



*Recipes from an International Kitchen*

*by*

*Lisabet Sarai*

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# *Introduction*

Allow me to introduce myself.

I'm Lisabet Sarai: erotic romance author, world traveler and creative cook. I've published more than a dozen romance titles in a variety of sub-genres. (Drop by my website if you'd like more information.) I've visited every continent except Australia and Antarctica. And I've been concocting interesting food for more than forty years.

When I call my cooking “creative”, what I mean is that I'm not afraid to experiment in the kitchen. For me, a recipe is only a starting point. Once I get the basic idea, I'll substitute ingredients, vary the spicing, and find ways to use whatever I happen to have in my refrigerator and cabinets on a particular day.

I've also created quite a few dishes from scratch. In particular, I've taken my favorite foods from my travels and adapted them to my own kitchen. This holiday season, I decided to share some of those recipes, along with my photos of the places that inspired them.

The dozen recipes included in this volume have some things in common. First, they are all easy and quick to make. I've never had the patience or the time for recipes with thirty ingredients and two dozen steps. If some dish requires constant stirring at precisely 92 degrees for exactly seven minutes, you won't find me trying to cook it! These recipes are forgiving. It's very difficult to get them wrong.

Second, these are all main dishes. I hardly ever cook or eat deserts. I experiment with salads and side dishes to some extent, but the majority of my culinary inventions are intended to be the anchors of a meal.

Third, readers will notice that my tastes tend to run to the savory and the spicy (like my stories). Garlic appears in almost every recipe. Chilis are another common ingredient. If you find my dishes a bit too strongly flavored, I hope that you will feel free to adapt and experiment in your own kitchen. No recipe is sacred!

Unless otherwise stated, all the recipes included in this book will serve two adults.

I'd love to hear about your experiences with this cookbook. It is the first one I've written. If you have comments, or questions, you can email me at [\*lisabet@lisabetsarai.com\*](mailto:lisabet@lisabetsarai.com).

Enjoy!

Wishing you a holiday season full of joy, love and delicious food.

16 November 2009

## *Tijuana Sal's Picante Enchilada Casserole*

Tijuana Sal's my alter ego. This is a recipe she dreamed up some time ago. It's fast, easy, and with the right amount of chilis will definitely spice up your evening. Makes delicious leftovers, too!



## Ingredients

1 lb. ground beef	1 half green bell pepper, chopped
1 package corn tortillas	1 tsp. chopped fresh chilis, or 1/2 tsp. cayenne (or more to taste)
8 oz. jack or medium cheddar cheese, sliced thin or grated	1 Tbsp. ground cumin
1 small can (175 gm) tomato paste	1 tsp. ground coriander
1 tsp. white vinegar	A dash of oregano
1 Tbsp. vegetable oil	1/2 tsp. salt
4 large garlic cloves, minced	Lots of fresh ground black pepper (to taste)
1 small onion, chopped	Yogurt or sour cream
1 half red bell pepper, chopped	Black olives

## Method

1. In a heavy skillet, fry the onions, garlic, and chilis in the vegetable oil until the onions start to brown.
2. Add the ground beef, cumin, coriander, oregano, salt and pepper (and cayenne, if you are using that instead of chilis). Cook, stirring occasionally, until the beef is well-browned.
3. Add tomato paste, water, and white vinegar. Add the bell peppers. Cook on medium heat another five minutes.
4. Assemble the casserole in a brownie pan or deep pie plate. Start by covering the bottom with a layer of tortillas. (You may want to cut them in half so that you don't have two layers.)
5. Spread half the beef mixture on top of the tortillas.
6. Sprinkle or arrange half the cheese on top of the beef.
7. Add another layer of tortillas.
8. Spread the rest of the beef.
9. Cut a tortilla or two into strips and arrange artistically on top of the beef. Then
10. sprinkle or arrange the remaining cheese.
11. Broil for 5-10 minutes until the cheese melts attractively.
12. Garnish with sour cream or yogurt and chopped black olives. Serve with a fresh tossed salad and a dry red wine.

## *Provencal Smoked Salmon Pasta*

This recipe always reminds me of the wonderful two weeks my husband and I spent touring around the south of France. We had goat cheese at almost every meal—but I never got tired of it!

