



# Azerbaijan

The Land of Fire on the Caspian shore, where flames rise from the hillsides, the old walled city of Baku meets glass towers, and tea comes in a pear-shaped glass.

## AT A GLANCE

## Facts to know

### CAPITAL

Baku

### POPULATION

About 10.3 million (official estimate for 1 January 2026)

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Azerbaijani, as set out in the constitution. Russian is widely understood, and Lezgian, Talysh and other minority languages are spoken

### CURRENCY

Azerbaijani manat, divided into 100 qpik

### AREA

About 86,600 km<sup>2</sup>, including the Nakhchivan exclave

### GOVERNMENT

Republic with a strong elected president, who serves a seven-year term, and a one-chamber parliament, the Milli Majlis

### HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Bazardüzü, 4,466 m, in the Greater Caucasus on the border with Russia

### LONGEST RIVER

The Kura, about 1,515 km in total. It rises in Türkiye, flows through Georgia and crosses Azerbaijan to the Caspian Sea

### NEIGHBOURS

Russia to the north, Georgia to the northwest, Armenia to the west, Iran to the south, and a short border with Türkiye from the Nakhchivan exclave. Across the Caspian Sea: Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan

### DRIVES ON THE

Right

### CALLING CODE

+994

# A 45-minute trip to Azerbaijan

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

**0 to 5 min** Welcome. Show the map page and find Azerbaijan together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there?

**5 to 15 min** Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 1139: The great Ganja earthquake; 1990: Black January; 2025: A peace agreement is initialled.

**15 to 25 min** At the table: talk about Qutab and Dushbara. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help.

**25 to 30 min** Say it like a local: practise "Salam" (Hello), "Sabahnz xeyir" (Good morning), "Axamnz xeyir" (Good evening). Everyone says them together.

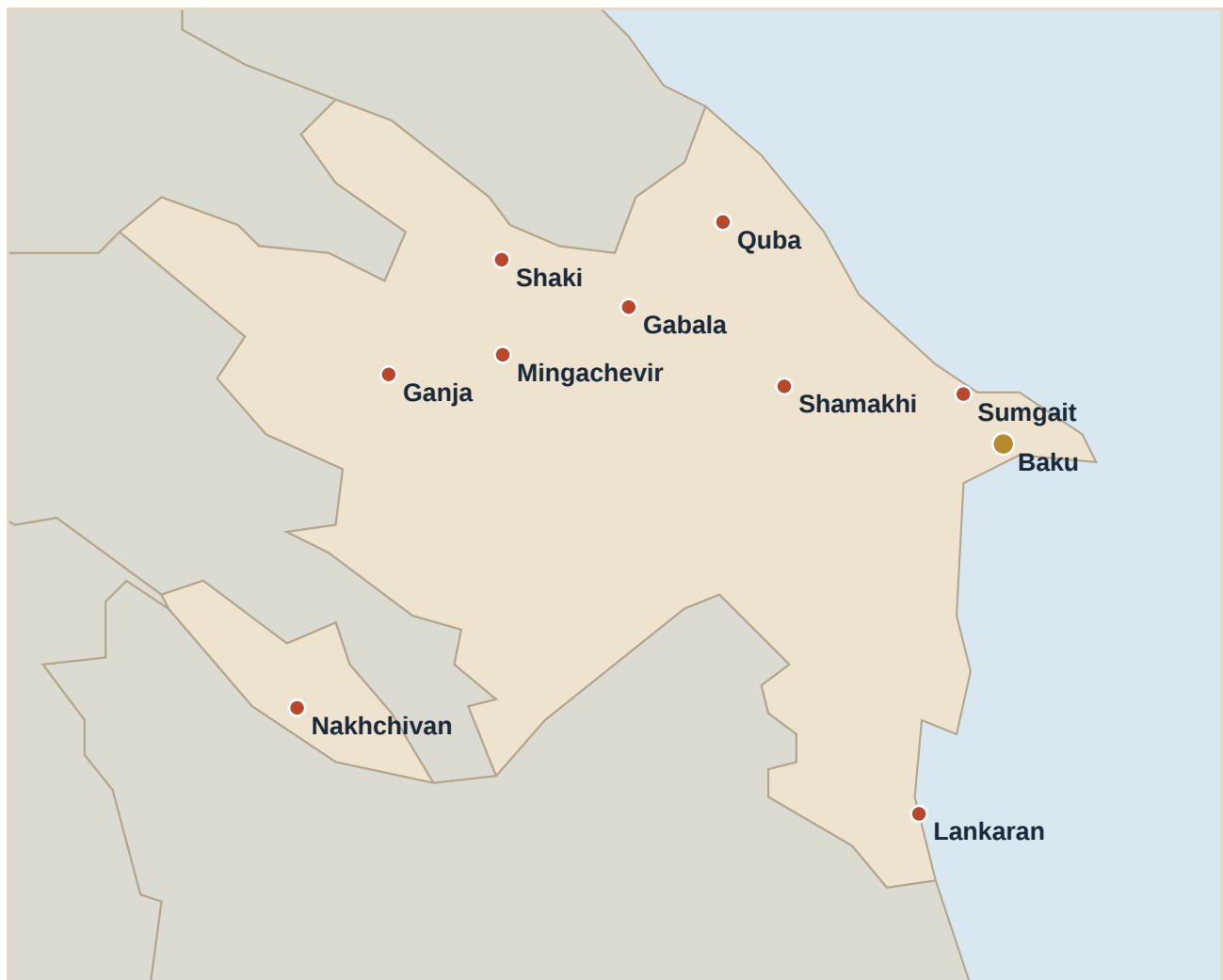
**30 to 40 min** Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at <https://preview.worldstroll.com/countries/azerbaijan/group>. No scores needed.

