





“Sharing food is at the heart of the community”

Food has the power to feed, nourish and unite. Ramona Andrews reports from Bristol, where she talks to women at a lunch held by 91 Ways, an organisation that’s bringing together people from around the world with sometimes life-changing results

REPORTAGE PHOTOGRAPHS **JOSEPH TURP** RECIPES **ELLA SHAH/SHIV SAMA, SUSAN ARAFEH, NEGAT HUSSEIN, AZZA MUSTAFA** FOOD PHOTOGRAPHS **MAJA SMEND** FOOD STYLING **LUCY O'REILLY** STYLING **LYDIA BRUN**





I’ve just arrived at a lunch hosted by the Bristol Hindu Temple and the kitchen is a flurry of activity. A team of cooks, some from the temple, some volunteers, are peeling potatoes, chopping cauliflower and rolling out dough. The spicy aromas of the cooking waft into the community hall where rows of tables are being laid. On the tables are cards asking guests to share details about their backgrounds and their food memories.

The lunch is organised by 91 Ways To Build A Global City (see p52). Its name might be a bit of a mouthful, but the premise is simple: bring people of different backgrounds together to share food and to build bridges between communities that would otherwise not have met.

As 91 Ways founder Kalpna Woolf puts it, “Food is a calling card. It doesn’t have an agenda. When people share food, they’re happy to talk about their heritage, and their likes and dislikes around that. It opens a door.”

The hall has a lively, party atmosphere, filled with the chattering voices of guests, including those from local charity Refugee Women of Bristol. The women are being swamped by schoolchildren, who’ve also been invited along for an unusually tasty food education.

The 91 Ways name comes from the number of languages known to be spoken in Bristol. Kalpna set up the organisation in 2015, aided by funding from Europe (Bristol was European Green Capital last year) with the aim of connecting as many of the different language communities in the city as possible.

Among the sound of laughter, I can hear conversations in Urdu, Arabic and Spanish, stirring up the air and mixing like the ingredients of a rich, simmering broth. When Kalpna later tallied up the number of languages spoken that day it came to a grand 25, including Shona (a Zimbabwean language), Quechua (a language native to Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru), Mandarin and Creole.

As lunch is plated up, women from the refugee charity, schoolchildren and the Temple’s hosts talk to each other about what they’re eating and what they like to cook at home. It becomes clear just how important this event is. Many of the Muslim guests could never have imagined setting foot in a Hindu temple before.

I overhear a Syrian and an Egyptian woman comparing their version of the Middle Eastern fava bean dish, ful medames. One of the schoolchildren reluctantly tries some cauliflower curry and concedes that it’s delicious.

Bringing people together through food is something we can all relate to,

“Food is a calling card. It doesn’t have an agenda. When people share food, they’re happy to talk about their heritage, likes and dislikes. It opens a door”

but it’s particularly important for temple-goers. The notion of *prasad* – an offering of food made to a deity in the temple that’s then distributed to worshippers – is central to the Hindu belief system.

As Kalpna says, “Some of the women here today have been through a lot. They want to integrate, they want to be part of Bristol. They come to our events and they feel wanted and empowered. We feel, and many people in our city tell us, that the work we are doing is a must-have and not a nice-to-have. Our communities and people feel disconnected from each other, which leads to people defining each other by their differences rather than their similarities. When we bring people together, people find common ground and walk away understanding their similarities.”

Sharing food and hospitality is at the heart of so many communities and cultures and here, today, that hospitality is on brilliant, flavoursome display.

Turn the page to meet the cooks and discover their recipes →



MEET THE COOK Ella Shah, Kenya

“When I came to the UK from Mombasa in 1972, there was a lot of discrimination, so you couldn’t get jobs easily. People would notice mistakes in your English, and the way you spoke. Back then it was hard to find vegetarian food. When I was in Kenya, if any non-vegetarian dish was around, I couldn’t stand the smell, but I’ve learned to tolerate meat-eating. My parents are Jains and don’t eat potatoes – we get our carbs mostly from lentils, chickpeas and mung beans. This chana is very like what we cook at home.”
Ella and the other volunteers cooked this recipe for chana masala, which came from another temple volunteer, Shivo Sama.

91 WAYS: HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

● **SHARE YOUR FOOD STORIES** If you live in the Bristol area, you can get involved with 91 Ways by attending their pop-up International Peace Cafe and other events. The organisation is also collecting food stories that tell of happiness, loss, conflict and more, and sharing them via the online community. Share your

own food memories at 91ways.org
● **HELP TO CROWD-FUND THE PROJECT** The Bristol 91 Ways project aims to be a template for cities across the UK. To make that possible, it has launched a crowd-funding campaign to raise money. Find out more at fundsurfer.com/91ways.



