MIDDLE EASTERN FOOD

Find here some relatively easy suggestions, if you would like your event to include food with a Middle Eastern touch. Check your supermarket (ask a manager, for they may have things you don't know about), and also check Trader Joe's. Many of these items are there.

Menu Suggestions

TO START

Pita bread cut in small pieces, roughly triangular - used for dips such as:

Hummus (made from chick peas) and Baba Ghanouj (made from eggplant)
Both can benefit from adding some oil and lemon to store-bought varieties.

Olives, both green and black - several varieties would be good - olives are very popular in the region.
Can also serve other marinated things like artichoke hearts, mushrooms, etc.

Cheese - Find a mild slightly salty spanish cheese (available in many stores) - they are similar to some middle eastern cheeses. Usually served cut in pieces about 2"x3" and about 1/4" thick. Can put in Pita bread, on melba crackers, or just eat it plain. Try grilling it lightly - it's delicious - see picture. Can do it in a pan on the stove or in the oven.
Salad: Tabbouli - can find in stores, but needs some tweaking, see suggestions below

ENTREES

Middle Eastern Chicken and Rice casserole - see recipe below

Garlic Chicken - just mash garlic and marinate chicken pieces in it, or buy mashed fresh garlic in a jar.

To make garlic sauce with some oil and seasoning, see recipe below. Use the garlic sauce as a marinade. Also, spread your garlic mash or sauce on chicken to broil it in the oven or BBQ it.

Lamb, beef, and chicken kabobs, marinate meat first – see marinade for Lamb Shish Kabob below. Get wood skewers for these at grocery store.

SIDE DISHES

Potato Latkes (left) - a great traditional Jewish dish and everyone loves them. See recipe below.

Vegetable Kabobs: eggplant chunks, zucchini, tomatoes
Get wood skewers from grocery store

can broil meat and vegetables in oven, or BBQ them

Green beans in tomatoes - see recipe below

Falafel (right) - can be found at many Middle Eastern fast food places

If you don't make the Chicken and Rice casserole...
Rice pilaf or Couscous - Near East brand is good for either of those (left).

Lentil soup or a lentil side dish, or a lentil and rice mix
Progresso Lentil Soup in cans is a good choice for this.
You could even drain the broth and mix them with the rice pilaf above.

Actually, Near East has their own lentil and rice pilaf, but this mix of the soup lentils and the rice might be tastier.

Stuffed grape leaves - (could also be served in the starter course) stuffed with rice and meat, or just rice. Greek variety easy to find in some stores (Greek grape leaves are often served cold and are a bit more oily than Middle Eastern, which are more lemony and often served hot).

DESSERT

Baklava - very traditional throughout all the Middle East and also a Greek dessert.

Apple Strudel - a traditional Jewish dessert - pretty easy to find in bakery departments.
Cut in serving size pieces.

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**Recipes**

**Tabbouli** is available in many stores, but it should be made with a majority of green parsley and scallions, not primarily grain. You could add some minced flat parsley (not the curly variety) and long green onions to the tabbouli you find in stores. Also needs tomatoes. Take a look at the photos to see how it should look.

Or buy the box mix, the Near East brand (in the rice aisle of all US supermarkets), which will provide you with the correct grain for the salad (it's call burghul and should be finely ground). But again, the salad should not be primarily grain, so add a lot of finely minced flat parsley and long green onions or scallions (more of the parsley). You can put those in a food processor to mince them. There should be more greens than grain. Also add tomatoes in small bites. The dressing is lemon juice and olive oil, with some garlic powder and salt to taste.

Adding lemon juice to store bought tabbouli helps it a lot - be generous, it shouldn't be dry.

**Lentil Soup** - healthy recipe; contains onions, garlic, spinach, cinnamon...it's yummy. Serves 8 -10

**OR JUST USE PROGRESSO’S AND ADD SOME SEASONING FROM THIS RECIPE**

**Ingredients**
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro, stems removed
- 12 cloves garlic
- olive oil
- 2 1/2 teaspoons salt, divided
- 2 large onions, chopped fine
- 1 lb lentils, washed and drained
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 12 cups water
1 (10 ounce) box frozen spinach
2 medium potatoes, cubed
6 tablespoons lemon juice

Preparation
1. Place cilantro in a food processor with garlic,
3 Tbsp oil, and 1/2 teaspoon of salt.
2. Process until mixture forms a paste.
3. Set aside.
4. Sauté onions in 1/4 cup of olive oil until light brown.
5. Add lentils and mix.
6. Cook on medium heat for a few minutes.
7. Add cinnamon and water.
8. Turn heat to medium-high and cook, uncovered, for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally.
9. Turn heat to medium, add remaining salt, spinach, potatoes and cilantro paste.
10. and cook, uncovered, on low heat until lentils are creamy.
11. Add lemon juice and continue cooking, uncovered, for 10 minutes.
12. (Total cooking time about 1 1/2 hours.) This soup can be served cold, warm or hot.

