants	aubergines	باذنجان		peaches	Pêches	دراق
Potatoes	Pomme de terre	بطاطا		Pineapple	Ananas	أناناس
garlic	Ail	ثوم		plums	prunes	خوخ
Parsley	Persil	بقدونس		pomegranates	Grenades	رمان
lettuce	Laitue	خس		strawberry	Fraise	فريز
lemon	Citron	ليمون		watermelon	pastèque	بطيخ
small okra	petite gombo	بامية		Orange juice	jus d'orange	عصير برتقال
tomatoes	Tomates	بندورة				
zucchini	courgette	كوسا				
Leeks	Poireaux	كرات\براصيا				
Cilantro	coriandre	كزبرة				
Fats	**Matières Grasses**	**الدهون**		**Meats**	**Viandes**	**اللحوم**
Butter	Beurre	زبدة		Beef	boeuf	بقر
Corn oil	Huile de maïs	زيت الذرة		Chicken	Poulet	دجاج
Olive oil	Huile d'olive	زيت الزيتون		Fish	Poisson	سمك
Vegetable oil	Huile végétale	زيت نباتي		~~Pork~~	~~Porc~~	خنزير
				Halal (meat)	Halal	حلال

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Grains	Les Céréales	الحبوب		Dairy	Les Produits Laitiers	الألبان
Buns	Petit pain	صمون		Cheese	fromage	جبنة
Flat bread	pain plat	خبز رغيف		Mozzarella	Mozzarella	موزاريلا
Long-grain rice	riz	رز طويل		eggs	œufs	بيض
lentil	lentille	عدس		Milk	Lait	حليب
Fava beans	fèves	فول صغير		Plain yogurt	Yaourt	لبن (غير محلى)
Chickpeas	Pois chiches	حمص حب		White cheese (e.g. Queso fresco)	Fromage blanc	جبنة بيضاء
White beans	haricots blancs	فاصوليا حب		Cream cheese	Fromage crémeux	جبنة كريم
Flour	Farine	طحين				
Pasta	Pâtes	معكرونة				
Corn starch	Fécule de maïs	نشاء الذرة				
walnut	noyer	جوز				
almond	amande	لوز				
Spices & condiments	Les Épices & Condiments	التوابل		Preserved	Les Conserves	المعلبات
Sugar	sucre	سكر		Chickpeas	Pois chiches	حمص معلب
Salt	Sel	ملح		Corn – canned	Maïs	ذرة معلبة
Black pepper	Poivre noir	فلفل أسود		Crushed tomato	Tomate écrasé	بندورة مهروسة
cumin	cumin	كمون		Diced tomato	dés de tomate	بندورة مقطعة
Rosemary	Romarin	أكليل الجبل		Tomato paste	concentré de tomate	رب البندورة
Oregano	Origan	أوريجانو		Tomato sauce	Sauce de tomate	صوص البندورة
Mint – ground	menthe	نعنع يابس		Mushroom	Champignon	فطر
Cinnamon	Cannelle	قرفة		Pickles	Cornichons	مخلل
Paprika	Paprika	فليفلة حمرا		sardines	sardines	سردين
Coriander	Coriandre	كزبرة ناشفة		Honey	Miel	عسل
Vinegar	vinaigre	خل		Jam	Confiture	مربى
ketchup	ketchup	كتشب				
Black tea	Thé noir	شاي				
Instant coffee	Café instantané	نسكافيه				
Chamomile	Camomille	بابونج				

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From a Middle Eastern store

Syrian Specialty			
Tahini	Tahini	طحينة	sesame seed puree
(Lebanese) bread	pain libanais	خبز لبناني	Thinner flat bread- eat fresh or freeze
Baharat	Baharat	بهارات	Syrian seven-spice mix
Labneh	Labneh	لبنة	Strained yogurt
Zaatar	Zaatar	زعتر	Thyme mix
Bulgur	Blé bulgur	برغل	A little of size #1 and more of size #2
Arabic coffee	Café arabe	قهوة	Ground- with or without cardamom
Olives (any variety)	olives	زيتون	Taste much better than regular grocery stores
Vermicelli Noodles	Vermicelles de riz	شعيرية	Short noodles usually cooked with rice or soups
Orange-blossom water	Eau de fleur d'oranger	ماء زهر	Can substitute with rose water
Pomegranate molasses	Mélasse de pomme grenade	دبس رمان	A thick syrup in a bottle
Ghee	Ghee	سمنة	Clarified butter
Halva with pistachio	Halva à la pistache	حلاوة	Sesame fudge, sold in plastic rectangle containers. Eaten for breakfast
Makdous	Makdous	مكدوس	Pickled baby eggplants, stuffed with walnut & red pepper, marinated in oil, eaten for breakfast, sold in glass jars.

