

# NARRATIVE LABELS (PP2 - AUB)

Work Package 4 Market-driven pilot initiatives

Activity 4.2.3 Realization of narrative labels

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**MedSNAIL NARRATIVE LABELS** is an initiative implemented in the framework of MedSNAIL and inspired by Slow Food methodology -an international grassroots organisation that promotes traditional food with a strong focus on the preservation of biodiversity and respect for local land and culture.

This initiative works to strengthen the productive network of Chouf and West Bekaa, MedSNAIL pilot areas in Lebanon, making visible the attributes of local products through a distinctive labelling system that values their origin, production process and elaboration.

This action aims to raise awareness among local citizens of the added value of these local products beyond their industrial labelling, highlighting the way in which they have been produced and processed. In addition, this initiative brings these local products closer to consumer profiles that are aware of responsible and local consumption, as well as introducing them into new sales channels.

Producers who have participated in this initiative are committed to the preservation of the local identity and its ecosystems.

The products selected for narrative labeling respond to traditional harvesting and processing methods, are closely linked to the pilot area where MedSNAIL has been developed or have been directly proposed by the producers most involved in the project activities.



## Cured meats

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### Goat Kawarma

*Hanan Halawi*

“Men alb lbayt”

#### Product

Kawarma is a cherished Lebanese meat delicacy that carries a rich history and distinctive preparation. It typically consists of small, tender pieces of meat that are marinated, cooked, and preserved in their own fat.

#### Territory

Located in the captivating region of Barouk in Chouf, Kawarma production thrives in this scenic territory. Barouk is renowned for its breathtaking natural beauty, characterized by expansive cedar forests, vibrant flora, and majestic mountains. The fertile soil and favourable climate of this area provide the ideal conditions for raising high-quality livestock, which are nurtured by local farmers and herders deeply connected to their land.

#### Animals and welfare

Goats in this region roam freely across vast pastures, grazing on nutrient-rich vegetation and basking in the warm Mediterranean sun. The goats, lovingly tended to by dedicated farmers, are nurtured with the utmost care and respect. The well-being of these animals is a top priority, contributing to the exceptional quality of the final product produced.

#### Processing

In the process of making Kawarma, fresh goat meat is carefully selected and cut into small pieces; Lamb fat obtained from fatty lamb tail is trimmed to remove any remaining meat spots on the fat. The chilled fat is diced into small cubes, making it easier to handle. The meat is heavily salted and refrigerated. Next, the diced fat is simmered in a heavy-bottomed stockpot over medium-low heat until it melts and crackles, resulting in small bits of browned fats floating on the surface. The melted fat is strained through a fine sieve to remove the small bits. The rendered fat is then returned to the stockpot, and the diced or minced meat is added, cooking over medium-low heat with occasional stirring. As the meat cooks, it releases water which gradually evaporates over approximately 25 minutes, leaving behind the meat and fat. Once cooled down, the Kawarma is ladled into clean dry jars and stored in the refrigerator, where it can be kept for up to a year.



## Cheese and Dairy products

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### **KISHEK** **Georgette El Tenn**

#### **Product**

Kishek is a remarkable dairy product in the Arab world. Its creation begins with cracked wheat, fermented with either cow or goat milk or yoghurt. A touch of salt is added, infusing the mixture with a distinct savory note taking on the flavor profile of the dairy product. Time and patience transform this blend into a culinary masterpiece. After the fermentation process is complete, the mixture is sun-dried, allowing it to develop its distinctive flavor and texture. Finally, the dried Kishek is ground, resulting in a finely powdered form, ready to be used in a multitude of dishes, including soups, stews, and manakeesh.

#### **Territory**

The Kishek is produced in the small village of Saghbine, huddled amidst the breathtaking landscapes of West Bekaa. Here, the art of crafting Kishek flourishes, drawing inspiration from the fertile soil and abundant wheat fields that grace the vast plains of the Bekaa Valley.