**40 to 45 min** Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page.

## You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

# Azerbaijan and its cities



- Baku (Absheron Peninsula, on the Caspian Sea): The Old City, Icherisheher, The Maiden Tower, The Flame Towers and the seaside boulevard, The Formula One street race
- Sumgait (Absheron Peninsula, about 30 km north of Baku): Soviet-era industry, The Caspian shore, Sumqayit State University
- Ganja (Western Azerbaijan, in the Kura valley): The Mausoleum of Nizami, The Imamzadeh shrine, Lake Göygöl nearby
- Mingachevir (Central Azerbaijan, on the Kura river): The Mingachevir Reservoir, Hydroelectric power, The Kura river running through the city
- Shaki (Northwest, in the foothills of the Greater Caucasus): The Palace of the Shaki Khans, Caravanserais, Shaki halva, Piti in clay pots
- Gabala (North, below the Greater Caucasus): Ruins of ancient Gabala, Forests and mountain resorts, The Gabala International Music Festival
- Quba (Northeast, on the slopes of the Greater Caucasus): Quba carpets, The Red Village,

### The road to Khinalug

- Shamakhi (Shirvan, between Baku and the mountains): The Juma Mosque, Vineyards and wine, Traditional dance, Soumak rugs
- Lankaran (South, on the Caspian near Iran): Tea plantations, Levengi, stuffed fish, The Hyrcanian forests, The Talysh people
- Nakhchivan (Capital of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, the western exclave): The Momine Khatun Mausoleum, Medieval tomb towers, The mountains of the exclave

# A short history of Azerbaijan

The rock carvings of Gobustan, near Baku, show that people lived by the Caspian thousands of years ago. In ancient times the land north of the Aras river was part of Caucasian Albania, a kingdom that adopted Christianity in the 4th century, and it was often ruled by or tied to Persian empires. Arab armies brought Islam in the 7th century, Turkic peoples arrived from Central Asia from the 11th century, and slowly the Turkic language that became Azerbaijani spread across the region. Local dynasties such as the Shirvanshahs ruled from Shamakhi and Baku, the Safavids of Iran held the area for centuries, and in the early 1800s the Russian Empire took it. The oil boom, a short-lived republic, seventy years of Soviet rule and independence in 1991 followed. The conflict with Armenia over Karabakh has shaped the country since the late 1980s, and the two sides still tell parts of that story very differently.

