

KITCHEN STORIES

A
DE-COLONIAL
RECIPE

by Yasmine Katkhuda
for Difference + Design '21

IN DIS APPEARANCE

INGREDIENTS
+
INSTURCTIONS

IN DIS APPEARANCE

Kitchen Stories

YASMINE KATKHUDA

INTRODUCTION

The space of a Palestinian kitchen holds fragments of stories untold by time, places lost in memory, and histories erased through politics. This recipe guide suggests thinking about food, in its processes and political dimensions, at the juncture of architecture's entanglements with settler colonialism. The Israeli agenda in large, is facilitated through architectural tropes - including that of segregated roads, land seizures, air and water control, military blockades checkpoints, an apartheid wall, seemingly rhizomatic settlements and so forth. This design research project does not intent to cover the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict nor suggest a solution to an impossible question that is most definitely intertwined with the built environment - but it does begin to rethink our associations and understandings of the food which we consume and take pride in, at home and in the diaspora, to reinitiate conversations around traditional Palestinian cuisine towards a future of liberation.

CONTEXT

Sitting with my Palestinian mother, aunties and grandmothers in listening to their conversations, following their hands while cooking only to become part of their kitchen adventures - I grew fascinated with inherent spatial dimensions to food and its consequent processes. As with many countries in the Middle East, common dishes are interpreted and styled differently across borders. They are also appropriated by colonial and imperial powers in their own pursuits. Msakhan, is one such dish that has upheld its immense popularity as being synonymous to the national dish of Palestine. It holds the power of existence within it - which for Palestinians ensues a right to return - consequently making of this dish, and many others, contested especially in the fragmented territories across Palestine. From labour practices that are interwoven in the production and maintenance of food facilities and lands, to the water we all need and the roads we use to transport - stories of politics and frustrations are equally a part of the domestic space as they are contentious within the urban fabric.

ISSUES

There are exhaustive dimensions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict - my focus however dwells in how the right to adequate food, in this context becomes contested and highly politicized - slowly detaching from the love of food within the community at home and in the diaspora. Palestinians face an alarming rate of food in-access, where over 2.2 of 5.6 million people within the borders in rural and urban areas alike are food insecure.¹ This is not surprising, as 61% of the West Bank is also classified as zone C per the Oslo Accords, assumes Israeli control over the land - therefore acts of farming are severely hindered. Palestine has historically been a farmer community on fertile lands, and processes of the soil and seeding were passed across generations. This local knowledge is diminishing fast in the light of technologies and policies crippling the labor of land in access and cultivation processes. Fruits and vegetables are now largely imported from Israel, where neoliberal developmental policies and limited access to land and markets have diminished the Palestinian agricultural sector.

DESIGN

An intervention between the imaginary or possible, and the real and existing - this seemingly straightforward recipe menu unpacks dimensions of food as design and culture in Palestine. It aims to construct and reconstruct one's relationships to place, history, society and politics, through images and info-graphics. As the research and design meander between the tangible and intangible acts and associations of food - of land practices, sourcing, cooking, eating, hosting and conversing - social concerns and limitations of contemporary political dilemmas, which reflect upon the conditions that characterize contemporary Palestinian communities are broken into digestible elements. Understood through and between its fragments, this design research brochure suggests foods inherent entanglements with architecture and urban design, especially in the context of settler colonialism.

¹ "Palestine: World Food Programme."

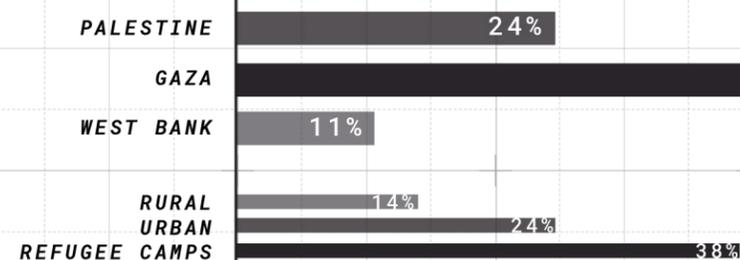
[01] FOOD INSECURITY IN OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

[02] DEMOGRAPHICS

37% of **5.6 mil.** people in Palestine are food insecure - driven by high poverty unemployment rates