#### **Animals and welfare**

Goat milk is the primary ingredient in Kishek, lending it a traditional pungent flavor that sets it apart from commercialized variations that typically employ other types of milk, commonly cow's milk. The goats enjoy a life of freedom and natural grazing on lush pastures, guided by attentive shepherds. This emphasis on animal welfare ensures that the goats can roam and feed on nutritious vegetation, ultimately contributing to the high quality and authentic flavor of the Kishek.

#### **Processing**

To craft Kishek, the process begins with soaking fine burgul in goat yoghurt (laban) and sea salt for a day. On the following day, goat labneh (reduced laban) and additional sea salt are incorporated over a span of two days. This mixture is then carefully stored in a pot for four days to undergo fermentation, allowing the flavors to develop. After this fermentation period, the Kishek is sun-dried for an additional four days until it reaches the perfect consistency. Finally, it is delicately crushed into a fine powder and thoughtfully stored, preserving its unique characteristics for future enjoyment.

#### **Production period**

The production of Kishek typically takes place from summer to early fall, aligning with the wheat harvest season that provides an essential ingredient, burghul. This timing ensures the availability of fresh ingredients for the preparation of Kishek. Kishek has a longstanding tradition of being prepared during the summer months and then carefully preserved for consumption during the colder winter months.



## Vegetables, fruit, legumes and their processed products (oil, wine...)

### **APPLE & GRAPE MOLASSES**

#### **Maha Al Hadi**

#### **Variety**

Mouwachah Apple variety (also known as San Pareille) and Oubeidy or Merwah Grape varieties.

#### **Territory**

The production of apple and grape molasses takes place in the enchanting region of Barouk Chouf, located in the heart of Lebanon. This picturesque territory, known for its fertile lands and favourable climate, provides an ideal environment for cultivating the finest fruits.

#### **Cultivation**

The cultivation of apples and grapes for molasses production begins in October and November. Skilled farmers in Barouk carefully tend to the apple orchards and grapevines, ensuring optimal growth and development of the fruits.

#### **Harvest**

The harvest of apples and grapes takes place in September when the fruits have reached their peak ripeness. Experienced farmers handpick the fruits, selecting only the best ones for molasses production.

#### **Processing**

Once the apples and grapes are harvested, the juice extraction process begins. The fruits are pressed to extract their sweet and flavorful juices, which are then brought to a gentle boil. The heat is reduced, allowing the juices to simmer slowly until they reach the desired thickness. This concentrates the natural sugars and flavors, resulting in rich molasses. After the perfect consistency is achieved, the apple and grape molasses are mixed together, creating a harmonious blend of flavors. The final product is carefully preserved in jars, ensuring its long-lasting freshness and taste.



## Vegetables, fruit, legumes and their processed products (oil, wine...)

### **FIGS WITH ANIS SEEDS**

***Amila Azzam***

#### **Variety**

Shatawi or Sukari Fig Varieties; Shatawi comes from the word Shitaa' in Arabic which means winter, as it ripens very late in the year. Whereas the Sukari variety is named after its sweetness, (sukar means sugar in Arabic).

#### **Territory**

The enchanting region of Kherbet Qanafar in West Bekaa, Lebanon, serves as the prime territory for cultivating figs. This idyllic region, renowned for its rich soils and favorable climatic conditions, provides the perfect environment for fig trees to thrive and produce succulent fruits infused with the aromatic essence of Anis.

#### **Cultivation**

The cultivation of figs takes place during the months of January and February in Kherbet Qanafar. Diligent farmers nurture the fig trees, ensuring they receive ample sunlight, water, and nutrients to promote healthy growth and bountiful harvests. The region's unique microclimate, characterized by warm summers and mild winters, contributes to the development of sweet and flavorful figs.

#### **Harvest**

The figs are carefully harvested during the months of August and September when they have reached optimal ripeness. Skilled farmers delicately handpick the figs from the trees, ensuring that only the finest specimens are selected. These freshly harvested figs are then set out under the warm sun to naturally dry, a process that enhances their sweetness and concentrates their flavors.