## **1139**      **The great Ganja earthquake**

In September 1139 one of the deadliest earthquakes in history struck the region around Ganja. Contemporary accounts speak of very many dead, though the numbers are disputed. Part of Mount Kapaz collapsed and blocked a river, and the water filled a valley to form Lake Göygöl, still one of the country's most beautiful sights.

## **1141**      **Nizami Ganjavi is born**

Around 1141 the poet Nizami Ganjavi was born in Ganja, where he lived most of his life. Writing in Persian, the literary language of the region at the time, he became one of the great romantic poets of the Persian tradition. His 'Five Treasures', including the love story of Layla and Majnun, are loved from Iran to Azerbaijan and beyond.

## **1501**      **The Safavids take power**

In 1501 the young Ismail I, leader of the Safavid order, was crowned shah in Tabriz and soon brought the lands of the Shirvanshahs under his rule. The Safavid dynasty ruled Iran and most of today's Azerbaijan for over two centuries and made Shia Islam the state religion. Ismail also wrote poems in the Turkic language that became Azerbaijani, under the pen name Khatai.

## **1828**      **The Aras becomes the border**

After two wars between Russia and Qajar Iran, the treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) gave the lands north of the Aras river to

the Russian Empire. The river became the border, and it still separates the Republic of Azerbaijan from the Iranian region also called Azerbaijan, where millions of Azerbaijani speakers live today.

**1846**

### **An oil well is drilled at Bibi-Heybat**

People around Baku had collected oil from shallow pits for centuries. In 1846 a Russian engineer used a percussion drill to sink a 21-metre well at Bibi-Heybat, on the edge of Baku, and struck oil. It was one of the earliest drilled oil wells in the world, thirteen years before the famous Drake well in the United States.

**1879**

### **The Nobel brothers found Branobel**

Robert and Ludvig Nobel, brothers of Alfred Nobel of the Nobel Prize, came to Baku in the 1870s and in 1879 set up the Branobel company. They built pipelines, storage tanks and one of the first successful oil tankers, the Zoroaster. Baku boomed, and by 1901 it produced more than half of the world's oil.

**1918**

### **The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic is declared**

On 28 May 1918, after the collapse of the Russian Empire, the Azerbaijani National Council declared independence. The new republic had an elected parliament with members from many communities, gave women the vote, one of the earliest countries to do so, and founded Baku State University. 28 May is celebrated as Independence Day.

**1920**

### **Soviet rule begins**

In April 1920 the Soviet Red Army entered Baku, and the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic was established on 28 April. For the next seventy years Azerbaijan was part of the Soviet Union. During the Second World War Baku's oil fields supplied most of the oil used by the Soviet army, and German forces tried and failed to reach them.

**1990**

### **Black January**

On the night of 19 to 20 January 1990, as the Soviet Union was falling apart, Soviet troops entered Baku to crush the independence movement. According to official Azerbaijani figures, 147 civilians were killed and about 800 injured. 20 January is remembered every year as a national day of mourning.

**1991**

### **Independence is restored**

On 18 October 1991 the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan adopted a declaration restoring the country's independence, and voters confirmed it in a referendum in December, just as the Soviet Union came to an end. In the same year Azerbaijan decided to return to the Latin alphabet.

**1994**

### **A ceasefire in the Karabakh war**

From 1988, conflict grew over Nagorno-Karabakh, a region inside Azerbaijan with an Armenian majority, and it became a full war after 1991. About 30,000 people died and more than a million had to leave their homes, most of them Azerbaijanis. A ceasefire in May 1994 left Armenian forces in control of most of Karabakh and all or part of seven surrounding districts, all internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan.

**2006**

### **Oil flows through the BTC pipeline**

Caspian oil had long reached the world only through Russia. On 28 May 2006 the first oil pumped from Baku reached the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean, through the new Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, about 1,768 km long, which crosses Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye.

**2012**

### **Baku hosts Eurovision**

Azerbaijan first took part in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2008 and won in 2011 with 'Running Scared' by Ell and Nikki. In May 2012 the contest was held at the new Baku Crystal Hall on the seafront, and Sweden won with 'Euphoria'.