syriancooking.com

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Appendix 2. **Recipes**

Kibbeh - This is a staple Syrian dish, very versatile. People will eat this fried, roasted, grilled or even raw.



Ingredients:

450g Fine Bulgar Wheat

450g Very Lean minced Beef/Lamb

2 tbsp of finely chopped Onion

1 tsp Bharat (See 'Store Cupboard Staples')

1 tsp Salt

1 tsp Pepper

METHOD:

In a medium bowl, soak Bulgar wheat for 30 minutes in cold water. Remove and drain. Remove excess water by squeezing through thick paper towel or muslin. Place into medium bowl and combine with half of the meat, chopped onion, ½ tsp of salt and pepper and ½ tsp Bharat.

Combine well and place small amount in food processor until dough like consistency. You can slowly add a teaspoon of water at a time during processing if needed. Place mixture aside, covered.

Prepare Kibbeh Stuffing

In a medium frying pan, sauté the finely chopped onion in olive oil. Add pine nuts if desired. Add remaining mince lamb or beef and mix well. Add remaining bharat spice , salt and pepper. Once beef is brown, remove from heat. Allow to cool for 10 minutes.

Assemble Kibbeh and Fry

Take an egg sized amount of dough mixture and form into a ball. With your finger, poke a hole in the ball, making a space for filling. Add filling and pinch the top to seal the ball. You can then shape it into a point, or football shape, or leave as a ball.

Fry in 350 degree oil on stove top or in deep fryer for about 10 minutes or until golden brown. Drain on paper towels. Makes 25 medium sized kibbeh.

Tips: Kibbeh can be stored in the freezer in an airtight, freezer safe container for up to 3 months and then taken out to fry when needed.

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Dawood Basha - Small meat balls and onion slices are fried then cooked in tomato sauce. This stew is usually served with rice.



INGREDIENTS

500g lean mince Beef

500g, peeled and cut in small pieces

1 tablespoon of tomato puree, dissolved in 1 cup water

2 Large, sliced

1 tablespoons vegetable oil

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon allspice

1/4 teaspoon white pepper

METHOD:

1. In a food processor, blend the ground meat, cinnamon, allspice and salt until you get a fine meat 'paste'.

2. To prepare the meatballs, wet your hands with some water and divide the meat into small balls the size of a small plum.

3. In a deep saucepan, heat the vegetable oil and fry the meat balls. Remove and drain on a kitchen absorbent paper.

4. In the same saucepan, fry the onion slices until tender then add back in the fried meat balls. Add the tomato pieces and the dissolved tomato paste. Cook over medium heat.

5. When the mixture starts boiling, reduce the heat, cover the saucepan and let it simmer for 15 min.

6. Serve hot with boiled rice.

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Riz B Haleeb- Creamy Syrian Rice Pudding



Ingredients:

4 cups milk.
1/3 cup short grain rice (washed).
1/4 cup sugar.

Gaimar mixture:
2 Tablespoons rose water.
1 teaspoon vanilla extract.
2 Tablespoons corn starch.
3 Tablespoons Double Cream

METHOD:

1. In a large pan mix milk, rice, sugar, bring to boil then reduce the heat, let it simmer for 1 ½ hours.

2. After the mixture is thickens stir in qaimar mixture.

3. Spoon the mixture to 5 dishes, topped with chopped pistachios, serve it warm or cold.

Useful Websites:

http://www.syriancooking.com/

http://shahiya.com/english/

www.lonelyplanet.com/dest/mea/syr

www.middleeastnews.com/syria

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