This dish takes less than half an hour to prepare including cutting the vegetables, but looks and tastes as elegant as anything you'd find at Chez Pierre.





## Ingredients

4 oz. smoked salmon, cut into strips.	½ tsp. oregano
3 oz. chèvre (soft goat cheese)	fresh ground black pepper (to taste)
½ cup sour cream	Dash of Worcestershire sauce
1 bunch broccoli, separated into flowerets	Dash of Tabasco sauce (optional)
1 small carrot, sliced into thin rounds	1 Tbsp. olive oil
1 small red bell pepper, diced	¼ cup water
¼ cup fresh or frozen green peas	6 oz. (dry) of your favorite pasta
2 cloves garlic	Freshly grated parmesan cheese
1 tsp. basil	Fresh parsley, chopped
1 tsp. tarragon	

## Method

1. Put water on to boil for the pasta. Add the pasta as soon as it boils (most likely after step number 3).
2. In a heavy skillet, over high heat, brown the garlic in the olive oil.
3. Add the carrot and broccoli, also the peas if they are fresh. Stir fry for 5 minutes. Then add the dry spices and fry for another 3 minutes, until the vegetables are coated with the spice-infused oil.
4. Turn down the heat to a simmer. Add the salmon, the chèvre, the sour cream and the water. Stir until the goat cheese melts into a smooth, creamy sauce.
5. Add the bell pepper and the peas, if they are frozen. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Add the Worcestershire and Tabasco. Stir then remove from the stove.
7. Drain the pasta, place in a bowl, and pour the contents of the skillet over the top. Garnish with parsley. Serve with grated parmesan cheese on the side.

## *Thai Fried Pork with Garlic and Chili*

Thailand is one of my favorite places. It may very well have the best (as well as the most varied) food in the world. This dish is my personal variant on a common offering that can be found both at street stalls and in fancy restaurants. Normally, the Thais don't add chilis during the cooking process, but use them as a condiment instead. My husband, who adores spicy food, likes it better this way. You can leave out the peppers if you want a blander but still flavorful main dish.

This recipe requires fish sauce, or *nam pla* as the Thais call it. *Nam pla* is a clear, light-brown sauce made from fermented anchovies. Unfortunately there is no good substitute. It is salty like soy sauce, but also has a kind of fishy taste that is difficult to replace. You can buy fish sauce at many Asian grocery stores. It is used in Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao cooking as well as Thai.



## Ingredients

1 lb. lean boneless pork chops, cut in 1 inch cubes

6 cloves of garlic, minced

5 hot red chilis, sliced finely (or adjust to taste)

1 tsp. fresh ground black pepper

2 tsp. *nam pla*

2 tsp. Maggi sauce

1 cup water

2 Tbsp. vegetable oil

Steamed white rice

Sliced cucumbers

Fresh coriander leaves

## Method

1. Heat the oil in a wok or heavy skillet until it is very hot.
2. Fry the garlic until it is light brown and crisp.
3. Add the pork and stir fry on high heat for 5 minutes.
4. Turn the heat to medium. Add the chilis, *nam pla*, Maggi sauce, and water.
5. Saute for about 10 minutes, until about half the liquid has evaporated and the pork is well cooked.
6. Serve on white rice, garnished with cucumber slices and coriander leaves.

## *Grilled Sole Florentine*

Florence (or Firenze as it is called in Italian) is a graceful, elegant city steeped in history.

This dish is elegant, too, but remarkably easy. As an added bonus, it's very healthy, low in fat and high in iron. You can make it with frozen spinach if you are really pressed for time. Use half a ten ounce package. Cook according to microwave directions, then place the cooked spinach in a colander and press out the water until it is as dry as possible.



