

Israeli Salad with Grilled Peaches + Honey Lemon Vinaigrette



If you know me at all then you know that Israel lives in my heart. I met my husband there. I fell in love with cooking there. I named my children Siona (Zion) and Eden. Our home is filled with artifacts, knickknacks and Judaica all reminding us and calling us back to Israel. For my husband, he spent 2 years in Israel receiving his Master's Degree in Marine Ecology. My journey in Israel began in 2001 when I studied abroad during the second Intifada. I was one of 8 participants on a study abroad program that typically has 70 participants but when CNN is broadcasting bus explosions and protests 24/7, you get a few students dropping out. I had to sign a waiver stating that I would not sue my small liberal arts college should I blow up in a bus while studying in Israel via their program. But, thank Gd, nothing horrible happened and I ended

up having the time of my life. Since that study abroad opportunity all those years ago, I've been blessed to go to Israel on 3 Birthright Israel tours (as a chaperone), studied at Pardes for a summer and then for another year. All told, I've probably lived in Israel for a combined total of at least 2 years. But it's been ages since we've gone and we long to return.



Taking a page from the Zahav cookbook – classic Israeli salad on the left followed by my Southern flare on the right.



I'm waxing poetic about Israel because I'm here to talk a little about the first ever Maccabi International Culinary Competition taking place on July 4, 2017 in Israel. Working with Maccabi World Union, as part of the 20th World Maccabiah Games, this groundbreaking new program is designed to showcase food as a universal language, bringing more people to Israel to immerse them in the culture, heritage and beauty of the land.

Each team will prepare a five-course meal, showcasing the flavors of their country and utilizing the freshest locally grown Israeli produce, meat, and fish. Chefs will be judged on the creativity, originality, and of course, flavor and presentation. The winning teams will be announced at a Chef's Party that evening. The event will be open to the public following the medal ceremony, providing spectators the opportunity to meet members of the international and local professional chef teams. There will be Jewish professional chefs from all over the world taking part in this competition--Australia, France, Gibraltar, Israel, Italy,

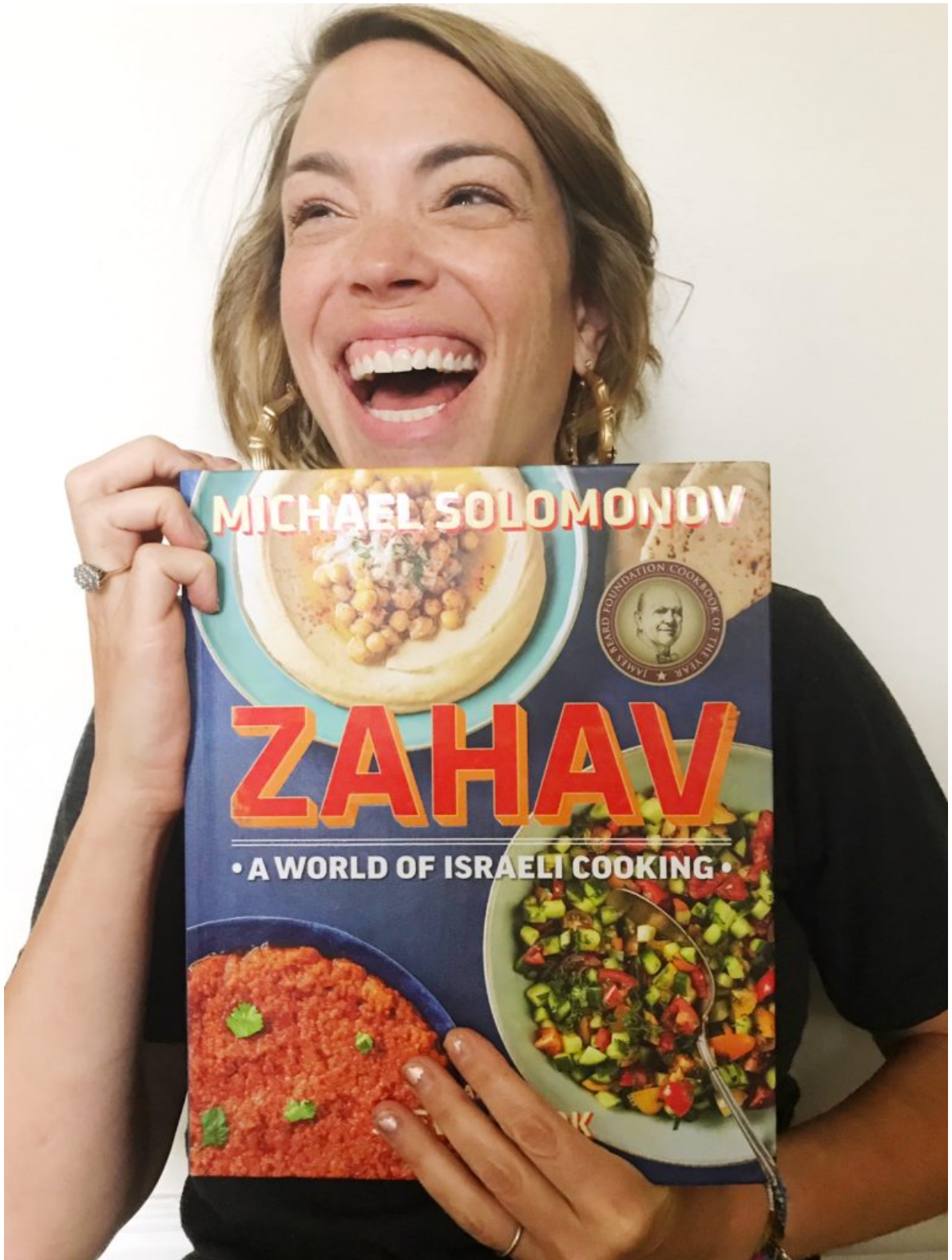
Spain and the USA.