**2023**

### **Azerbaijan takes control of Karabakh**

The six-week war of 2020 and the ceasefire that ended it returned the seven districts and part of Karabakh to Azerbaijani control. In September 2023 a one-day Azerbaijani military operation ended the Armenian-run administration in the region, and almost all of Karabakh's Armenians, more than 100,000 people, left for Armenia. Armenia and many international observers call this an expulsion; Azerbaijan says the residents chose to leave.

**2024**

### **The COP29 climate summit in Baku**

In November 2024 Baku hosted COP29, the United Nations climate change conference. After talks that ran past their planned end, it closed with an agreement on climate finance for developing countries. The choice of a major oil and gas producer as host was widely debated.

**2025**

### **A peace agreement is initialled**

On 8 August 2025, at a meeting in Washington, the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan initialled the text of a peace agreement and signed a joint declaration. As of September 2026 the agreement had not yet been signed or ratified, and talks on the remaining steps continue.

# What people eat in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijani cooking brings together the lamb and dairy of shepherds, the fish and caviar of the Caspian, the fruit and nuts of the mountain valleys, and saffron, which is grown on the Absheron Peninsula around Baku. A meal often starts with a plate of fresh green herbs, white cheese, bread and pickles, followed by a hearty soup such as bozbash or piti, which can be a meal in itself. The main course might be kebabs, dolma or, on special days, plov, the saffron rice that is the pride of every host. Black tea follows the meal, served with lemon, sugar lumps and fruit preserves, and sweets such as pakhlava and shekerbura appear at every celebration, above all at Novruz, the spring New Year.

## Qutab (Qutab)

All of Azerbaijan

Very thin half-moons of dough filled with fresh herbs, minced lamb or pumpkin, cooked quickly on a dome-shaped griddle called a saj and brushed with butter. They are eaten hot, often with sumac and plain yoghurt, as a snack, a starter or a light meal.

## Dushbara

All of Azerbaijan, a dumpling family found from the Caucasus to Central Asia

Tiny dumplings of lamb and onion, served in a clear meat broth sprinkled with dried mint, with vinegar on the side. Good cooks pride themselves on making the dumplings so small that many fit on one spoon.

## Dovga (Dova)

All of Azerbaijan

A soup of yoghurt cooked with rice or chickpeas and a large amount of green herbs such as coriander, dill, mint and spinach. It is eaten warm in winter and chilled in summer, and at weddings it is served between the meat courses to help digestion.

## Kufta bozbash

All of Azerbaijan; bozbash soups are also loved in Armenia and Iran

A rich soup with large lamb meatballs, often with a dried sour plum hidden inside, cooked with chickpeas, potatoes and saffron. The broth is often drunk first, and the meatballs and potatoes are eaten afterwards with bread as a second course.

## Shaki piti

Shaki, in the northwest; similar pot stews are found across the Caucasus and Iran

Lamb, chickpeas, potatoes and sour plums slow-cooked for hours in a small individual clay pot, flavoured with saffron and sealed with a piece of tail fat. It is eaten in two stages: first you crumble bread into a bowl and pour the broth over it, then you eat the meat and vegetables with sumac.

## Plov (Plov)

All of Azerbaijan, with dozens of regional versions

Long-grain rice steamed until each grain is separate and finished with saffron and butter. In Azerbaijan the rice is usually served with the gara, the topping of lamb or chicken, chestnuts, dried apricots, raisins and onions, on a separate platter, so each person can combine them. Shah plov, a festive version, is baked inside a golden crust of thin lavash bread that is cut open at the table.

## Dolma (Yarpaq dolmas)

All of Azerbaijan; stuffed leaves and vegetables are loved across the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Balkans

Young vine leaves wrapped around minced lamb, rice and herbs and simmered gently, then served warm with garlic yoghurt. In Azerbaijan dolma is usually folded into small neat parcels. Cabbage leaves, peppers, tomatoes and aubergines are stuffed the same way.

## Lyulya kebab

All of Azerbaijan; also a speciality in neighbouring Armenia

Minced lamb mixed with plenty of onion and a little tail fat, pressed around wide flat skewers and grilled over charcoal. It is wrapped in thin lavash bread with raw onion, sumac and herbs, and often comes with grilled tomatoes and pomegranate seeds.

