



## Sharing food, hospitality and breaking down barriers

**Lina Jebeile is a food stylist, professional photographer and former secondary school teacher. An Australian born Muslim of Lebanese heritage, who grew up in the suburbs of Sydney to Lebanese migrant parents Lina lived in a world of two cultures – the Lebanese one at home and the Australian one at school. She is proud of her Australian-Lebanese upbringing and brings her passion for food and hospitality to her work.**

Lina will speak at the annual Iftar Dinner in partnership with Affinity Intercultural Foundation, the Uniting Church in Australia and Uniting at Parramatta Mission on 5 June and share her insights into how hospitality and food can bring people together, break down stereotypes and build harmony.

Lina quietly became a local celebrity with her #spreadhummusnothate community campaign in 2016-17. The community campaign which had her visiting local churches and even the local police station quickly gained media attention and took her by surprise.

“I wasn’t expecting this kind of coverage to be honest,” Lina explains on her blog *The Lebanese Plate*. “In fact, I wasn’t too sure what to expect. What I did know was I didn’t want this to be a political or religious movement. What I was hoping though was to connect people, not online, but in real world situations.”

The idea behind the campaign was to encourage real human interaction between people from different walks of life. To build bridges, rather than burn them around the idea of hospitality.

As she explains she “wanted to take the powerful act of food sharing – something so ridiculously obvious and commonplace – to break down barriers and build friendships. I needed people, myself included, to take a step outside their comfort zone and ask questions, have



conversations and learn more about ‘the other’ who may live next door, down the road or the next neighbourhood.

“Essentially I wanted to take it offline with the intention to bring people together who usually wouldn’t run in each others’ circles. People who wouldn’t usually sit and have a conversation. I wanted to give the average Australian an opportunity to have open, respectful dialogue so they can see that although we all have our differences, we can still get along and live in the one society, harmoniously.”

The #spreadhummusnothate campaign has slowed down now as she is busy with a number of things, but she brings her passion to connect people over food and hospitality to everything she does.



*Food is our common ground,  
a universal experience*

LINA JEBEILE



## Would your Congregation like to host an Iftar Dinner?

In a sign of solidarity and friendship with the Muslim community, the Uniting Church will co-host Iftar dinners with Muslim partners during Ramadan this year. If your Congregation would like to host a dinner there are many things to consider when thinking about an interfaith event.

Ramadan is a significant and sacred time for Muslims, marked by fasting, one of the five pillars of Islam. The Iftar meal is the 'breaking of the fast' for Muslims at sunset each day throughout Ramadan. The sharing of the Iftar meal between Muslims and non-Muslims has become a powerful symbol of solidarity and unity.

### Here are 4 steps to think about prior to hosting an event

#### 1. Partner with a Muslim organisation

Ramadan is a Muslim festival and the Iftar meal is an important ritual for Muslims at this time. It is a great idea for the Iftar Dinner to be organised in partnership with a Muslim community or organisation. The significance of the Iftar meal for our Muslim partners should be honoured and understood.

#### 2. Find a congregation to host the meal

Ideally the Iftar dinner will take place inside a Uniting Church hall or venue. It is a gesture of hospitality and welcome to invite people of the Muslim faith into our 'home' or 'space'. It is also a significant gesture by our Muslim partners to partake of this important ritual in another faiths' community. Hospitality and welcome are important themes of Ramadan and are essential to building interfaith friendship.

#### 3. Invite guests

The number of guests invited should be split equally between the Muslim partner and Uniting Church to ensure an equal number from both communities. You want to create opportunities for conversation and encounter between the two faiths.

When inviting guests from the Uniting Church, seek to include senior leaders (for example Presbytery Chair, Minister, Moderator, General Secretary) as well as representatives of the community or congregation where the dinner is being held. The presence of leaders underlines the Uniting Church's commitment to stand alongside the Muslim community in Australia. The dinner is also an opportunity to build genuine relationships at the community level.

#### 4. Organise catering

Organise this in liaison with your Muslim partner to ensure the food meets their dietary requirements. Also take note of any other food requirements of guests from other faiths, for example for Jewish guests food must be kosher.

## THE LEBANESE PLATE



### Quick Hummus

#### Ingredients

- 3 cups canned chickpeas
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons tahini
- 1/3 – 2/3 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon cumin (optional)
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil (plus more for serving)

#### Instructions

1. Drain chickpeas and peel off skin. (Peeling skin off chickpeas gives you a much smoother end result, but this is optional)
2. Place salt and garlic into a mortar and pestle. Crush to form a paste.
3. Place chickpeas with the garlic/salt paste into a food processor. Add remaining ingredients (including cumin if you wish, I love that spicy flavour).
4. Process all ingredients until it all comes together. When it starts to resemble a paste, stop blending and scrape down sides. Do this a couple of times to make sure everything is mixed evenly.
5. If the mixture looks too thick I usually add an extra tablespoon or two of extra virgin olive oil. Or you can just add water, a little bit at a time until you get the thinner consistency you desire.
6. Serve topped with a good drenching of olive oil. You can also top it with radish, pine nuts, parsley or a sprinkle of paprika. It's yummiest when eaten with fresh Lebanese bread!



