

# GAZA, PALESTINE

## Cultural Heritage: Cuisine

**GAZAN CUISINE:** The food of Palestine is incredibly diverse. Cooking styles and flavours vary by region, based on the climate, landscape, and traditions of each area. Gazan cuisine is especially vibrant, and is unique for its inclusion of seafood (Gaza is the only coastal area in the occupied Palestinian territories) and use of spices. Hot chilies (*filfil harag*) and dill (*'ayn jarada*) are an essential Gazan spice combination.

More than just food; Gazan cuisine and cooking has a vital social meaning and value. Shared meals are the cornerstone of social customs and family occasions. Songs, tales, and legends that accompany traditional meals have become fully part of Gaza's cultural heritage. Traditional Gazan cooking is rooted in respect for the natural landscape and biodiversity, and it safeguards the conservation and development of traditional activities and crafts linked to fishing and farming in the Gaza region.



The **zibdiyeh** is a traditional Gazan bowl made from clay at a cavernous factory in Gaza City. It is an essential tool in any Gazan kitchen, and is used for cooking, serving, and eating.



**Zibdiyit gambari** (shrimp stew) is a typical Gazan dish of shrimp with tomatoes, dill, spices and peppers stewed in a **zibdiyeh**.



**Rumanniyah**, a seasonal vegetarian stew made with tart pomegranates, lentils, eggplant and thickened with tahini.



**Filfil mat'houn** or **shatta** (hot chili paste) is a key ingredient in many Gazan recipes, and is produced locally.



**Dagga Ghazawiyeh** (Gaza salad) is a fiery-hot mash of tomatoes, cucumbers, dill and hot pepper pulverized with a **zibdiyeh** and bathed in olive oil.



**Sumaghiyyeh** originates from Gaza City, and is named after the spice sumac. This iconic meat and chard stew infused with sumac and red tahini is traditionally prepared for celebrations such as Eid, Christmas, or birthdays.



**Fiseikh** (salted fish) is typically eaten on the first day of Eid al-Fitr, at the end of the month of Ramadan. *Fiseikh* is believed to have health benefits such as detoxifying the stomach, which is beneficial after a month of fasting.



**knafa arabiya** is the ultimate dessert of the Gaza Strip. Varieties of *knafa* are made throughout the region, but *knafa arabiya* is the jewel of Gaza alone. Typically made in bakeries rather than at home, it is more rustic and richer in flavor than other *knafa* varieties: a rich, buttery sheet of layered walnuts and toasted semolina breadcrumbs perfumed generously with cinnamon and nutmeg, soaked in warm syrup.