

FOOD: ANNE DAY

Lebanese Chef Shares Her Kitchen Secrets

The Lebanese Taverna on Dec. 5 at the White Hart is so successful that it had sold out all 50 places long before I had the wits to book a reservation. In fact, it was sold out within days of announcing it. In conjunction with Annie Wayte, the chef at The White Hart, Zeina Mehio has planned a memorable dinner of her own interpretations of Lebanese cuisine.

Bereft that I was unable to secure a place at this special dinner, I called up the chef to see if I could, at least, glean some secrets of her famous Lebanese cuisine.

Mehio graciously shared Thursday's menu with me and also provided me with a recipe.

This Lebanese software engineer who ran a successful worldwide business in Senegal is a native of Beirut who has

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also lived in Paris, she moved to Lakeville in 2013. In addition to running an ecotourism company focusing on corporate team building, Mehio is an accomplished chef. She says that she loves American food, French food and African food and never follows any recipe to the letter, the way her mother did, she says that she likes "to play, to experiment, I love these foods." She missed the cuisine of her native Beirut so she recreates them at home for her family and also now, for the first time at Thursday's Lebanese Taverna at The White Hart (I hope this won't be the only time they do this dinner).

She likes to work with all of the flavors of the Mediterranean — lamb, fresh vegetables, cinnamon, cumin, Aleppo pepper, pomegranate molasses, onions, garlic, cilantro ginger — you get the idea. And she provided me with this recipe which she said is simple enough even for an unpracticed middle eastern chef like me.

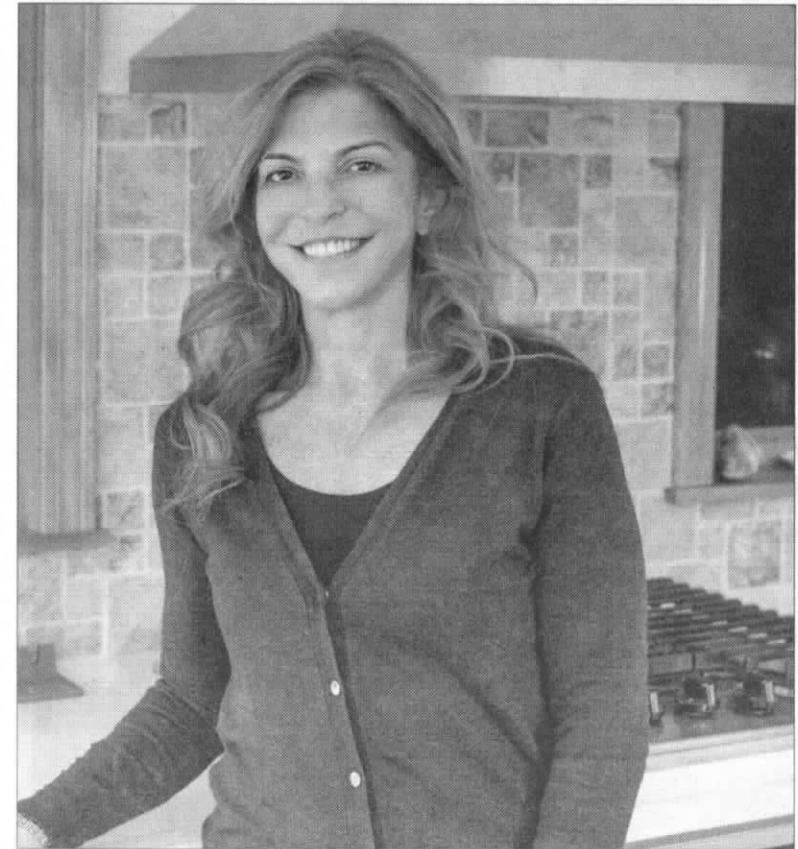


PHOTO BY ANNE DAY

Zeina Mehio shares her interpretations of Lebanese cuisine.

MUJADARA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 c dried green lentils rinsed and sorted
- 1/2 c coarse wheat (bulgur)
- 3 large onions thinly sliced
- 2 tbs olive oil
- 4 c water
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1 tsp cumin

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large pot, heat 1 tbs olive oil over medium high heat and add the onion slices.
2. Cook until dark brown and caramelized.
3. Remove onions from pan and set aside.
4. Add lentils and water to the same pan and boil on medium heat for 10-12 minutes, uncovered.
5. Stir in bulgur, cumin, salt and pepper then bring to a simmer.
6. Place a lid on the pan then reduce heat to low.
7. Cook for 15 additional minutes then fluff with a fork.
8. Transfer the lentil and bulgur wheat mixture to a platter and top with caramelized onions.
9. Serve with tomato salad or yogurt