

I grew up in Palestine where we always ate big lunches (instead of big dinners) right after school with my family at the kitchen table. Dishes were always hand-washed, ingredients were always seasonal and Zataar was always made by my Tita (grandma). My recipes are influenced by my Palestinian roots and American living, my travels, my mama, my titas, farmers markets, nostalgia, and of course my family and friends from all over. My food journey takes place around my kitchen in Chicago. I am often surrounded by dishes in the sink, Barbie's/Legos on the floor, and our dog who hangs around the kitchen hoping to catch some crumbs. Cooking has been my creative outlet and my source of relaxation despite the stacks of dishes. I was inspired by mom and my tita who are both amazing cooks. My grandma had her own garden, she planted everything from tomatoes, garlic, herbs, zucchini, etc... to almonds, olives, lemons, apricots, and fig trees that my sido (grandpa) planted almost 100 years ago in our family garden in Jerusalem. My passion developed by watching and cooking with my mom in the kitchen. As a working family, my sister and I had to complete the meals that my mom started at the crack of dawn before going to work. My mom loved to try out new recipes from her work travels, she often brought home new spices, cheeses, and pasta. She loved to entertain and cook for family and friends and almost always made cake on the weekends. Almond & Fig, is a memoir told through food. I cook to remember the place I came from (Palestine) and to pass that connection on to my children.