## Ingredients

Two fresh fillets of sole	1 tsp. oregano
½ lb. fresh spinach, washed, cleaned and shredded	½ tsp. basil
Juice from two lemons	Salt to taste
1 clove garlic, minced	2 Tbsp. olive oil
½ tsp. fennel seeds	Tomato slices
	Slices of fennel root

## Method

1. Wash the fillets and place on a broiler pan lined with aluminum foil.
2. Brush the fillets with 1 Tbsp. olive oil. Drizzle with half the lemon juice. Scatter the fennel seeds over the top.
3. Broil for ten minutes or until cooked. Meanwhile, make the topping.
4. In a heavy skillet, heat the remaining olive oil. Brown the garlic on medium heat.
5. Turn the heat to high. Add the spinach. Stir constantly, until the spinach begins to wilt. (If you are using frozen spinach, keep the heat on medium. Add the spinach and cook for 3 minutes.)
6. Add the basil, oregano and salt. Reduce the heat to medium and cook for another 2 minutes, stirring occasionally.
7. Remove the spinach from the stove. Stir in the remaining lemon juice.
8. Place broiled fillets on plates and top with the spinach mixture. Garnish with slices of tomato and fennel. Serve with your favorite pasta tossed with olive oil and grated cheese.

## *Mom's All-American Meatloaf*

Most meatloaf is pretty boring. Mine is exciting, savory and a bit spicy. (As you might expect!) I've adapted my mother's meatloaf techniques, most notably adding green peppers, and added some touches of my own.

Unlike most recipes in this book, this one will make enough meatloaf for four people, or a dinner for two people plus a lunch of cold meatloaf sandwiches.



## Ingredients

2 lbs. 85% lean ground beef	½ tsp. tarragon
Two slices whole wheat bread	1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 egg, beaten	1 tsp. Tabasco sauce (optional)
¼ cup finely chopped green pepper	1 tsp. black pepper
¼ cup finely chopped celery	½ tsp. salt
½ cup finely chopped onion	Ketchup
2 cloves garlic, minced	

## Method

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Crumble the bread into pieces no larger than ¼ inch.
3. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients except the ketchup. Mix well, using your hands to knead the mixture and make sure that everything is well distributed.
4. Press the mixture into a loaf pan. Decorate the top with attractive designs drawn in ketchup.
5. Bake for 45 minutes or until done.
6. Serve with home-made mashed potatoes and a green salad.

## *Hong Kong Sauteed Vegetables*

Hong Kong was my first experience of Asia. The city is a bewildering mixture of modern skyscrapers and ancient traditions. The smell of incense or star anise always brings my mind back to that eye-opening trip.

This vegetarian dish is simple and savory. The particular vegetables that I've listed below can be substituted by others, including snow peas, asparagus and daikon. The relative quantities can also be adjusted to fit your tastes.

Oyster sauce is a thick, brown sauce that is usually available in the foreign section of supermarkets or at any Asian grocery store. You can substitute soy sauce; use no more than one tablespoon as it is much more salty.





## Ingredients

4 oz. firm tofu, cut into ½ inch cubes	2 cloves garlic
1 cup broccoli flowerets	2 Tbsp. oyster sauce
1 cup cauliflower flowerets	¼ tsp. white vinegar
1 cup carrot sticks (no thicker than ¼ inch)	2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
1 can (6 oz.) straw mushrooms, drained, or 6 dried Chinese mushrooms	Steamed white rice
1 can (8 oz.) baby corn, drained.	Shredded daikon (white horseradish root)
	Shredded carrots