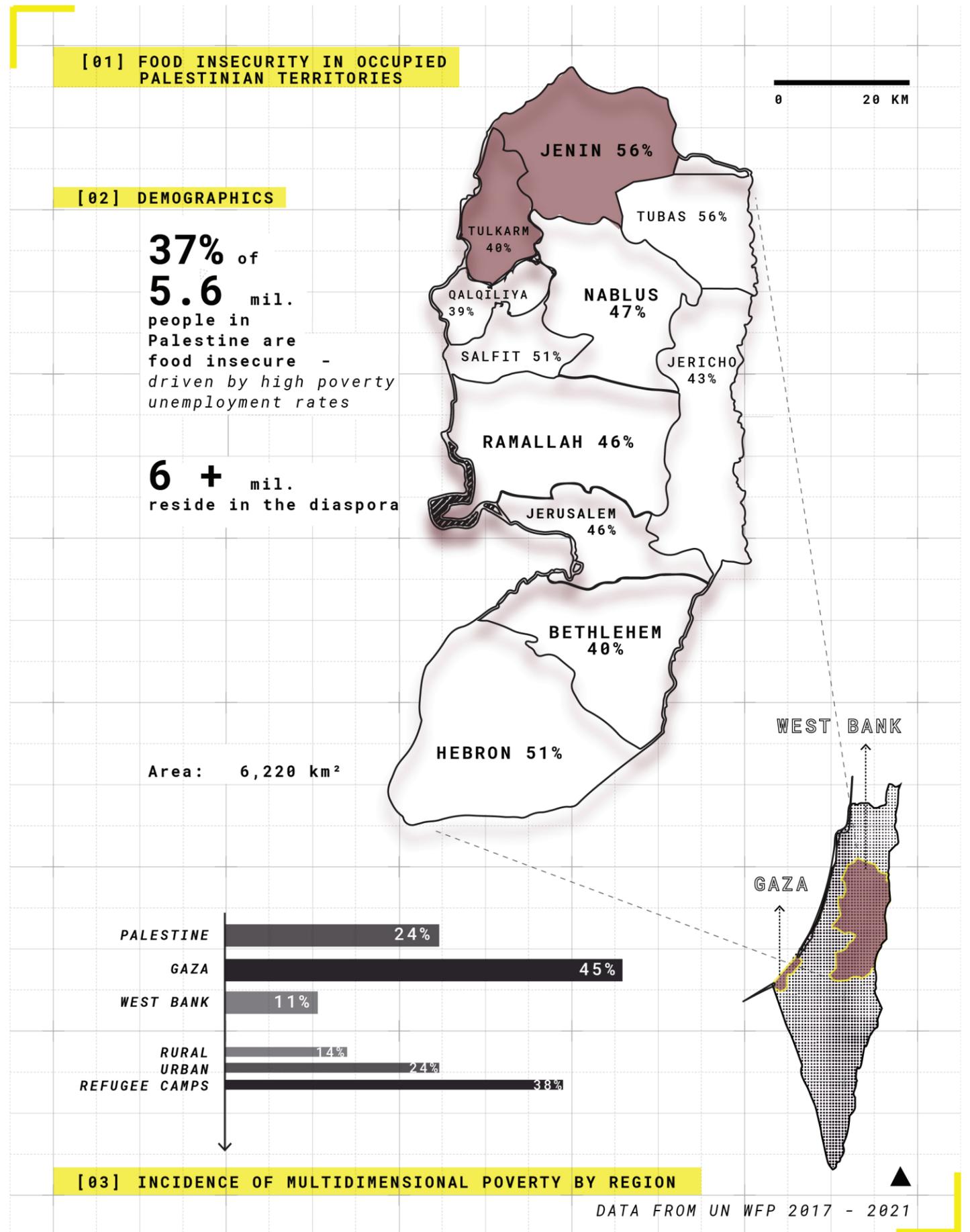
6 + mil. reside in the diaspora

Area: 6,220 km²



[03] INCIDENCE OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY BY REGION

DATA FROM UN WFP 2017 - 2021



MUSAKHAN

Recipe adopted from
Chef Rawia Bishara
Tanoreen Brooklyn '88

+DEFINITION:

A staple Palestinian slow-cooked chicken dish smothered in onions and bright, tangy sumac, set on top of taboun flat-bread.

