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Tastes of the Levant

Menios Constantinou

FROM Surry Hills to Bankstown, Sydneysiders have for years known the staples of Lebanese food – tabouleh, felafel, hummus and the like – but we come across some common home-style dishes far less often.

Ever heard of the lentil and rice pilaf dish, *moujadara*? What about *znoud el-sit*, the pastries stuffed with mince and pine nuts?

Norma Dakhoul was raised in a migrant household where cooking and eating these dishes was a part of everyday life.

Dakhoul was born in Daraya, a small village in the north of Lebanon, and lived there until her family moved to Australia when she was 11.

It was here that she developed a love of Lebanese food, which eventually led her to establish her Bondi Junction-based cooking school.

“An adventure, not just a cooking business,” Dakhoul said



The staples of Lebanese food: felafel, hummus, tabouleh, chicken and shish kebab.
Photo: KATRINA TEPPER

of her business. “It’s a unique experience to mix the culture, history and cooking methods in a way that stimulates your mind and tastebuds.

“I can still remember the scent of fresh herbs and spices, ripe lemons and crushed garlic that filled our home and have such nostalgic memories of rolling up vine leaves and making fresh Lebanese bread.

“My mother placed such importance on family at mealtimes

and by creating Norma’s Lebanese Foods I hope to share some of this passion for Lebanese food and culture with as many people as possible.”

Dakhoul’s cooking classes are held on Saturdays from March 27 and each class ends with a full sit-down meal.

The cost is \$120 per person and classes are held at 70 Bronte Road, Bondi Junction. Visit www.normaslebanesefoods.com.au.