

Homeland inspiration

A Lebanese migrant shares her love of the cuisine of her homeland, and her passion for cooking, with **VERA BERTOLA**.



Souad El Haddad shows how quick and tasty her tuna macaroni salad is to put together.

Picture: ROBERT POZO

SOUAD EL Haddad and her husband make a great team.

Lebanese-born Souad, who now lives in Macquarie Fields, just loves cooking.

"I love the kitchen, I love it. It's my favourite place," she said.

And fortunately, her husband loves food and especially his wife's cooking.

Souad can often be found in her kitchen whipping up a storm, much to her husband's delight.

She has been in Australia

eight years and feels most comfortable cooking Lebanese-style food – her husband's favourite – although she admits she is also happy to take ideas from other cuisines and incorporate them into her own cooking.

Her tuna macaroni salad is a favourite – quick to make and relatively inexpensive – while her husband enjoys a good tabbouleh.

She also enjoys vegetable dishes: vine leaves stuffed with meat and rice (wara'

enab) and likewise stuffed zucchini cooked in yoghurt (koussa bil-laban).

Lebanese food is internationally renowned: there's few people who haven't tucked in to a fattoush or falafel or enjoyed pita bread coated with hummus.

The cuisine is based on herbs and spices (thyme, cumin, sumac and parsley, among others) and the freshness of ingredients, especially the wide range of vegetables.

inspiration



The tuna macaroni salad features some Lebanese cuisine flavours.

Fresh and tasty

TUNA MACARONI SALAD INGREDIENTS

500g macaroni, 1 tspn salt, 3 tbsp olive oil, four cups water, 1/2 cup chopped green onion, 1 cup chopped mint, 1 cup mixed capsicums chopped (seeded and de-stemmed), 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley (packed), 2 cans of tuna in olive oil undrained (if tuna packed in water, drain water and add 2-3 tbsp olive oil), 2 stalks celery chopped juice of 1/2 lemon, freshly squeezed, 1/4-1/3 head of lettuce preferably iceberg sliced first and roughly chopped into 5cm long strips, fresh ground pepper.

METHOD

1. In a saucepan, add one cup of elbow macaroni to boiling salted water. Simmer for about 10 minutes until the macaroni is just a little more cooked than al dente. Remove from heat, drain and rinse with cold water.

2. While the macaroni is cooking, assemble the other ingredients. In a large bowl mix the green onion, capsicum, parsley, tuna, celery and lemon. Add the drained macaroni. Fold in the iceberg lettuce until well mixed. Add ground pepper to taste.

Using this base, the assortment of Lebanese dishes and combinations are almost limitless. Poultry is more common than red meat, and when red meat is eaten it is usually lamb on the coast and goat meat in the mountain regions. Lebanese food also includes garlic and olive oil, often seasoned by lemon juice.

■ Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative runs a healthy food for new arrivals class in Minto each Wednesday. Details: Fatin Alrawi on 4627 1188.



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