+ ORIGIN:

Jenin & Tulkarm region in the North

+ DESIGN PREMISE:

Musakhan is one of many dishes appropriated by Israel, that is undoubtedly Palestinian. Displayed here as a multi-faceted recipe, each dimension becomes the result of meticulous research that looks into relation of the meal and its components and effects of occupation on it.

+ FOLLOWING SPREAD:

Counter-ingredients: a politicized reading of the meal.

INGREDIENTS

TIME: 1hr
SERVES: 4

1 tsp. ground **allspice**

½ tsp. ground **cardamom**

½ tsp. ground **cumin**

2 Tbsp. **sumac**,
more for sprinkling

4 whole **chicken** legs
(thigh and drumstick;
about 2½ lb. total)

Kosher **salt**

¼ cup plus 1 Tbsp. ex-
tra-virgin **olive oil**

3 white **onions**,
coarsely chopped

¼ cup **pine nuts** or
slivered almonds

Taboon bread, warmed

1 **lemon**, halved

CHICKEN

POULTY PROCESSING INDUSTRY
LABOR: RIGHTS + PRACTICES

OLIVE OIL

LAND CONFISCATION
LAND DISPOSSESSION
ECOLOGICAL DESTRUCTION
BORDERIZATION

ONIONS

WATER
LAND
LABOR

SPICES / PINE NUTS

SOURCING
CULTURAL PRACTICES

TABOUN BREAD

LABOUR OF CARE
SPATIAL PRACTICES



INSTRUCTIONS

01

Preheat oven to 350°. Mix allspice, cardamom, cumin, + 2 Tbsp. sumac in a small bowl to combine.

02

Season chicken all over with salt in a large bowl. Rub with half of spice mix, pressing and working it into the meat.

03

Heat ¼ cup oil in a large ovenproof skillet over medium-high. Cook chicken, turning occasionally, until golden brown on both sides and some fat is released, 3–5 min. a/ side. Transfer chicken to a large plate, leaving fat in skillet.

