



◀▼ **Afghan & Arab Bakery**

Habib Afghan-Baig (left) says he turns out about 1000 rounds of *khubz* (Arabic bread) each day from his blink-and-you'll-miss-it bakery. As well as rolling out Afghan naan, made in a traditional *tannur* to a recipe handed down from his father, Sultan Afghan-Baig, Habib also makes Egyptian *aiysh* bread, lavash and Turkish pide. 2/13 Nelson St, (02) 9728 1832.



In the neighbourhood
FAIRFIELD, NSW

In a tiny hole-in-the-wall bakery on the fringes of Fairfield in Sydney's west, Habib Afghan-Baig is busy shaping a batch of long, pillowy *khubz*. The light-as-air Afghan bread – which he bakes until golden in a traditional *tannur* clay oven – has been eaten in the Middle East for centuries. Habib, owner of the Afghan & Arab Bakery, says he learned to make the bread by watching his father at work at his well-known bakery in Kabul. “All my life has been about bread. In the Middle East, no meal is complete unless it is shared and eaten with bread,” says the 35-year-old, who arrived in Australia as a refugee in 1999. “Most people from Kabul know my father and my family. And now they know me: people come from all over Sydney to buy my bread.”

Habib, who bought the bakery in 2007, is one of many Afghan refugees to arrive in Fairfield after fleeing the conflict in their homeland. Historian Stephen Gapps, author of *Fairfield: Evolution of a Migrant City*, says the cultural profile of Fairfield is extremely diverse – with more than 130 nations forming the background of local residents.

The top 10 overseas birthplaces listed in the 2006 ABS census for the area includes countries such as Croatia, Cambodia and China, but a wander around the neighbourhood also provides a colourful snapshot of the area's migration history, with many mixed businesses catering to new migrants from Iraq, Afghanistan and Latin America.

Sisters Daniela and Claudia Casanova, of Chilean descent, woo customers to Paula's Continental Cakes (*Shop 2/9 Barbara St*) with authentic South American dishes worth swooning over. Their parents

opened the cafe more than 30 years ago. Although the signature dish is *empanadas*, which Daniela says are “made with love”, the traditional El Salvadorian dish of *pupusas* – filled tortillas served with cabbage salad, and slathered with a piquant chilli sauce – is also popular.

The Fairfield Council slogan ‘Celebrating Diversity’ springs to life with a stroll down Smart Street, where the accent crisscrosses the globe from Latin America and back to the Middle East.

Tierras Latinas is a gem of a grocery store run by Peruvian Jesus Quinteros and his family, who arrived in Australia in 1998. Join the snaking queues of Spanish-speaking customers in search of food from their home: there are cans of cactus, the prized *cochayuyo* (dried kelp), *platanos fritos* (fried plantains) and even alpaca-wool ponchos.

Nearby, Frank's Restaurant is where members of the local Middle Eastern community converge to enjoy the main draw: chef Frank Abdo's ‘famous’ mixed grill served with neon-bright pickles and pita.

Al Dhiaffah Al Iraqi (*15 The Crescent*) is another chaotic hub at lunchtime with owner Hassan Mahady's menu offering specialties such as *semeç masgûf* (barbecued fish) and *tashrib* (a tender lamb curry wrapped in bread) to the Iraqi community. “People come in here to hear Iraqi music, eat Iraqi food and celebrate their culture,” says Hassan.

No matter the migrant history, the intoxicating mix of fragrance, spices, music, accents and flavours, it seems the denizens of Fairfield are bound together by one common thread: a shared appreciation of their heritage and culture. 🍷



◀▶ **Frank's Restaurant**

Frank and Therese Abdo have been serving up generous and affordable fare for the past two decades at this charming, no-nonsense Lebanese restaurant. Frank's is best known for the mixed-grill plate: the lamb is pink and peppery, the chicken chargrilled to perfection and the dips, pickles and pita make it a meal to remember. 16 Smart St, (02) 9724 3000.



◀ **Tierras Latinas**

This delicatessen deserves its loyal local following: it sells a fabulous selection of specialty products from Central and South America ranging from fat, meaty chorizo and *queso fresco* (a soft, mild cheese) to empanadas, Colombian corncakes (*dona arepa*) and fiery hot sauces. There is also a tempting array of sweets: try the *dulce de leche* (caramel). 1/57 Smart St, (02) 9723 4446.

◀▶ **Bondeno Café**

When Enver Dizdagic fell in love with his wife Ramiza, it was while sharing a plate of *čevapčići* at a cafe called Bondeno in north-western Bosnia. When Enver opened his own eatery in Australia 15 years ago, he paid tribute to his wife by calling it Bondeno Café and putting the famous skinless sausage – served with bread and cabbage salad (left) – on the menu. 77 Ware St, (02) 9723 0860.



▶ **La Torre Cake Shop**

Robert Lagrange comes from a line of celebrated pastry chefs in Argentina, and has run this South American bakery with his wife Graciela for the past 28 years. La Torre's signature ‘chocoflan’ has been passed down through three generations, and their *rosca de chicharrón* (bread with pork crackling) is also popular. 1/9 Nelson St, (02) 9724 4565, latorre.com.au.



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