## Levengi

Lankaran and the Talysh region in the south

A whole fish from the Caspian, or a chicken, stuffed with a thick paste of ground walnuts, grated onion and sour plum or pomegranate syrup, then baked until golden. It is a festive dish of the south, made above all for Novruz.

## Tandir bread

All of Azerbaijan

Round or oval loaves slapped onto the hot inner wall of a clay oven, the tandir, and baked in a few minutes until blistered and chewy. Thin lavash is baked the same way or on a saj griddle, and bread is treated with great respect: it should never be thrown away or left on the floor.

## **Qatiq (Qatq)**

All of Azerbaijan and much of the Turkic world

A thick homemade yoghurt, eaten plain with bread, stirred with garlic as a sauce for dolma and qutab, or thinned with water and salt to make the cold drink ayran. Strained, it becomes the thick cheese-like süzm.

## **Shekerbura**

All of Azerbaijan, a symbol of Novruz

Half-moon pastries of buttery dough filled with ground almonds or walnuts, sugar and cardamom. The top is decorated with a fine pattern pinched with special tweezers called maggash. Families and neighbours often gather to make them together before Novruz.

## **Shaki halva**

Shaki, in the northwest

A very sweet speciality of Shaki, made of a lacy web of rice-flour dough called rishta, layered with crushed hazelnuts, cardamom and coriander seed and soaked in syrup. It is made by professional halva makers, not at home, and takes a whole day. Visitors to Shaki carry boxes of it home.

## **Black tea (Çay)**

All of Azerbaijan; tea is also grown around Lankaran in the south

Strong black tea is the national drink, served all day long in small pear-shaped glasses called armudu. It comes with sugar lumps, slices of lemon and small dishes of fruit preserves, and it is offered to every guest as a sign of welcome.

### **GOOD MANNERS**

## **At the table**

- Guests are welcomed with tea, usually before anything else. It is polite to accept at least one glass.
- Bread is treated with great respect. Do not throw it away, put it on the floor or step over it; old bread is left in a clean place or given to birds.
- Say 'nu olsun', may it be good for you, to people who are eating, much like 'enjoy your meal'.
- Take off your shoes when you enter a home unless your hosts tell you otherwise; slippers are often offered.
- The eldest are served first and treated with great respect. At the end of the meal it is polite to thank your hosts warmly and praise the food, especially the plov.

- Alcohol is legal and wine and beer are common, but many Azerbaijanis do not drink, so follow your hosts' lead.

# Qutab

Very thin half-moons of dough filled with fresh herbs, minced lamb or pumpkin, cooked quickly on a dome-shaped griddle called a saj and brushed with butter. They are eaten hot, often with sumac and plain yoghurt, as a snack, a starter or a light meal.

## Ingredients

- 250 g plain flour, plus extra for rolling
- About 130 ml warm water and 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 200 g spinach, finely chopped
- 1 bunch each of spring onions, coriander and dill, finely chopped
- 40 g butter, melted, plus more for brushing
- Salt, black pepper, and ground sumac to serve
- Plain yoghurt to serve

## Method

1. Mix the flour, salt and water into a firm, smooth dough. Knead for 5 minutes, cover and leave to rest for 20 minutes.
2. Mix the spinach, spring onions and herbs with a little salt and pepper, and squeeze out extra liquid with your hands. Stir in 2 tablespoons of the melted butter.
3. Divide the dough into 12 balls and roll each one out very thinly into a circle about 18 cm across.
4. Spread a spoonful of filling over half of each circle, fold it over into a half-moon and press the edges firmly together.
5. Cook the qutab in a dry, hot frying pan for 1 to 2 minutes on each side, until they have golden spots. Brush with butter, stack them, and serve warm with sumac and yoghurt.

# Dovga

A soup of yoghurt cooked with rice or chickpeas and a large amount of green herbs such as coriander, dill, mint and spinach. It is eaten warm in winter and chilled in summer, and at weddings it is served between the meat courses to help digestion.

