



This page: Loaves of challah, one of Judaism's seminal recipes, ready for sale at the Landner bakery in Jerusalem's Beit Israel ultra-orthodox neighborhood. Opposite page: Roasting sesame seeds at a tahini factory in East Jerusalem.



Century-old bakeries line their shelves with challah, the bread eaten on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays.

Nearby, hole-in-the-wall restaurants specialize in grilled offal, and Jewish Kurdish eateries simmer heritage dishes over kerosene stoves. Just about every menu offers something stuffed: a stuffed fruit or vegetable, stuffed pastries like baklava, stuffed neck of lamb, or the stuffed semolina dumplings known as kubbeh. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish homes all churn out countless variations of stuffed foods—a beloved but labor-intensive form of cooking that used to be reserved only for holiday meals but has now received widespread attention.

The Jerusalem bagel (ka'ak in Arabic) is also enjoyed by nearly all city residents, regardless of creed or class. An elongated ring of dough sprinkled with toasted sesame seeds, it is baked in traditional wooden stoves in family-owned bakeries in the Old City's Muslim quarter. A Jewish influence—sour cream—has been added to it to make part of East Jerusalem's most popular breakfast: a bagel served with za'atar, falafel, and a hard-boiled egg. Although the modern-day bagel only bears a passing resemblance to Jerusalem's sesame-covered rings, it has nevertheless been one of the seeds of a mainstream phenomenon: the near global obsession with bagels.

Meanwhile, outside the city walls, nature does its part to contribute to the flavors of old Jerusalem. Wild caper bushes flourish in the walls' crevices, and the hills around the city are home to wild herbs consumed since Biblical times. These herbs were once an important source of nutrition for people who could