



MENA Studies Centre  
Brown Bag Research Talks, Programme Fall 2021  
Theme: **Foodways of the Middle East and North Africa**

This fall we will have a brown-bag talk on the last Monday of each month (September to November) from 12:00 to 1:30pm via Zoom:

**Monday, Sept. 27, 12:00–1:30pm**

**Dr. Nawal Nasrallah:**

**From Babel to Baghdad: Culture of a Cuisine in Transition**

Abstract: The talk will explore foodways and culinary practices from ancient Mesopotamia (2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE), when cuisine was varied, rich and sophisticated, to medieval Baghdad during the Golden Age of the Abbasid caliphate (9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries), where a self-indulgent high food culture developed. I will address the gastronomic manifestations and achievements in both periods based on an examination of documents and artifacts. My focus will be on showing continuities in the recipes of the surviving cookbooks from both ancient and medieval times.

Nawal Nasrallah is an independent scholar who specializes in the history and culture of Arab food. Amongst her numerous publications are English translations of medieval Arabic cookbooks, most importantly *Annals of the Caliphs' Kitchens: Ibn Sayyar al-Warraq's Tenth-century Baghdadi Cookbook* (Brill, 2007), *Treasure Trove of Benefits and Variety at the Table: A Fourteenth-century Egyptian Cookbook* (Brill, 2017), and *Best of Delectable Foods and Dishes* by the thirteenth-century Andalusian scholar Ibn Razin al-Tujibi (Brill, 2021).

**Monday, Oct. 25, 12:00–1:30pm**

**Dr. Rose Wellman:**

**Feeding Iran: Votive Food and the Making of an Islamic Republic**

Abstract: This talk draws from a year and a half of ethnographic research among Shi'i state-supporting families in the provincial town of Fars-Abad, the city of Shiraz, and Iran's capital, Tehran, to explore how votive food is being employed at home and in the grand rituals of Iranian state power to forge an Islamic Republic. By focusing on food, Wellman seeks to understand how ideas and practices of kinship and religion are linked to state power. She asks: what can an analysis of home life and everyday piety tell us about contemporary nation-making?

Rose Wellman is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan-Dearborn who specializes in Iran, the Middle East, and its diaspora. Her book, [Feeding Iran: Shi'i Families and the Making of an Islamic Republic](#) (University of California Press, 2021), draws from ethnographic research in Iran between 2007 and 2010 to explore how everyday family life and piety are linked to state power. Wellman is currently conducting new research with Arab Americans in metro Detroit, focusing on the region's vibrant Shi'i Iraqi community.

**Monday, Nov. 29, 12:00–1:30pm**

**Dr. Nima Naghibi:**

**Dining, Shopping, and Reimagining Home in "Tehranto"**

In Toronto's diasporic Iranian community, nostalgia for a former home, Tehran, is entrenched into the urbanscape. In "Tehranto," restaurants are organized and decorated to produce an experience of dining among, for example, the ruins of Persepolis, thus offering a nostalgic revisitation for older generations, and a mediated memory experience for younger generations. In my new research project, I am interested in the development of "Tehranto" into a hub of diasporic Iranian culture and cuisine, and in engaging with the stories "Tehrantonians" are telling about themselves, and about Toronto and Tehran.

Nima Naghibi is an Associate Professor of English at Ryerson University in Toronto. Her research is in the areas of diaspora studies, literatures of immigration and exile, and life narratives with a particular focus on Iran. She is the author of *Women Write Iran: Nostalgia and Human Rights from the Diaspora* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016) and *Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Western Feminism and Iran* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007).