04

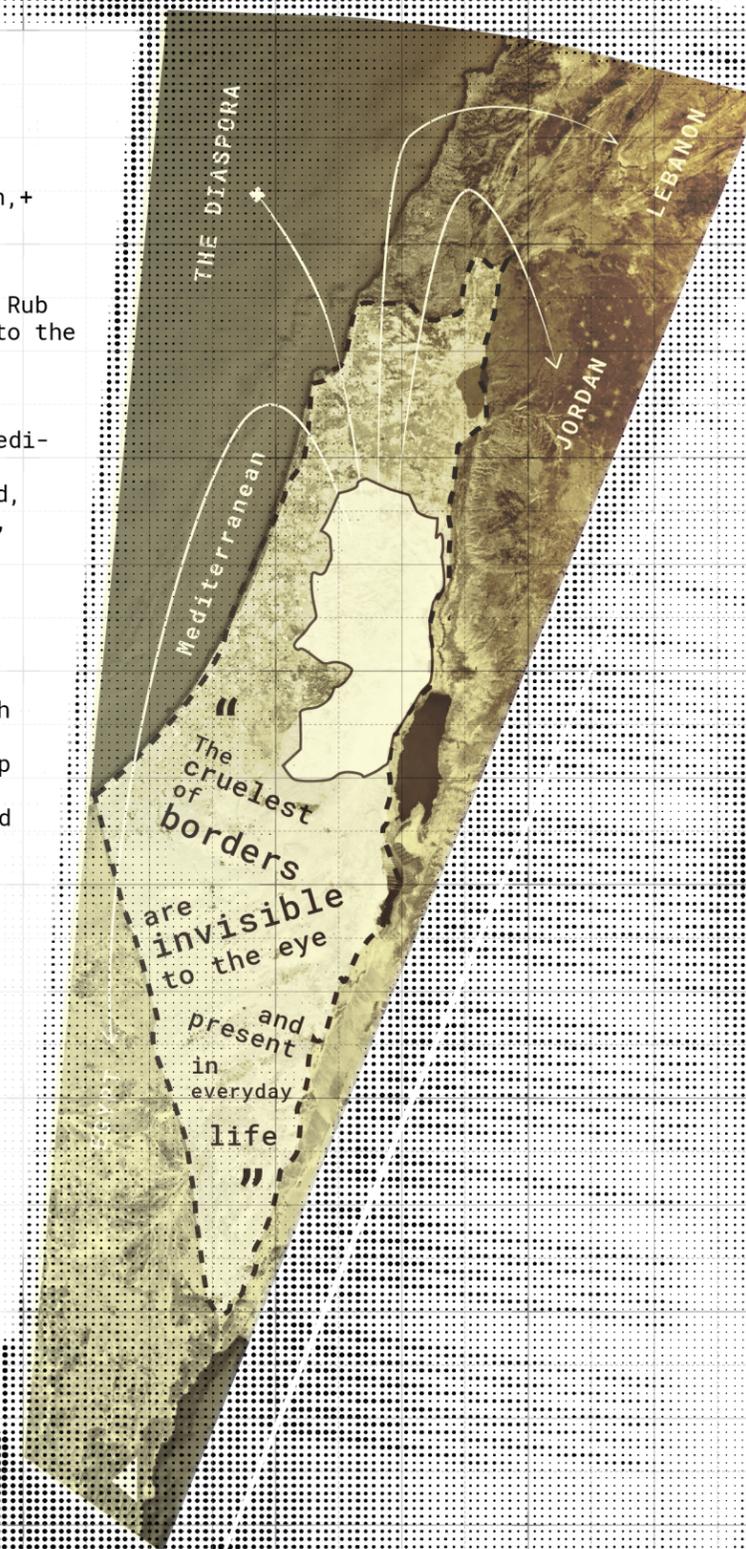
Return skillet to medium-high heat. Cook onions, scraping any browned bits on bottom of skillet and adding a splash of water if pan gets dry, until softened and golden brown, 18–25 min. Sprinkle with remaining spice mix and continue to cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 30 sec. Add ¼ cup water, season with salt, and bring to a simmer. Nestle chicken back into skillet, skin side up, and transfer to oven. Bake, uncovered, until liquid is mostly evaporated and chicken is cooked through, 30–35 min. Let cool 10 min. in skillet.