## Ingredients

- 750 g plain yoghurt (not Greek-style)
- 500 ml water
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon plain flour
- 50 g short-grain rice, or 1 tin (400 g) chickpeas, drained
- 1 large bunch each of coriander and dill, and a small bunch of mint, finely chopped
- 100 g spinach, finely chopped
- Salt

## Method

1. Cook the rice in a little salted water until soft, or rinse the chickpeas, and set aside.
2. In a large pan, whisk the yoghurt with the egg and flour until smooth, then whisk in the water.
3. Put the pan over a medium heat and bring it slowly to a gentle boil, stirring all the time in the same direction so the yoghurt does not split. This takes about 10 to 15 minutes.
4. Once it bubbles, add the rice or chickpeas, the herbs and the spinach, with a little salt. Keep stirring and simmer for 5 to 8 minutes more.
5. Serve hot, or let it cool and chill it in the fridge for a refreshing summer soup.

# Kufta bozbash

A rich soup with large lamb meatballs, often with a dried sour plum hidden inside, cooked with chickpeas, potatoes and saffron. The broth is often drunk first, and the meatballs and potatoes are eaten afterwards with bread as a second course.

## Ingredients

- 500 g minced lamb (or half lamb, half beef)
- 2 onions: 1 grated for the meatballs, 1 sliced
- 2 tablespoons rice, rinsed
- 8 dried sour plums, dried apricots or pitted prunes
- 1 tin (400 g) chickpeas, drained
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and halved
- 1.5 litres water or light stock
- A pinch of saffron soaked in 2 tablespoons hot water, or 1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
- Salt, black pepper, and dried mint to serve

## Method

1. Mix the minced meat with the grated onion, rice, salt and pepper, and knead well.
2. Divide into 8 portions. Flatten each one in your palm, put a dried plum in the middle and roll it into a large, smooth ball.
3. Bring the water or stock to the boil with the sliced onion, add the chickpeas and potatoes and simmer for 10 minutes.
4. Lower the meatballs gently into the soup, cover and simmer for 40 minutes without stirring hard, so they keep their shape. Make sure the meatballs are cooked through in the middle.
5. Stir in the saffron water, taste for salt, and serve in deep bowls with a pinch of dried mint on top.

# Dolma

Young vine leaves wrapped around minced lamb, rice and herbs and simmered gently, then served warm with garlic yoghurt. In Azerbaijan dolma is usually folded into small neat parcels. Cabbage leaves, peppers, tomatoes and aubergines are stuffed the same way.

## Ingredients

- About 40 vine leaves in brine (one jar), rinsed
- 500 g minced lamb or beef
- 60 g short-grain rice, rinsed
- 1 onion, grated
- 1 small bunch each of coriander, dill and mint, finely chopped
- Salt and black pepper
- 30 g butter
- To serve: 300 g plain yoghurt mixed with 1 crushed garlic clove

## Method

1. Mix the meat, rice, onion and herbs with salt and pepper and knead well.
2. Lay a vine leaf shiny side down, stalk towards you, and cut off the stalk. Put a heaped teaspoon of filling near the base.
3. Fold the bottom over the filling, fold in the sides and roll it up into a small, firm parcel. Repeat with the rest.
4. Line a heavy pan with a few spare leaves and pack the dolma in tightly, seam side down. Dot with the butter and add hot water to just cover them.
5. Put a small plate on top to hold them down, cover and simmer very gently for about 50 minutes, until the rice and meat are cooked. Serve warm with the garlic yoghurt.

# Lyulya kebab

Minced lamb mixed with plenty of onion and a little tail fat, pressed around wide flat skewers and grilled over charcoal. It is wrapped in thin lavash bread with raw onion, sumac and herbs, and often comes with grilled tomatoes and pomegranate seeds.