## Method

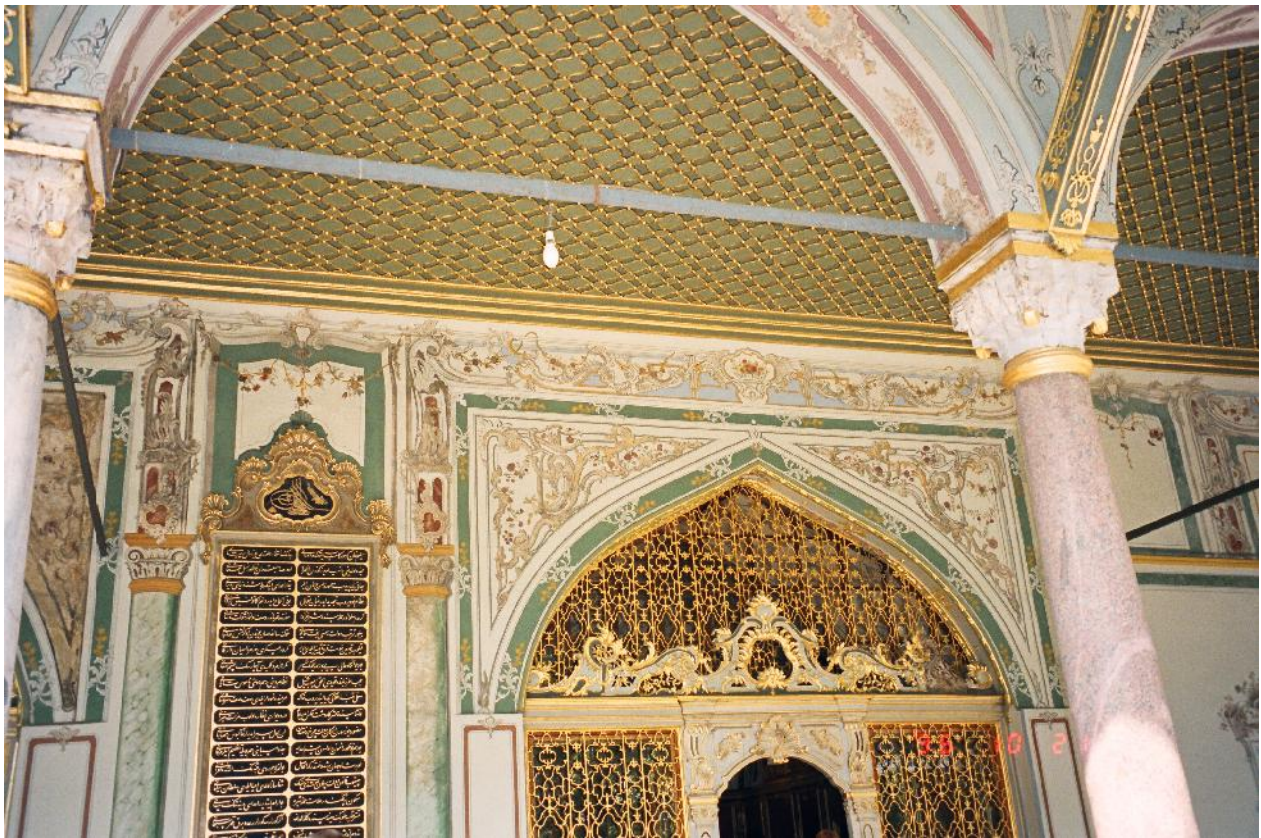
1. If you are using dried mushrooms, soak them in warm water for 15 minutes, then cut into bite-sized pieces.
2. Heat the vegetable oil in a wok or heavy skillet on high heat.
3. Fry the tofu until the cubes have a light brown crust. Remove from the pan with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.
4. Fry the garlic for 2 minutes, until light brown.
5. Add the fresh vegetables. Fry, stirring constantly, for 5 minutes.
6. Add the oyster sauce. Stir fry for 2 minutes.
7. Add the corn and the mushrooms. Turn the heat to medium and cook for 2 minutes.
8. Stir in the vinegar, then remove from the stove. Add the tofu cubes and toss.
9. Serve with steamed white rice, garnished with shredded daikon and carrot.

## *Moroccan Lamb and Couscous*

I spent a week in Morocco many years ago, at the very start of my traveling career. In some ways this was a waste. I couldn't appreciate how exotic it was, since as a new traveler, everything was surprising and exciting. Still, I loved it.

This recipe is a quick approximation to traditional Moroccan *tajine*. Real *tajine* must cook for several hours. This dish can be ready in 30 minutes.

Couscous is a kind of North African pasta. It has a consistency a bit like Cream of Wheat breakfast cereal or hominy grits. You should be able to find it in the international section of your supermarket. Follow the directions on the package—it's absurdly easy!



## Ingredients

1 lb. ground lamb	½ tsp. ground cloves
2 cloves garlic, minced.	1 tsp. black pepper
¼ cup minced onions.	½ tsp. cayenne (optional)
½ cup chopped fresh tomatoes	½ tsp. salt
¼ cup raisins	1 Tbsp. olive oil
¼ cup chopped dried apricots	½ cup water
¼ cup pine nuts	1 cup dry couscous
1 tsp. cinnamon	Black olives
½ tsp. nutmeg	Fresh scallions cut into 2 inch lengths

## Method

1. In a heavy skillet, brown the garlic and the onions in the olive oil over medium heat.
2. Add the lamb. Brown, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes.
3. Pour off any excess grease. Then stir in the cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, salt, pepper and cayenne. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring to keep from sticking.
4. Add the tomatoes and the water. Cover and cook on low heat for 10 minutes. This would be a good time to start cooking the couscous.
5. Stir in raisins, apricots and pine nuts. Cook, covered, for another 5 to 10 minutes.
6. Serve on top of couscous garnished with olives and scallions. Add a green salad with feta cheese and some pita bread for a Mediterranean feast.