Middle Eastern Chicken and Rice dish - truly delicious!

Ingredients
* 3 tablespoons olive oil
* 4 boneless skinless chicken thighs or chicken breasts
* 2 diced onions
* 300 g ground beef or ground lamb
* 1 tablespoon minced garlic
* 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
* 1 teaspoon ground allspice
* 1/4 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper or hot chili flakes
* 3/4 teaspoon salt
* 1 1/2 cups long grain rice
* 3 cups hot stock (you can use 3 beef or chicken stock cubes, if so omit the salt)
* 2 tablespoons pine nuts
* 2 tablespoons minced parsley

Directions
1. Heat the olive oil over high heat in a pan.
2. Sauté the chicken on both sides until golden brown.
3. Remove the chicken from the pan and set aside.
4. Add the onion and ground beef to the same hot pan.
5. Cook until the onions and meat is beginning to brown, then add the garlic and cook another minute or two.
6. Add the cinnamon, allspice, cayenne pepper (or chilli flakes) and salt; sauté two minutes while stirring.
7. Stir in the rice making sure that it is fully covered with the oil and spices, place the chicken in the rice.
8. Add the pine nuts.
9. Pour in the stock or water and cover. Cook slowly for about half an hour. Stir occasionally and as you do so allow the chicken to break up. You may need to add extra hot water if the rice gets a little dry.
10. Remove the pan from the heat and sprinkle with minced parsley.

Garlic Sauce
This is the definitive garlic sauce, perfect for serving like a mayonnaise (but there's no mayonnaise in it) - brush on chicken before grilling, or simply put in a sandwich as a condiment. Can also let meat sit in it as a marinade.

Ingredients
4 cloves garlic
3 - 4 cups olive oil
Salt to taste
The juice of one lemon

Preparation
Crush the garlic with a little salt in a mortar and pestle or easier still, in a blender. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil but keep beating. (You don't want to 'break' the sauce.)

Keep drizzling until you have a fine white fluffy garlic mayonnaise. When you think it's fine and white and fluffy enough (this will take a while, 10 minutes or so at least, more if you're pounding), add lemon juice but keep beating. Add salt and add extra lemon juice to taste.
Marinade for Lamb Shish Kebob
2 parts wine vinegar (example: 1/2 cup)
2 parts olive oil (example: 1/2 cup)
1 part red wine (example: 1/4 cup)
garlic powder and salt to taste - don't skimp

Mix enough of this marinade to cover the meat you will be grilling or BBQing. Allow meat to marinate overnight.

Potato Latkes
Ingredients:
* 4 large potatoes
* 1 medium onion
* 1 large egg
* 1 tsp. salt
* 1/2 tsp. white pepper
* 1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
* 1/2 tsp. baking powder
* vegetable oil (for frying)

Preparation:
1. Grate potatoes and onion. Transfer to colander and squeeze mixture to press out as much liquid as possible.
2. In a large bowl, mix egg, salt, pepper, flour and baking powder. Add potato and onions, and mix well.
3. Heat oil in a deep, heavy skillet.
4. Drop about 2 tablespoons of potato mixture into the pan for each pancake. Flatten with back of spoon so each pancake is about 2 1/2 to 3 inches in diameter.
5. Fry over medium heat for about 4 to 5 minutes on each side, or until golden brown and crisp. Turn carefully with 2 spatulas so oil does not splatter.
6. Drain on paper towels.
7. Before frying each new batch, stir potato mixture. If all the oil is absorbed, add a little more to the pan.
8. Serve hot with applesauce, or sour cream, or sugar.
Green Beans in Tomatoes

Ingredients
* Fresh green string beans, or frozen.
* 1 large can of crushed tomatoes, or diced or stewed
  - can have seasoning in it if you like.
* 3 brown onions, chopped
* 2 cloves of garlic crushed - you can substitute minced garlic in a jar
* 3 tbs olive oil
* 2 tbs lemon juice
* salt & pepper
  You could also add herbs that you like.
  But notice if the tomatoes you got have some.

1. Cook the beans until moderately done, not very soft. 2. Heat the olive oil in a pan over a medium heat. Add the chopped onions and sauté them until soft, around 10 minutes. OR you could skip this step and just used minced onions in a jar. 3. Add to the onions: the garlic, beans, salt and pepper (and any herbs if you chose some), and sauté for on a low heat for a few minutes (5-15 mins), until beans are pretty soft. 4. Add the canned tomatoes and lemon juice, and bring to a boil, then turn it down. 5. Cover and simmer over a very low heat for about 20 minutes. Okay if tomatoes get thicker. If you are going to let it simmer longer, could put in the beans uncooked. The longer they are in there, the more they absorb the other flavors.