

# Multicultural barbie

**Yasmine Fathy** explores the diverse world of Australia Day celebrations.

IN GREEK culture, the pomegranate fruit symbolises fertility, success and happiness so to honour Australia Day, a traditional Greek family adds the fruit to its barbecue.

"Australia Day is a non-Greek celebratory day but a very big day," says Maria Benardis, whose family hails from Kalamata, Greece. "So we use the pomegranate to celebrate."

Every Australia Day, she invites family and friends to her home where she cooks dishes blending Australian and Greek cuisine. "After all, Australia opened its arms to allow the Greek people in this country," says Benardis, owner of Greekalicious cooking school. "It is also a very emotional day because they remember the day they arrived."

Early on January 26, Benardis cracks a pomegranate, removes the seeds and puts it in a bowl with fresh parsley, cumin, extra-virgin olive oil, lemon and crushed garlic and dips the mix over lamb after it's cooked on the barbecue.

Nidal Al Hihi, from Wentworthville, gives Australia Day a Lebanese flavour. On the day, she and her family gather to cook traditional kofta, kebab and chicken on the barbecue.

"The garlic goes with the chicken, the hummus goes with the kofta and the kebab," Al Hihi says.

Teresa Wozniak, who moved to Australia in 1992 from Poland, makes an array of her homeland's delights including zurek, a soup cooked with pork sausages and marjoram and served with a sliced boiled egg. For the day, she also makes pierogi dumplings and fills them with meat or cabbage and wild mushrooms or spicy potato.

Sledzie, or herrings, marinated in oil and onions and served with sour cream and shaved apples are also on the menu. For dessert, she makes the traditional Polish poppy seed cake makowiec.

Sophia Giufre celebrates the Sicilian way with 30 family members. "My nonna wakes up very early on Australia Day," she says. "She will wake up like 6am, go to church and then she will come home and then it will take about three hours cooking the pasta sauce."

Gifure's nonna makes sugo, the traditional Italian sauce with tomatoes, meat, basil, garlic and herbs.

In Baulkham Hills, Lorraine Elliott and Michaela Aguilar meet with a group of friends to celebrate, each bringing something special from their country. Elliott, who comes from a Chinese background, cooks Japanese-themed wagyu burger and Chinese roast pork. Aguilar, who moved to Australia from Austria 15 years ago, makes sauerkraut

## Prawn souvlaki

Make a ladolemono dressing by combining 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, 6 tbsp fresh lemon juice, a pinch of dried oregano, salt and pepper. Shell and devein 16 raw prawns and skewer. Brush each with ladolemono and barbecue for about one minute on each side or until prawns turn pink. Brush with more dressing to serve and garnish with parsley or coriander.

**Maria Benardis**

and serves it with speck and a pork delhi. They also have a multicultural barbecue. "The cooking method is Australian but what we put on the barbie is probably Swiss or German," Aguilar says.

Bahjah Hmoud, from Daceyville, meets with friends from the Sydney Multicultural Community Services and makes a traditional Iraqi rice with meat, nuts and sultanas.

"If you live in Europe or in Guinea or in Greece, you never get access to those kinds of people," Aguilar says. "This is really something uniquely Australian."



**Greek flavours ... prawn souvlaki with ladolemono dressing.** Photo: Kate Geraghty