#### **Processing**

Once the figs have been thoroughly dried and reached a state of excellent dehydration, they are immersed in a water bath infused with Anis seeds. This infusion imparts a delightful hint of Anis flavor to the figs, adding a unique and aromatic twist to their natural sweetness. After the brief soaking, the figs are further dried for a day to ensure they are perfectly preserved. Finally, they are carefully packaged and stored, ready to be enjoyed as a delectable treat bursting with the delightful flavor combination of sweet figs and mild spiciness of the anis seeds.



## Vegetables, fruit, legumes and their processed products (oil, wine...)

### **SUMAC**

#### ***Rola Fakher***

#### **Variety**

Local Sumac; *Rhus coraria*. This variety of Sumac is also called Sicilian Sumac, Lebanese Sumac, Syrian Sumac, soumak, sumaq, or velvet sumac, because of the fuzzy coating that grows on the berries.

#### **Territory**

Nestled in the magnificent expanse of West Bekaa, the territory of Rashaya serves as the home for sumac cultivation. With its sprawling landscapes and breathtaking vistas, this region sets the stage for the growth and development of sumac bushes. The fertile soils and harmonious climate of Rashaya create an ideal environment for the flourishing of this treasured spice.

#### **Cultivation**

Sumac cultivation in Rashaya takes place during the winter season. This timing ensures optimal conditions for the growth and development of sumac plants. The cool temperatures and moderate rainfall during this period support the healthy growth of the sumac bushes.

#### **Harvest**

The harvest of sumac berries occurs during the months of July and August. Skilled farmers meticulously hand-pick the ripe sumac berries from the bushes. The timing of the harvest is crucial to ensure that the berries have reached their peak flavor and nutritional content.

#### **Processing**

After the sumac berries are harvested, they undergo a careful processing method. First, the harvested berries are laid out in a cool, well-ventilated area to dry naturally. This drying process allows the berries to retain their vibrant red color while preserving their distinctive tangy flavor. Once dried, the seeds are removed, and the remaining berries are carefully ground into a coarse powder. The result is sumac powder, ready to be used in various culinary delights such as salads, in manakeesh, and as a topping on savory dishes.



## Vegetables, fruit, legumes and their processed products (oil, wine...)

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### ZAATAR MIX

Nadim Rawda

*Thyme after Thyme*

#### Variety

Local Thyme; Origanum Syriacum

#### Territory

Thyme cultivation for zaatar production thrives in the scenic region of Baakline Chouf. This picturesque territory, with its favourable climate and fertile lands, provides the ideal conditions for growing high-quality thyme, renowned for its rich aroma and flavor.

#### Cultivation

The cultivation of thyme begins in March and April in Baakline Chouf. Diligent farmers carefully tend to the thyme plants, ensuring they receive adequate sunlight, water, and nutrients. The region's optimal climatic conditions contribute to the robust growth and development of the thyme plants, resulting in aromatic leaves bursting with flavor.

#### Harvest

The harvest of thyme takes place in June and July when the plants have reached their peak maturity. Skilled farmers handpick the thyme sprigs, ensuring the selection of only the freshest and highest-quality leaves. The harvested thyme is then spread out to dry naturally, allowing the leaves to retain their essential oils and intense fragrance.

#### Processing

Once the thyme leaves are thoroughly dried, they are carefully ground into a fine powder. This process ensures that any large pieces are broken down, resulting in a smooth and consistent texture. In some traditional recipes, the ground thyme is mixed with other ingredients such as sesame, nuts, lavender, cashew, or kishkek, adding layers of complexity to the flavor profile. The final product, known as zaatar, is stored in jars, and kept in a cool and dry place to preserve its freshness and potency. Zaatar is a versatile culinary delight. It can be enjoyed as a sandwich spread or used to create a flavorful dip for bread, vegetables, and mankoushe by simply mixing zaatar with olive oil.