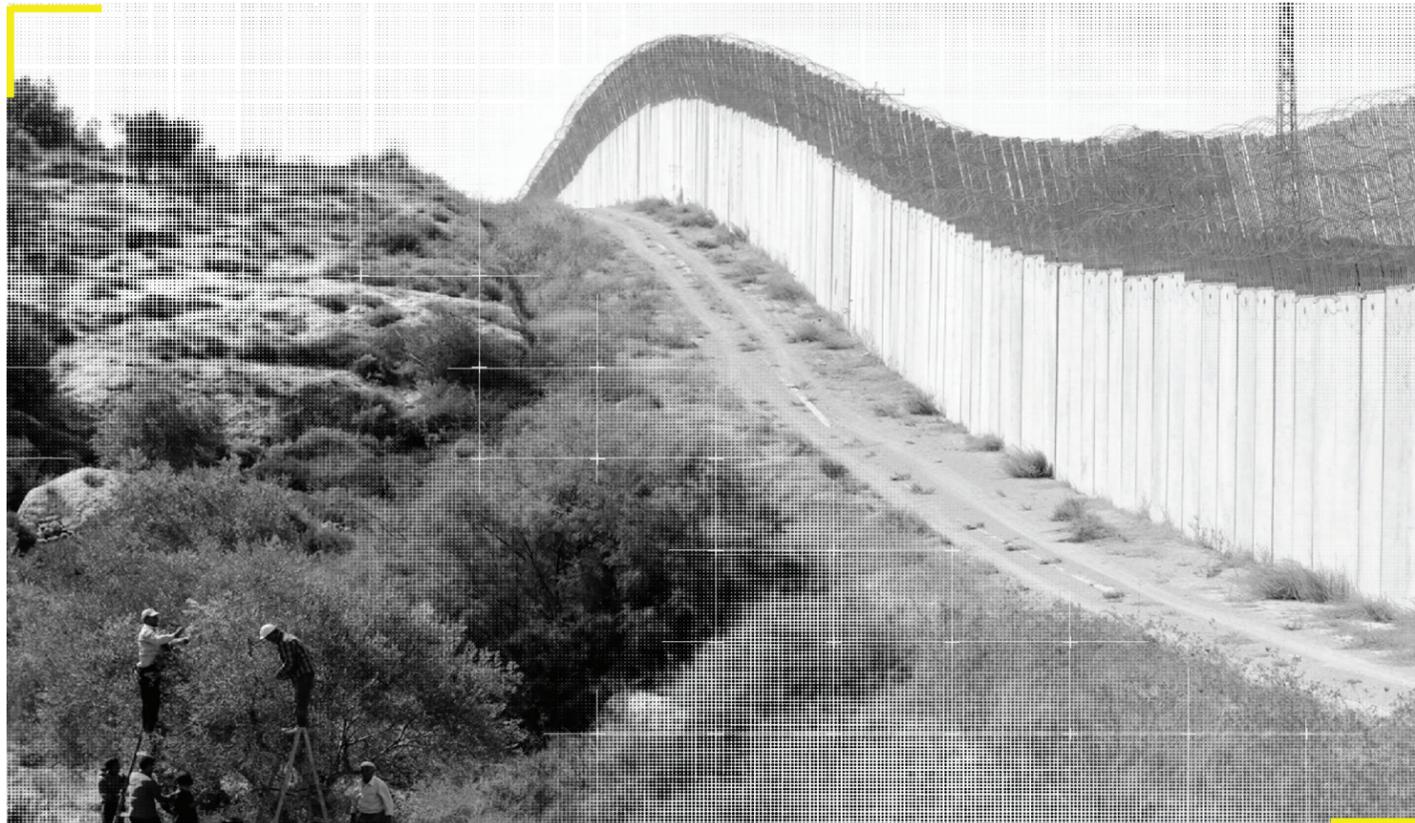
05

While chicken is cooking, toast pine nuts in remaining 1 Tbsp. oil in a small skillet over medium heat, stirring frequently, until golden brown and fragrant, about 3 min. Remove from heat and season with salt.

06

Arrange warmed bread on a platter and top with chicken and onions. Scatter pine nuts over and sprinkle with more sumac. Squeeze juice from one lemon half over chicken. Cut remaining lemon half into wedges to serve alongside.





ECOLOGICAL x ECONOMIC: Palestinian farmers harvest their olives in the West Bank village on lands engulfed by the Apartheid Wall. [REF al jazeera gallery]



SOCIAL: Within the domestic sphere, food preparation is assumed by the matriarch - regardless of social class. Meals and their preparation are often central to family life.. [REF Ramallah-by-@eyalyassky]



ECONOMIC x SOCIAL: Workers attempting to save chickens after poultry farm was destroyed by missiles - both laborers and chickens under threat. [REF middleeastmonitor]



CULTURAL: Beyond intimate family setting, in gathering and communal meals - food become resistance against occupying forces, in reasserting joy and solidarity amongst community. [REF Mirna Bamieh]

ONGOING LIST OF THE
ARCHITECTURES OF
OPPRESSION

TREE + CROP BURNING
WATER INACCESS
LAND SEIZURE
SETTLEMENTS
FORCED DISPOSSESSION
WEAPONIZATION
CHECKPOINTS
LABOUR EXPLOITATION
DISPROPORTIONATE
RIGHTS AND RESTRICTIONS
MOVEMENT LIMITATIONS
BORDERIZATION
ECOLOGICAL RUIN
PERSTICIDE WAR
SURVEILLANCE ...