## *Bangalore Cauliflower Curry*

I've visited India only once, spending two weeks on a business trip in the state of Karnataka. This is where the city of Bangalore is located—the “Silicon Valley” of India. We had been warned that the freshness of meat in India was not always to be trusted, so we ate nothing but vegetarian food for the whole trip. Since many Indians are vegetarians, this was hardly a hardship. The variety available was staggering. And it was all delicious!



## Ingredients

1 large head of cauliflower, separated into flowerets	1 tsp. cumin
1 potato, peeled and diced	½ tsp. ground cloves
1 cup fresh or frozen green peas	½ tsp. cayenne
1 large yellow onion, sliced	½ tsp. salt
½ cup plain yogurt	3 Tbsp. butter
1 Tbsp. turmeric	1 tsp. lemon juice
1 tsp. ground coriander	1 cup water
1 tsp. ground cardamom	Steamed rice

## Method

1. Melt the butter over medium heat in a large kettle or saucepan. Fry the onions in the butter until brown and slightly crispy.
2. Add the dry spices and mix well.
3. Add the cauliflower, potato and the peas if fresh. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring so that the spices coat the vegetables.
4. Add the water. Cover and cook on low heat for 10 minutes.
5. Uncover and stir in the yogurt and the peas, if frozen. Cook, covered, another 5 minutes.
6. Remove from the stove. Stir in the lemon juice. Serve with steamed rice—basmati (long grained Indian rice) if you can get it!

## *Heidelberg Hamburg Stroganoff*

As readers have probably figured out by now, I love visiting places that have a sense of history. Heidelberg, Germany, was settled in the early Middle Ages. The university there dates from 1386 and is one of the oldest in Europe. Walking the streets of Heidelberg is like taking a trip back through time.

Hamburg Stroganoff is my interpretation of a German recipe. Given the name, I suppose it should really come from the city of Hamburg, but Heidelberg is far more attractive. This hearty dish is just the thing for a cold winter night.



## Ingredients

1 lb. 85% lean ground beef	1 tsp. tarragon
1 small yellow onion, coarsely chopped	½ cup beef bouillon
2 cloves garlic, minced	Dash of Worcestershire sauce
1 lb. fresh mushrooms, washed and sliced	2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
½ cup sour cream	Egg noodles
1 tsp. black pepper	Parsley

## Method

1. Put water for the noodles on high heat.
2. In a heavy skillet or kettle, heat the vegetable oil. Fry the onions and the garlic until they are golden.
3. Lower the heat to medium high. Add the ground beef, pepper and tarragon. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring frequently, until the meat is well browned.
4. Add the noodles to the boiling water.
5. Stir in the bouillon and the sour cream. Add the mushrooms and the Worcestershire sauce. Turn the heat to low and simmer, covered, for another 15 minutes.
6. Correct the seasoning. (You may want to add a bit of salt, or more pepper.) Serve over noodles, garnished with chopped parsley.

## *Turkish Stuffed Squash*

Turkey is a magical country. The remains of a dozen different civilizations stretching back four millenia are layered one on top of the other like the stacked filo leaves in *baklava*. The food and the wine are incredibly delicious. The people are sociable and warm and they love cats. The music brings me back to my younger days when I was a belly dancer.

This recipe is adapted for a New England climate. Normally in Turkey this will be a *mezze* – and appetizer - and they will use summer or zucchini squash. My more robust version uses butternut squash and is suitable for a main dish.





