



ADEENA SUSSMAN

# sababa

Fresh, Sunny Flavors  
from My Israeli Kitchen

FOREWORD BY

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# Cinnamony Smoky Eggplant P'titim

Word to the wise: If you're in Israel shopping for pantry staples, don't ask for "Israeli couscous"; shopkeepers will look at you quizzically and give you regular semolina couscous. To Israelis, these are p'titim, and p'titim only. An after-school snack for generations of Israeli kids the way a box of mac 'n' cheese is for Americans, these tiny orbs of pasta were invented as a substitute for rice during Israel's so-called austerity period in the 1950s, when food was scarce and creativity was key. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, came up with the idea, so older Israelis know the product as "Ben-Gurion's Rice." Quick-cooking and absorbent, it soaks up any sauce you throw its way. No one's going to mistake this dish for rice, but p'titim deserve a place of their own in every kitchen. If you can't find them in a shop, Italian fregola works well, too.

1½ cups uncooked p'titim  
(Israeli couscous)

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

½ small Italian eggplant, cubed  
(2 cups)

1 medium onion, chopped

1¼ teaspoons kosher salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black  
pepper

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

½ teaspoon ground cumin

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

1 medium tomato, diced, or

1 cup canned diced tomatoes in juice

¼ teaspoon smoked paprika

¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped

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**Serves**

**4 to 6**

**Active Time:**

30 minutes

**Total Time:**

45 minutes

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In a dry skillet, toast the p'titim over medium heat, stirring frequently, until lightly golden and fragrant, 3 minutes. Transfer the p'titim to a plate. Add the olive oil to the skillet and raise the heat to medium-high. Add the eggplant, onions, ½ teaspoon of the salt, and the black pepper and cook, stirring often, until the onions are golden and softened and the eggplant has shrunk and is browned, 9 to 10 minutes. Add the garlic and cook 1 more minute. Add the tomato paste, cinnamon, cumin, cayenne, and another ½ teaspoon salt and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the tomatoes and 1½ cups water to the pan, then stir in the p'titim, cover with a tight-fitting lid, reduce the heat to medium-low, and cook until the p'titim have absorbed all the liquid, 8 to 9 minutes. Remove from the heat and let rest for 2 minutes. Open the lid, stir in the paprika, the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt, and the parsley and serve immediately.