## Ingredients

- 700 g minced lamb, fairly fatty (or half lamb, half beef)
- 2 onions, grated and squeezed dry
- 1 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 4 flat metal skewers
- To serve: lavash or other thin flatbread, 1 red onion sliced and mixed with 1 teaspoon sumac, fresh herbs, grilled tomatoes

## Method

1. Mix the meat, onion, salt and pepper and knead hard for 5 minutes until the mixture is sticky. Chill it for 30 minutes.
2. With wet hands, divide it into 8 portions and press each one around a skewer into a long, even sausage, two per skewer.
3. Grill over hot charcoal or under a hot grill for 10 to 12 minutes, turning often, until browned outside and cooked through with no pink inside.
4. Slide the kebabs off onto the flatbread and serve with the sumac onions, herbs and grilled tomatoes.

# Useful phrases

## Salam

sa-LAM · Hello

## Sabahnz xeyir

sa-ba-huh-NUHZ KHEYR · Good morning

## Axamnz xeyir

akh-sha-muh-NUHZ KHEYR · Good evening

## Necsiniz?

ne-JA-si-niz · How are you? (polite)

## Yaxyam, tükür

yakh-SHUH-yam, ta-shak-kur-LAR · I'm fine, thanks

## Mnim adm ...

ma-NIM a-DUHM · My name is ...

## Çox sa olun

CHOKH SAGH o-lun · Thank you very much

## Zhmt olmasa

zah-MAT OL-ma-sa · Please

## Balayn

ba-ghush-LA-yuhn · Excuse me, sorry

## Bu neçydir?

boo ne-cha-YA-dir · How much is this?

## Çox bahaldr

CHOKH ba-ha-LUH-dur · It's very expensive

## Hesab, zhmt olmasa

he-SAB, zah-MAT OL-ma-sa · The bill, please

## Tualet haradadr?

tu-a-LET HA-ra-da-dur · Where is the toilet?

## **ngilisc dana bilirsiniz?**

in-gi-LIS-ja da-nuh-SHA bi-LIR-si-niz · Can you speak English?

## **Baa dümdim**

ba-SHA dush-MA-dim · I didn't understand

## **Nu olsun!**

NOOSH ol-SUN · Enjoy your meal!

## **Buyurun**

BU-yu-run · Here you are, please go ahead

## **Göründk**

gyo-ru-sha-na-DAK · See you, goodbye

## Things you might not know

1. Baku lies about 28 metres below sea level, which makes it the lowest-lying national capital in the world.
2. By 1901 the oil fields around Baku produced more than half of all the oil in the world.
3. Azerbaijan has hundreds of mud volcanoes, and by common estimates nearly half of all the mud volcanoes on Earth are found here, many of them around Gobustan.
4. A piece of Azerbaijani mugham music, played on the balaban, a wooden wind instrument, travels through space on the Voyager Golden Record, launched in 1977 with the Voyager spacecraft.
5. Azerbaijani has been written in three alphabets in one century: Arabic script until 1929, then Latin, then Cyrillic from 1939, and Latin again after 1991. Since 2001 the Latin alphabet, with letters such as , and , has been the only official one.
6. Qrmz Qsb, the Red Village near Quba, had about 3,600 people in 2010, mostly Mountain Jews, and is widely described as the only town in the world with a mostly Jewish population outside Israel and the United States.
7. Robert and Ludvig Nobel ran one of the world's largest oil companies from Baku in the late 1800s, and their brother Alfred, founder of the Nobel Prizes, was one of its shareholders.
8. Azerbaijan won the Eurovision Song Contest in 2011, only its fourth time taking part, and hosted the contest in Baku the next year.
9. Formula One cars race through the streets of Baku, past the walls of the Old City. At about 6 km, it is one of the longest circuits on the calendar, and the first race there was held in 2016.
10. The chess world champion Garry Kasparov was born in Baku in 1963, when it was part of the Soviet Union.
11. Before Novruz, the spring New Year, families mark the last four Tuesdays of winter, each for one element: water, fire, wind and earth. On these evenings children jump over small bonfires.
12. UNESCO has listed several Azerbaijani traditions as intangible heritage,

including mugham music, carpet weaving, and the making and sharing of dolma.

13. The Caspian Sea, on Azerbaijan's shore, is the largest inland body of water in the world. In Azerbaijani it is called Xəzər dənizi, the Khazar Sea, after a people who once ruled north of it.
14. Khinalug, a mountain village of about 2,000 people, has its own language, Khinalug, which is spoken nowhere else on Earth.