And if that weren't enough of a reason to register to attend and watch, this incredible event is co-chaired by James Beard Award-winning Chef Michael Solomonov of Zahav Restaurant (and Dizengoff and Abe Fisher and Federal Donuts and Rooster Soup Co. and Goldie Falafel). It is Chef Solomonov and his beautiful cookbook, *Zahav*, that inspired the recipe featured in this post. I am constantly reconciling my natural inclination to make Southern food with my near-constant desire for fresh Israeli food and this dish is the representation of the two. I'm SO excited to see what the chefs participating in the competition cook-up. I wonder how much of what the present will be representative of not only their home country but also their Jewish heritage.



I am so excited to see what these chefs bring together and am dually impressed with the fact that the organizers have brought in an as-yet-to-be-announced *tzedakah* project that the culinary teams will participate in. There are plans tape and 'live stream' the competition so check back in to the blog or

at the Maccabi Culinary Competition for more info. Oh, and if you don't have to spend this summer teaching summer school health to 9th graders, like I do, then you'll also want to check out the extreme culinary tour that the Maccabi Culinary Competition organizers have developed. It's an Israeli foodie dream come true! The Culinary Mission runs through the Maccabi games so now only will you be exploring the dynamic culinary movement coming out of Israel at full speed, you'll be doing it along side the chefs participating in the Maccabi Culinary Competition. More information can be found [here](#), at the Mission's website.



When you live in LA and have 2 small children and no extra income to throw at plane tickets to Philly, this is as close to actually dining at Zahav as one can get.



The view of Jordan from the husband's patio (mirpeset) in Eilat



Somewhere up North – my husband, Yonah, in the whale and me pretending to be eaten by said whale. No one told me we were going to do a serious pic!!



If you haven't been to Jerusalem during Purim, can I just recommend it now? Thanks.



This post is sponsored by The International Maccabi Culinary Competition

Israeli Salad with Grilled Peaches and Honey Lemon Vinaigrette

Salad Ingredients:

2 cups chopped Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced
2 cups chopped Persian cucumbers, peeled and diced
1 cup cooked pearl barley, cooled
2 peaches, grilled (instructions below)
3 Tbsp chopped fresh mint leaves
1/2 cup sheep's milk feta
Lemon honey vinaigrette (ingredients and recipe below)

Directions for Salad:

Combine all salad ingredients into a large bowl except for the mint and feta. Toss with cooked and cooled pearl barley. Add 3 tbsp of olive oil and stir. Next, add half of the chopped mint leaves and feta. Toss to combine. Top with salad dressing and rest of the mint leaves. Serve room temperature or cold.

Method for Grilling Peaches:

Cut peaches along the seam all the way around and twist halves off the pit. Discard of entire pit (be thorough – accidental pit-eating would be a bummer). Brush cut sides with olive oil. Cook, cut side down, on a hot grill until fruit has grill marks, 3 to 4 minutes.

Rotate 90 degrees to continue to cook for another 3-4 minutes or until total grill marks appear and the fruit starts to caramelize. Remove from the grill with a pair of tongs and sprinkle with a dash of flaky sea salt.

Set aside to cool.

Lemon Honey Vinaigrette Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice (from about 2 small lemons or 1 large)
- 1/4 cup white-wine vinegar

- 2 teaspoons honey
- 1 teaspoon coarse salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
- 1 cup olive oil

Method:

In a medium bowl or jar, combine lemon juice, vinegar, honey, coarse salt, and ground pepper. Whisk until salt has thoroughly dissolved. Gradually add the oil and whisk until thoroughly combined.