



## Teta and Babcia: Tales and Recipes from Egypt, Poland and Syria

تیتا و بابتشا: رحلات في وصفات الجدات

Author: Miranda Beshara

Illustrator: Heba Khalifa

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Genre: Food memoir / Family History / Cultural Diversity

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Awards: Selected for the [2022 IBBY Honour List](#)

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### About the book

*Teta and Babcia* is an intercultural coming of age memoir told through grandmothers' recipes from Egypt, Syria, and Poland. Farah, 12 years old, lives in Paris, France and is curious about her roots that extend across three other countries. Farah is lucky to have three grandmothers to help her on her quest: Teta Aida (her Egyptian great-grandmother), Babcia Monika (her Polish maternal grandmother), and Teta Afaf (her Syrian paternal grandmother). Those amazing women walk with Farah down memory lanes opening their hearts and kitchens and infuse their dishes with their delightful stories. The book is beautifully illustrated using collage between family photos and drawings. It is suitable for middle grade readers to explore questions related to cultural diversity and mixed heritage.

### About the author

Miranda Beshara is a children's author/translator and co-founder of [Hadi Badi](#). She also teaches Arabic online to children at Kalamna. Miranda translates and edits from/to English, French, and Arabic. In 2020, she participated in the Antwerp University's Children's Literature Summer School and also received a diploma in the mediation of children's and young adult literature from the Ecole du Livre in Montreuil, France. *Teta and Babcia* published by Dar Al Balsam, Egypt, is her first book. Miranda's second book is forthcoming later this year.



## Sample translation

*Translated from Arabic by the author, Miranda Beshara*

### Part 1: Farah



*Illustration with photo collage of a plate with a map showing the various countries p. 8-9*

“Where are you from?”

While this looks like a straightforward question, in my case it's not!

My name is Farah, and I am 12 years old.

I was born in Cairo, Egypt. My mother is Polish-Egyptian and my father is Egyptian, but with Syrian roots. Right now, I live in France.

I am Egyptian, Polish, and Syrian!

My mother has a famous saying:

“Our family is a big, delicious mixed salad.”

*(Illustration with photo collage of a family tree with the wedding pictures of the three sets of grandparents p. 10-11)*



And it's true, my family is a big, delicious mixed salad, made up of all sorts of people:

It has the big and the small,

the tall and the short,

the fair and the dark-skinned,

the well-behaved and the mischievous,

and it has those who observe Ramadan,

and those who celebrate the Virgin Mary.

من أكتب الأنشطة إلى قافي هو تصميم أيام المصور العائلي، ولا أكتب عن سؤال أبي وأمي عن جدودي وحوادث زمان.

أم، ميراندا، تحكي عن طفولتها في مطبخ جدتها تبنا عايدة في بيت العائلة في حي شبرا بالقاهرة، وزيارتها إلى بيت جدها في عيادات بولندا.

أما أبي، كريم، فيحكي عن والدته وموائد أهله في الشام عندما كان يذهب للزيارة في العطلات.

شانت طروف عمل بابا وماما أن تعيش خارج مصر ولكن يظل في مصر ببيت الأول، العائلة الكبيرة، أصدقاء المقطوفة، والأماكن المحببة والمأروقة.

زيارة مصر أياً داشنا ممزوجة بروائح وملحاقات أكلات جداتي التي تظل معي من العطلة إلى العطلة.

أنا محظوظة أن لدى ثلاث جدات حلوات، جدة ماما تبنا عايدة وجدني بابتشا مونيكا من ناحية ماما ميراندا وتبنا عايف من ناحية بابا كريم... لكل واحدة حكاية وطبخة أحجها من يدها.



Illustration with photo collage of the three grandmothers when they were young p. 12-13

One of my favorite things to do is look through family photo albums. I love my parents' stories about their childhood and their families.

Miranda, my mother, talks about childhood memories spent in the kitchen of her grandmother, Teta Aida in Shobra. That's a crowded neighborhood in Cairo, and it was very different from what she saw during her visits to her grandfather's house in the Polish countryside.

And Karim, my father, remembers the lavish meals he would have at family gatherings when he used to spend his summer vacations in Syria.



We moved to France because of my parents' jobs, but Egypt is still my first home, where I have a big extended family, my childhood friends, and beautiful memories of familiar places. My visits to Egypt are always filled with the smells and flavors of my grandmothers' cooking, and these smells and tastes stay with me from one visit to the next.

I am fortunate to have three lovely grandmothers. There's Teta Aida, my mom's grandmother, or my great grandmother. There's Babcia Monika, my mom's mother. And there's Teta Afaf, my dad's mother. Each one of them has a story and a signature dish that she makes, and that I love to eat.

*(Illustration with photo collage of plate with flowers, golden cherub statue, and scattered orzo pasta p. 14-15.)*

One day, while I was talking with my mom and showering her with all sorts of questions about my grandmothers, I got an idea.

"Mama, how about we interview Teta Aida, Babcia Monika, and Teta Afaf the next time we go to Egypt?"

My mom liked the idea, and we sat together and prepared the questions we would ask the three grandmas. We decided to ask each of them about her respective childhood, life, and culinary heritage.

The grandmas took us on magical journeys with their stories! Some of them, my mom was hearing for the first time.

When we got back to Paris, we wrote down those stories, and we have decided to share them with you, along with some of my grandmas' delicious recipes.

Let's start with the story of my great grandmother, Teta Aida.

## More information

- [Goodreads reviews](#) in English and Arabic
- [Video translation pitch](#) in English as part of the BILA HUDOOD: Arabic Literature Everywhere Festival
- ArabLit.org interview: '[Adolescence, Food, and Illustrating Family History: A Talk About 'Teta and Babcia'](#)' by Yasmine Motawy, February 10, 2020
- Review in French at [Takam Tikou](#)