

The Ein Yahav settlement in the northern Arava is home to many greenhouses like this one, growing tomatoes with a wide spectrum of flavors and colors.



INTRODUCING ... SHAKSHUKA

If tomatoes could choose their bedfellows, Israelis like to imagine they would lie down with eggs. That is because this prodigious pairing yields a dish that has become a favorite not just in Israel, but all across the Middle East. The debate rages on about who came up with shakshuka (recipe page 256) first—the Turks, Tunisians, Moroccans, Yemenis, and Libyans all claim it as their own. But one thing is certain: everyone has a preferred version these days. This simple dish, whose name means “all mixed up” in Hebrew, can be found all over Israel, from cozy home kitchens to chic cafés. It is a one-pan dish (ideally it should be served sizzling in the pan it was cooked in) that goes with just about everything, and it is a great way to use up all those overly ripe tomatoes lying around your kitchen.



Fruits and vegetables flourish in the Arava’s fields and greenhouses, benefitting from the region’s nearly endless summer.

were generations ago. To this day, in Bedouin villages, elderly women still cook the traditional cuisine of the nomad. Flat, thin pita bread is baked on the saj, a convex tin pan placed over a campfire. Afig, a pungent cheese of dried goat or sheep’s milk is made in the springtime and left to dry in the sun and the hot desert air—the dried cheese chunks, never refrigerated, are eaten year-round, with a little water added to restore their moistness. Then there is bsisa, an ancient Bedouin “energy snack” with its sharp, smoky aroma, made of toasted ground flour mixed with olive oil, water, sugar, and salt. In the past, even when roaming tribes could not stop to light a fire, they knew they could rely on nutritious bsisa for a quick hunger fix.

Traditionally, the Bedouin ate meat sparingly, instead relying on their flocks to provide the milk and wool necessary for living. Meat was reserved for holidays, special occasions, or to welcome an honored guest, but when it was