Ella’s chana masala

SERVES 2. HANDS-ON TIME 35 MIN, SIMMERING TIME 15 MIN, PLUS 24 HOURS SOAKING IF USING DRIED CHICKPEAS

MAKE AHEAD Make up to 24 hours ahead, cover and chill. Reheat in a pan on the hob.

- 200g dried chickpeas (or 2 x 400g tins chickpeas, drained and rinsed) – dried chickpeas have a better taste and texture than tinned
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- Thumb-size piece fresh ginger, grated
- 1 medium green chilli, finely chopped
- 3-4 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 level tsp ground turmeric
- ¼ tsp chilli powder
- 1 tsp garam masala
- ½ tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- Handful fresh coriander, chopped
- Natural yogurt and lemon wedges to serve

- 1 If using dried chickpeas, soak them overnight, covered, in a pan of lukewarm water. The next morning, drain the water and cover with fresh water. Add ½ tsp salt and boil until soft (about 1½-2 hours). Drain and set aside.
 - 2 Put the garlic, ginger and chilli in a small bowl and mix together into a coarse paste.
 - 3 Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat and fry the onion for 10-15 minutes until soft and starting to brown. Add the cumin seeds and the ginger, garlic and chilli paste, and cook for a few seconds. Add the tomatoes and stir for 2 minutes, adding salt to taste.
 - 4 Add the turmeric, chilli powder, garam masala, ground coriander and ground cumin and stir well to combine, then add the chickpeas and cook for 15 minutes. Stir in the chopped coriander and serve with a dollop of yogurt and lemon wedges to squeeze over.
- PER SERVING** 591kcal, 23.8g fat (3g saturated), 28.1g protein, 63.7g carbs (15.3g sugars), 0.2g salt, 4.6g fibre

*** Negat’s zigni berbere**

SERVES 4-6. HANDS-ON TIME 25 MIN, SIMMERING TIME 1 HOUR 30 MIN

- MAKE AHEAD** Cover and chill for up to 48 hours or freeze for up to 1 month. Defrost, then heat.
- FOOD TEAM’S TIP** As a cheat, you can buy Bart berbere blend from Waitrose and Sainsbury’s.

- 50ml vegetable oil
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1kg British free-range skinless and boneless chicken thighs, cut into cubes
- 2 x 400g tins plum tomatoes
- 2 beef stock cubes
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 125ml dry red wine (optional)
- Bunch fresh coriander, roughly chopped, plus extra to serve
- Lemon wedges to serve
- Eritrean injera flatbreads (or regular flatbreads) or rice and a green salad to serve

FOR THE BERBERE PEPPER BLEND

- 1 tsp each ground ginger, fenugreek and black pepper
- ½ tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp ground cardamom
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- ¼ tsp ground allspice
- Pinch ground cinnamon
- ½ tbsp fine sea salt
- 1 tbsp mild paprika

- 1 In a large pan, heat a plug of oil. Add the onions and fry for 5 minutes until starting to colour, then add the garlic and fry for 2-3 minutes more or until the onions are golden.
 - 2 Mix the berbere ingredients in a small bowl and set aside (or see tip). Add the chicken to the onions and fry, turning, until starting to colour. Add the remaining ingredients, including the berbere blend, and simmer gently until the meat is tender (1-1½ hours). Taste, season and serve with the accompaniments.
- PER SERVING (FOR 6)** 332kcal, 12.3g fat (2.4g saturated), 38.3g protein, 11.2g carbs (9.5g sugars), 3.1g salt, 4.1g fibre →

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHS: JOSEPH TURP

people.



MEET THE COOK Negat Hussein, Eritrea

“I left Eritrea at the age of five, went to Sweden via Sudan and came to the UK at 19 to go to university. When I first moved to Bristol it was difficult to meet people but over the years it got easier. In Eritrea we use our fingers to eat together – it shows we’re all on the same level. You eat together from a big plate in the middle and wait for each other to share the food. It’s difficult to eat British food with your hands – except maybe fish fingers! Zigni berbere is a spicy stew, typical Eritrean food, and berbere is a popular spice blend that goes into it. We eat the stew with injera, a spongy-textured flatbread.”



