

# Introduction



*I come by my love of food naturally. My mother, a talented Sephardic cook from Greece, was a recipe collector and food lover who encouraged my presence - and independence - in the kitchen. I started baking when I was 10 years old and before long was making all the desserts for the family. I also began a recipe collection of my own and would scribble notes all over them so I could remember what I did differently and if I would make it again.*

*When I was deciding what to study, my mother suggested nutrition as I had a passion for food and enjoyed reading about the healthy side of it. I became a clinical dietitian and worked for many years in the field, but part of me always wanted to be involved in tourism. Finally, years later, I was able to combine the two by offering culinary tours and cooking classes to travelers in Israel. I started Cook in Israel in 2009 and my vision has been to introduce Israel through home cooking and food culture.*

*My tours and classes - like the recipes in this book - reflect my personal tastes and interest in healthy, clean eating. I always take visitors to the shuk, the lively outdoor market that is the culinary heart and pulse of any Israeli city. Then we return to my home, where we cook a meal inspired by the market and*

*fresh flavors of Israel alongside my family. For me food is an awakening of all the senses and cooking and baking is pure creativity.*

*This book is all thanks to my three children, who for years have been telling me to write it. With their encouragement, I was inspired to put pen to paper and leave my family with a memory of the flavors of home. I know how much I miss not having my mother and grandmother's recipes written down and wanted to give my kids something tangible to hold onto.*

*I've been vegetarian for almost 30 years and so you'll find little meat in these pages. My family loves meatballs and hashwa (rice with meat), so I make them on occasion and have included those recipes here. I've never liked chicken and don't cook it, so there's not a single chicken recipe to be found. I do, however, eat fish and there is a whole section with my favorite fish dishes.*

***I love cooking and baking and more than anything hope to pass on that passion through this book. Food connects people and so I invite you to connect with me and my family in the pages that follow.***

***Orly***