#### TALK ABOUT IT

## Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Azerbaijan, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Qutab or Dushbara? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- Independence is restored (1991). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- A ceasefire in the Karabakh war (1994). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen The Maiden Tower, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Azerbaijan, which would it be and why?

## QUIZ

# How well do you know Azerbaijan?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

**1. The Azerbaijani letter sounds like the vowel in which English word?**

- A) see
- B) cat
- C) too
- D) go

**2. In which year did Azerbaijan win the Eurovision Song Contest?**

- A) 2011
- B) 2012
- C) 2008
- D) 2016

**3. Black January is the name for the night in January 1990 when Soviet troops entered Baku and killed many civilians.**

- A) True
- B) False

**4. What is Gobustan, southwest of Baku, famous for?**

- A) A medieval cathedral
- B) A Roman amphitheatre
- C) Thousands of prehistoric rock carvings
- D) A glacier and ski slopes

**5. Which city on the Kura river is nicknamed the 'city of lights' because of its power stations?**

- A) Shamakhi
- B) Quba
- C) Mingachevir
- D) Lankaran

**6. Which ancient stone tower on the edge of Baku's Old City is a symbol of the country?**

- A) The Spasskaya Tower
- B) The Galata Tower
- C) The Tower of David
- D) The Maiden Tower

**7. Azerbaijani, the official language, belongs to which family of languages?**

- A) Slavic
- B) Semitic
- C) Romance
- D) Turkic

**8. Shamakhi was for centuries the capital of the Shirvanshahs.**

- A) True
- B) False

**9. To take a carpet out of Azerbaijan, you need an export certificate.**

- A) True
- B) False

**10. A piece of which kind of Azerbaijani music travels through space on the Voyager Golden Record?**

- A) Fado
- B) Flamenco
- C) Mugham
- D) Tango

**11. What do you say to someone who is eating, like 'enjoy your meal'?**

- A) Balayn
- B) Sabahnz xeyir
- C) Göründk
- D) Nu olsun

**12. Which town is famous for a very sweet halva made of a lacy web of rice-flour dough, nuts and syrup?**

- A) Mingachevir
- B) Shaki
- C) Lankaran
- D) Sumgait

# Quiz answers

## 1. B) cat

Cat. The letter , as in t (meat) and gözl (beautiful), sounds like the a in 'cat'.

## 2. A) 2011

2011, with 'Running Scared' by Ell and Nikki. Azerbaijan first took part in 2008 and hosted the contest in Baku in 2012.

## 3. True

True. On 19 to 20 January 1990 Soviet troops entered Baku to crush the independence movement; official Azerbaijani figures count 147 civilians killed. 20 January is a day of mourning.

## 4. C) Thousands of prehistoric rock carvings

Thousands of prehistoric rock carvings. Gobustan has more than 6,000 carvings of hunters, dancers, animals and boats, and has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2007.

## 5. C) Mingachevir

Mingachevir, built from 1948 around a great dam on the Kura, has a hydroelectric station and a reservoir about 70 km long.

## 6. D) The Maiden Tower

The Maiden Tower, Qz qalas, is about 29 metres high and usually dated to the 12th century. Together with the Palace of the Shirvanshahs it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

## 7. D) Turkic

Azerbaijani is a Turkic language, closely related to Turkish and Turkmen.

## 8. True

True. Shamakhi was the main seat of the Shirvanshahs for centuries, before Baku took over that role in the 15th century.

## 9. True

True. Reputable sellers can arrange the certificate, or it can be obtained through the Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum in Baku.

## 10. C) Mugham

Mugham, played on the balaban, a wooden wind instrument. Fado is from Portugal, tango from Argentina and Uruguay, and flamenco from Spain.

## 11. D) Nu olsun

Nu olsun, may it be good for you. Göründk means 'see you', balayn 'excuse me' and sabahnz xeyir 'good morning'.

## **12. B) Shaki**

Shaki. Shaki halva is made by professional halva makers and takes a whole day to prepare.

# Azerbaijan visa page

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