MEET THE COOK

Azza Mustafa, Sudan

“In our culture, when a visitor comes round, you always provide food or drink. It says ‘I’m welcoming you and I’m glad to have you here with me.’ I love what 91 Ways is doing in the city. I live in another part of Bristol but I came all this way to meet new people. I love to cook with others too. We talk about kids, normal life, the weather, missing your family, and we support each other. Basbousa is for a special occasion. It’s an Arab sweet, and you can find it in all Arab countries. I learned to make it in Sudan. My mum makes it all the time, and when I cook it I remember her.”





Azza’s basbousa (sweet semolina cake)
SERVES 12-14. HANDS-ON TIME 15 MIN, OVEN TIME 25 MIN

- MAKE AHEAD

Make up to 24 hours ahead and store somewhere cool, well covered.
- FOOD TEAM’S TIP

It might look like there is far too much syrup but the cake will absorb it all.

- FOR THE SYRUP
- 450g caster sugar
 - 2 tbsp lemon or orange juice
- FOR THE CAKE
- 110g butter, melted, plus extra for greasing
 - 280ml full-fat greek yogurt
 - 200g caster sugar
 - 240g semolina
 - 1 tbsp baking powder

YOU’LL ALSO NEED

- 28cm x 18cm cake tin at least 6cm deep, greased with butter and lined with non-stick baking paper

- 1** To make the syrup, put the sugar and 340ml cold water into a pan over a medium heat and let the sugar dissolve. Add the lemon or orange juice and bring to a boil. Once the syrup begins to boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer gently for 8-10 minutes. Remove from the heat.
- 2** Heat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas 4. In a mixing bowl, combine the butter, yogurt and sugar using a metal spoon. In a separate large bowl, combine the semolina and baking powder. Carefully fold the butter mixture into the semolina until just combined.
- 3** Pour the batter into the tin and bake for 25 minutes until golden and a skewer pushed into the middle comes out clean. Slowly pour the syrup over the cake until no more can be absorbed. Cool, then turn out onto a large plate or board. Cut into diamond shapes to serve.
- PER SERVING (FOR 14)** 332kcal, 8.3g fat (5.3g saturated), 3.9g protein, 60.3g carbs (47.3g sugars), 0.4g salt, 0.5g fibre




Susan’s ful medames 
SERVES 2 AS A STARTER OR 4 AS A SNACK.
HANDS-ON TIME 15 MIN

- MAKE AHEAD

Prepare the beans up to 24 hours in advance and keep covered in the fridge.
- 400g tin broad beans or fava beans
 - Pinch paprika
 - Pinch cinnamon (optional)
 - Juice 2 lemons
 - 3 garlic cloves, crushed
 - 3 large tomatoes, deseeded and finely chopped
 - 80ml olive oil

- Bunch fresh flatleaf parsley, finely chopped
- Pitta bread to serve

- 1** Put the broad/fava beans in a medium pan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil, then drain.
- 2** Transfer the beans to a bowl and add a good pinch of salt and black pepper, the paprika and cinnamon and mix well. Add the remaining ingredients and mix again. Serve with freshly toasted pitta bread.
- PER SERVING** 224kcal, 15.5g fat (2.2g saturated), 6.3g protein, 11.7g carbs (4.2g sugars), 0.5g salt, 6.5g fibre 



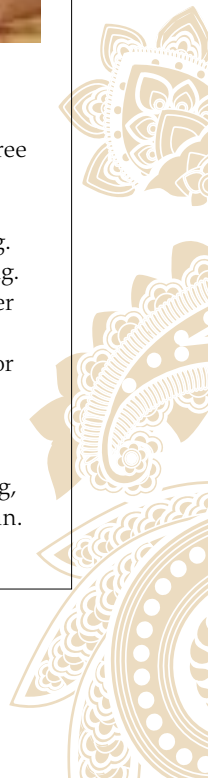
MEET THE COOK

Susan Arafah, Syria

“I came to the UK in 2012 to visit my daughter, who was doing her masters degree here. When things became bad in Syria, I had to stay. I was a lecturer in English at Damascus University, but I lost everything. My career, my life, my students. Everything. It’s not easy to think about it. I’m a member of the Refugee Women of Bristol and now I volunteer there. Food is an essential factor to bring people together. If you cook for someone and you see in their eyes that they enjoy it and appreciate it, you feel satisfaction. You did something. By sharing, by talking, giggling, chatting, being human. I love cooking for that.”



NEXT MONTH
Residents of a small town in Devon get together for their annual harvest festival



people.