#### Lina's Top Tip

*The making and preferred taste of hummus can be very subjective. I know many who make it different with more lemon, more garlic and even lots more tahini. This recipe here is how I like it. Feel free to use this as a guide & add or minus the amount of lemon juice or garlic to taste.*

# The theme for Iftar in 2018 is Building Harmony

One way of making a link between the different events being held across the country is with a common theme – harmony.

The Iftar dinner is about hospitality, welcome, respect and our desire to learn more about the other. From this we hope to create new friendships between Muslims and UCA members.

## THE LEBANESE PLATE

### Mu'jadara: Lentils & Rice



#### Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups brown lentils
- 1 cup rice
- 2/3 cup olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baharat
- 3 brown onions
- 5 cups

#### Instructions

1. Place lentils in a large saucepan with 4 cups of stock (or water), salt and baharat. Bring this to the boil and allow to continue boiling for 15 minutes.
2. In the meantime, finely slice onions.
3. Cook onions in a saucepan with the olive oil for about 10 minutes or until caramelised and golden brown.
4. After 15 minutes, add the rice, 3/4 of the caramelised onions plus one cup of stock (or water) to lentils (set aside remaining caramelised onions for serving).
5. Cover and leave to simmer on low heat for another 15 minutes until rice is cooked (Tip: I usually turn heat off after 10 minutes. I leave lid on saucepan and allow steam to finish cooking the rice).
6. Eat it warm or cold with the caramelised onions you set aside.



#### Lina's Top Tip

Great served with some natural yoghurt & salad on the side!



*although we all have our differences, we can  
live in the one society, harmoniously*

LINA JEBEILE

## THE LEBANESE PLATE



# Apple Tarts & Baklava Crumble

### Ingredients

- 2 large Crimson Snow apples (or Pink Lady)
- 1/4 of a lemon
- 50g unsalted butter, melted
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 sheet puff pastry
- 1/3 cup pistachio, coarsely chopped
- 1/3 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped
- 1/3 cup almonds, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon white sugar
- 1 tablespoon butter (extra), melted

### Instructions

1. Use a 20cm oven-proof frying pan as a template to cut out a circle from the pastry sheet. Core and thinly slice up two large apples. Overlap apples around the same frying pan. Squeeze lemon juice over apples to keep from browning.
2. On a medium heat add the 50g of melted butter over the top of apples with the brown sugar and a tablespoon of water. Once sugar dissolves & begins to thicken, remove from heat and place pastry sheet over the top of apples.
3. Place the frying pan into a 200 °C pre-heated oven. You will know it's ready once puff pastry is golden and crisp. This should take approximately 10-12 minutes.
4. As you wait for the tart to cook, prepare baklava nuts and spices by toasting nuts in a small saucepan for 2 – 3 minutes. Add the additional 1 tablespoon of butter, white sugar & cinnamon. Take off heat once butter is melted, sugar dissolves and all ingredients are combined.



### Lina's Top Tip

Turn out tart onto a plate and serve with the baklava nuts and spices and a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

## What an Iftar Dinner Event might look like

The program for each event will be tailored to the local context and devised in consultation with Muslim partners. The following may provide a guide.

**Call to Prayer:** Organised by Muslim partners, the call to prayer marks the "breaking of the fast".

### Space for Muslim Prayer

**Welcome to Guests:** Offered in turn by the Uniting Church and Muslim partner.

**Sharing on Ramadan:** By Muslim partners, outlining the significance of Ramadan in the Islamic faith and how Muslims in Australia observe the festival.

**Meal:** An important time to encourage conversation and sharing.

**Guest Speaker:** Invite a Muslim person to speak on a particular theme or subject or to tell some of their story, for example someone who arrived in Australia as a refugee, someone involved in the community or who has achieved success in a particular field.

**Conversation:** Ensure there is enough time for people at the dinner to mix and meet and share stories.

**Seating:** Place Muslim and UCA guests next to each other.



## Want to host your own event? Need some inspiration?

For more tips:

<http://bit.ly/InterfaithResources>

For more delicious recipes visit Lina's blog:  
[thelebaneseplate.com](http://thelebaneseplate.com)