## Ingredients

1 butternut squash, 2-3 pounds	¼ cup chopped onion
1 cup cold cooked rice	¼ cup sliced almonds
4 oz. feta cheese, crumbled	1 tsp. cinnamon
2 oz. mild cheddar cheese, shredded	½ tsp. ground cloves
1 clove garlic, minced	1 tsp. black pepper
¼ cup chopped red bell pepper	½ tsp. salt
¼ cup chopped celery	2 Tbsp. butter

## Method

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Split the squash lengthwise, so that you have two halves, each of which looks something like a mandolin. Scoop out the seeds and discard.
3. Cut a V-shaped trench along the neck of the squash to make more space for the stuffing. Chop up the squash that you remove and put it in a mixing bowl with the rice.
4. In a medium skillet, melt the butter. Sauté the garlic, onion, celery and red pepper, in that order, cooking each item for a few minutes before adding the next. The celery and pepper should still be slightly crisp.
5. Add the sauteed vegetables to rice. Then mix in the almonds, the spices and the feta cheese.
6. Place the squash on a greased cookie sheet or in a shallow baking pan. Pack the rice mixture into the cavity where you removed the seeds and into the trench you created. The stuffing will make a mound above the surface of the squash.
7. Sprinkle the cheddar cheese over the top of the stuffing.
8. Bake for 20 minutes or until the squash is soft and the cheese is browned.

## *Lisbon Linguiça Stew*

Lisbon, Portugal, is another ancient city. When Julius Caesar established Roman rule of the city in 250 B.C., the settlement there was already 1000 years old. Perched on the Atlantic Ocean, with its hilltop castles and cathedrals, Lisbon offers magnificent views as well as quirky curiosities. A filigree iron Victorian-era “elevator” climbs from the flatter city center to one of the peaks that cluster around the harbor. Creaking trolley cars wind through the narrow streets and up forty five degree slopes. The gothic Belém Tower juts into the sea, commemorating the maritime exploits of explorer Vasco de Gama.

*Linguिça* is a tasty Portuguese sausage available in many parts of the United States, especially in southern New England and New York. I've also made this recipe using *kielbasa*, Polish sausage. The flavor is different but equally delicious.



## Ingredients

1 lb. linguica sausage	1 can of peeled Italian tomatoes (8 oz.) with liquid
2 large parsnips, peeled and sliced thickly	2 cloves of garlic, thinly sliced
2 large carrots, peeled and sliced thickly	1 small yellow onion, sliced.
1 small yellow turnip, peeled and cubed	1 tsp. black pepper or more to taste
1 medium potato, peel and cubed	2 Tbsp. olive oil
	1 cup water

## Method

1. Heat the oil in the bottom of a soup pot or kettle. Saute the garlic until light brown. Then add the onion and fry until soft.
2. Slice the sausage into pieces about one inch thick. Add to the pot and brown for 10 minutes.
3. Add the tomatoes and the pepper. Bring to a boil. Then turn down the heat to medium high and stir in the parsnips, carrots, turnip and potato. Add ½ cup of water.
4. Cover and cook on medium heat for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. The stew should be bubbling but not boiling. Add more water if the sauce begins to dry out.
5. Serve with sliced cucumbers and tomatoes drizzled with vinegar, hearty bread and butter.

## *Korean Tuna Salad*

My most recent foreign trip was a ten day excursion in Korea. I enjoyed the food but I'm still not familiar enough with Korean cuisine to attempt my own adaptations. However, one of the tastiest meals I ate there was a tuna salad sandwich at a coffee shop in Seoul. Tuna salad has been a favorite of mine since I was a little girl, but this was quite different, with some unexpected ingredients.

Since returning home, I've tried to reproduce that "Korean Tuna Salad" from memory.



## Ingredients

1 can tuna in spring water (6 oz.)

¼ cup chopped sweet pickles

¼ cup minced scallions

¼ cup chopped red bell pepper

¼ cup chopped green pepper

¼ tsp. crushed red chili pepper

2 Tbsp. mayonnaise

1 tsp. lemon juice

Whole wheat bread

Cheddar cheese slices

Lettuce leaves

Thin, peeled cucumber slices

## Method

1. Drain the tuna and place in a large bowl. Use a fork to separate the tuna into flakes.
2. Add chopped vegetables, chili pepper, mayonnaise and lemon juice. Mix well.
3. Chill for at least half an hour.
4. Assemble sandwiches on the wheat bread. Spread a thick layer of tuna salad. Arrange cucumbers on top of the salad. Then add a slice of cheese, followed by a lettuce leaf. Top with another slice of bread, spread with a thin layer of mayonnaise.