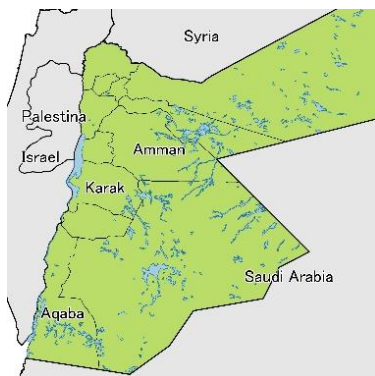


My favorite Jordanian dishes

I find Arabic dishes very delicious. I have been working in mostly Arabic countries these days, so it is not very necessary for me to carry Japanese food stuff with me on a business trip abroad. This time I had the opportunity to stay in Jordan for 3 weeks, and I traveled across the country along the Jordan Valley, from the north, near the border to Syria and Israel, to the south, Aqaba. Our Jordanian driver cum guide of the same age as me, who worked for a travel agency before, was a food enthusiast. He



arranged a recommended meal wherever we went. We enjoyed Arabian cuisine in Jordan together. I would like to introduce some of the impressive Jordanian dishes I encountered during this trip.

Zarb

When we were phoning to book an appointment with the director of Karak agriculture research station, located in the middle of Jordan, on the bank of the Dead Sea, he told us "Never bring lunch!" I thought that we would be invited to a nearby restaurant after the interview, but he was kindly preparing to serve *Zarb*. *Zarb* is originally a dish of the desert-dwelling Bedouin dish. The procedure seems as follows; digging a hole in the ground, adding charcoal, making an oven, putting mutton, chicken, and vegetables, and steaming them in the ground (see photo below). The director led us behind the building. He took the initiative to hold a scoop and dug out chicken meat and vegetables from the ground. Firstly, I was surprised at this extraordinary way of cooking. Looking closely, the shelf in the ground carrying the meat and vegetables seemed to be handmade prepared by welding a front cover of fan. I was very impressed with their DIY spirit and the quest for delicious food. The *Zarb* itself, seasoning was simple, chicken was crumbly soft, and the potato was steamingly soft and appetizing, because it

was cooked for a long period. I enjoyed *Zarb*, perhaps too much, and I had no room for dinner that evening.

Ghidra

"Which do you like, *Ghidra* or *Mandi* for dinner tonight?" I was asked by the driver, when we were going to Aqaba, 6 to 7 hours south of Amman by car. Both seemed to be cooking names. "Going to the Red Sea, you must eat fish!", I replied. "Definetly no, it should be *Ghidra* or *Mandy* at Aqaba." He told me confidently. "Well, I would like *Ghidra*." I answered, because it sounded like the name of a monster somewhere I heard.

Immediately he phoned a restaurant, and started ordering in detail. Three hours later, we arrived at Aqaba and went straight to the restaurant. Then, only our table was prepared perfectly in the restaurant, where no other guests were there, and a waiter brought a big pot.



He turned the pot over a big silver dish placed on the table, and the big dish was quickly filled with rice, chicken, and others. It looks like *Biriyani*, an Indian cuisine, but the amount served was completely different from the one which I took in Japan. *Ghidra* contains chickpea with rice, and the taste was deep because spices were working well. It seemed Basmati rice was used, but it was delicious with a moist feeling, so I took too much without thinking anything but eating. *Ghidra* was similar to *Qouzi* which I used to eat frequently in Iraq.

Unfortunately, in this edition of AAI I can introduce only two dishes due to the limited space. I tasted plenty of other delicious dishes during the visit, which made this business trip fruitful and enjoyable. That is why it is rather difficult for me to stay away from Arab countries.

(By Nakayama, May 2017)

