

Food, Family and Lebanese Culture Take Center Stage in A Taste of Serhel

Valerie Michael discusses her family roots, traditions and recipes in a new book titled: A Taste of Serhel.

BELHAVEN, NC, UNITED STATES, December 2, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Valerie Michael](#) is thrilled to announce the release of her first cookbook, [A Taste of Serhel](#). This inspirational work reflects upon one family's [Lebanese](#) cultural roots and the dishes that have been passed down through generations.

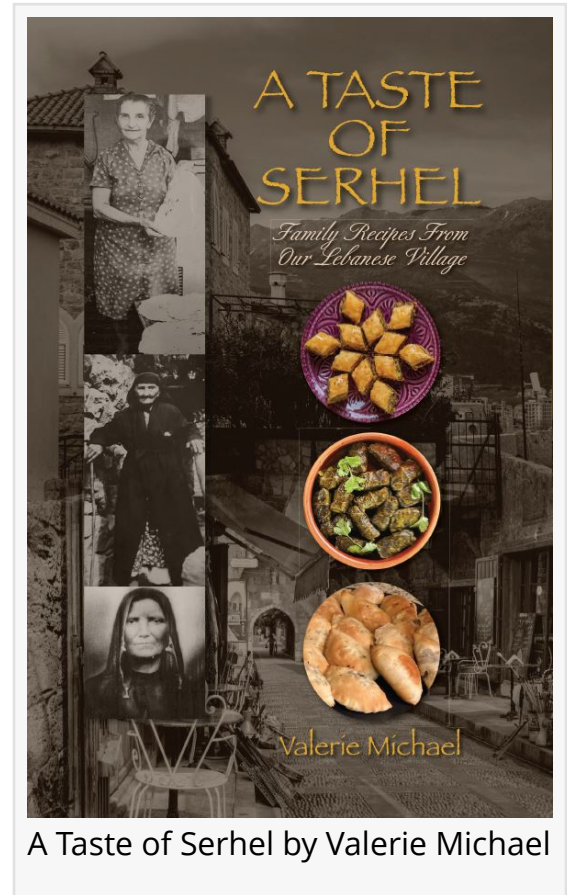
A Taste of Serhel is a Lebanese cookbook that contains many easy-to-follow recipes that span many types of dishes. Having grown up with a deep respect for her Lebanese roots, Valerie drew her inspiration for the cookbook from her desire to preserve her family's rich and long-standing history dating back generations to a small village in Lebanon.

Her fondest memories as a little girl growing up in Grosse Pointe, MI are of the amazing foods prepared by her grandmothers and aunts. Valerie's large extended family gathered often in celebration against a backdrop of the delicious and traditional Lebanese foods contained within the book.

The holidays are approaching fast and are always a time for family and friends to gather together and share food and fellowship. We sat down with Valerie to ask about some of the important people and memories that contributed to A Taste of Serhel.

Can you share a moment from your personal life that inspired a specific recipe in the book?

About 15 years ago, my dad expressed one day that he really missed his mother's Kibbe Nayye, which is a raw meat dish similar to tartar but with spices. So, I decided to try and make it. I had no recipe, no measurements, nothing. The ancestors never measured anything, so I essentially pictured my grandmother putting the different ingredients into the meat. I watched her



countless times as a child so I guess somewhere in my memory it computed. To my surprise, my dad said it tasted just like his mother's. That gave me the confidence to try other dishes. I've been hooked on cooking Lebanese food ever since.

Were there any themes or messages you consciously set out to explore in this book?

I actually started out writing the book for my nieces and nephews who love the food but haven't had the first-hand exposure to the culture that I and others in my generation have.

Originally, it was just a few of the family favorites intended just for family members, but as I delved in further, and talked with others in my extended family, I realized that many of us had the same idea, which was to preserve our food legacy, family culture and stories for future generations.

So, I expanded the book to include all the recipes that were prepared by the ancestors. I also included a short family tree of both sides of my family so that future generations had some sense of their origins. And I included some family favorites that are not necessarily Lebanese but were always a part of our dinner table.

What research did you conduct for this book, and did you uncover anything surprising or fascinating?

This book took so much research. Far more than I expected. Getting the recipes right, getting the proper names in Arabic, figuring out the family tree. It all took a lot of time but very much worth every minute I spent. The surprise was how much research I did on a project that I thought would be so simple.



Valerie Michael



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The fascination came from so many areas, most of which are not in the book. I sifted through hundreds of photographs, looking for historical value as it related to my family. I interviewed cousins, many of them repeatedly. I still can't believe how patient they were with me. The more I learned about the village and the village life, the more I became intrigued. I'm totally obsessed with learning about what life was like for my ancestors up on that mountain.

Which of the family members in the book do you relate to most on a personal level?

WOW! That's a tough one. I would have to say I have a little of all of them in me. After all, we are a close family and all in the previous generation were a big part of my life. I would like to think I am most like my great-grandmother, Warda Courey, because she was a career woman, started her own business, had an independent spirit. I did that as well. And she was also devoted to family. She was a great cook. I remember her quite well even though she died when I was young. I do know my mother and my aunts adored her and spent many hours in the kitchen with her.

You can discover more recipes and learn more about Lebanese culture at:

www.valeriemichael.com. A Taste of Serhel is available for sale on Amazon.com.

About Valerie Michael:

Valerie holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications Studies from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She has over forty years of experience in Marketing and Communications, new business management, event planning, campaign management and crisis communications. Throughout her career she has won numerous awards for outstanding achievements and has developed programs still in use today worldwide. Valerie is retired but continues her lifelong commitment to community service and has volunteered for numerous industry, charitable and political organizations. She currently resides in Northern Nevada.

David J Hudson

Hudsonmann Publishing LLC

+1 843-425-5473

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