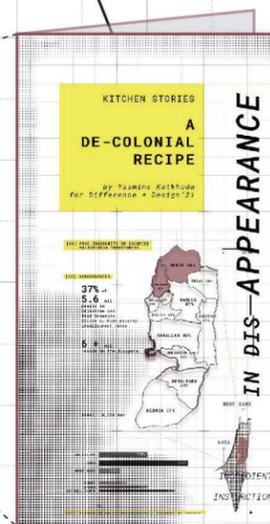
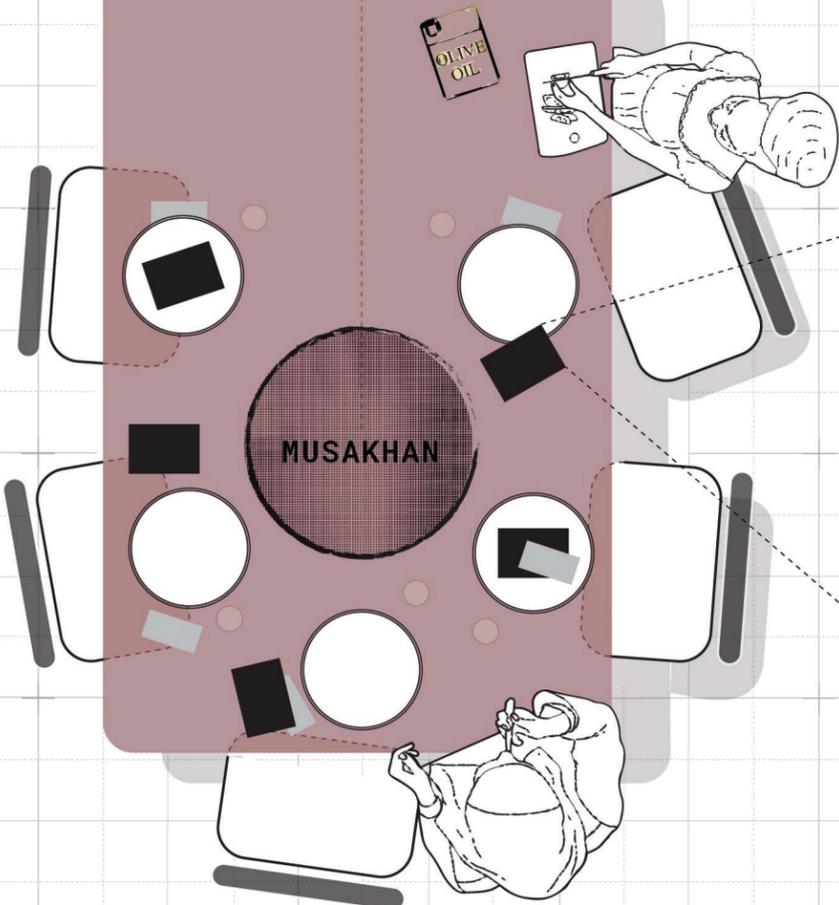
*The Israeli
state has deployed
architectures of
apartheid to
displace, surveil,
control, starve,
segregate and
ethnically cleanse
Palestinians. Stories of
hope,
arise at the
margin,
in food
towards a
future of
liberation.*



The space of the kitchen holds fragments of stories untold by time, places lost in memory, and histories erased through politics.



Sourcing food, cleaning, cooking, gathering and hosting become political acts practiced at present, and projected as images into an uncertain future. The once displayed, destroyed, or forgotten becomes a story of existence, of permanence and of belonging.



OUTCOMES

Israel suffers from labor shortages and therefore must source outside labor for economic productivity. On the other hand, Palestine has excess labor and unemployment rates because of lack of opportunity as the result of occupation which restricts economic, ecological, and social mobility in accessing work permit and movement of both laborers and produce, limiting and controlling land development, controlling the only aquifer in the West bank and rerouting water supply to settlers and their farms, as well as many others.

This ties directly into Palestinian households who need to source food elsewhere, work jobs in undesirable ethical and often physical conditions to afford a living whilst upholding a sense of dignity, and for those lucky to be able to own and cultivate land - face unpredictability in accessing it, or supplying water to it, and unfortunately result in becoming dispossessed of it.

CONCLUSION

While Musakhan is a delicious Palestinian dish - it ultimately ties all dimensions of the conflict bringing it into the space of the kitchen. Conversations shared in the preparation and consumption of the dish lend to future imaginaries of liberation beyond contemporary entanglements within the architectures and systems of settler colonialism. Palestinian traditional food, and Musakhan in specific, holds fragments of stories untold by time, places lost in memory, and histories erased through politics.

As a lineage of contested bodies, our food carries stories we must reclaim in our modernity as to pass it on to future generations at home and in the diaspora. A meal becomes a space of reflection for socio-political realities, attitudes, and fashions - unearthing often suppressed elements of culture and history. Now more than ever, food is a means of historical validation, where processes of food production and consumption become a form of peaceful resistance.

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