



• Creativity • Collaboration • Continuity • Community

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FEATURE STORY

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PERMACULTURE DESIGN CERTIFICATE (PDC) CLASS OF 2015

We are proud to announce we completed the second edition of the **Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC)** course in Lebanon on June 5!

The course was held from **May 21 to June 5** and took place once again in the village of **Saidoun** (Jezzine caza), thanks to the support of the **Saidoun Municipality**.

Once again, we had the pleasure of hosting our lovely instructors *Klaudia van Gool* (UK) and *Betty Khoury* (Lebanon-Egypt) whose knowledge and good vibrations helped make the PDC an enjoyable experience for everyone.

This year we had **13 participants** of different ages and backgrounds (landscape architects, designers, artists, activists - and even a business graduate) who brought us and the people of Saidoun a dose of positive energy and inspiration.

Here they are, the second class of permacultivators graduated right here in Lebanon:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Amani Dagher | • Hassane Mourad | • Silvana Khawand |
| • Carla Freiha | • Layal Salman | • Tina El Chaer |
| • Carlos Yammine | • Michel Chaptini | • Yasmina El Khouri |
| • Fadi Zein | • Raafat Arab | |
| • Hadi Deaibess | • Razan Al Salah | |

LIVING PERMACULTURE-

The PDC course is more than just intensive theory and application of permaculture principles and tools in a design process. As in 2014, we had the chance to live the **Permaculture Ethics (Earth Care, People Care, Fair Share)** throughout the course, and experience their benefits:

Earth Care: On one hand, the participants were enchanted by the nature of Saidoun on more than one occasion, including their daily rendezvous with the sunset over the sea. They even had the chance to interact with some of its more secretive residents like a hedgehog and a tiny shrew that *Betty* rescued from the claws of *Mimo*, the housecat. On the other hand, they did a fantastic job of cleaning up the land and sorting recyclables/compostable organic matter. *Rita Khawand* from SOILS also led a recycled art session as part of the course's waste/energy module - and the resulting art pieces were truly beautiful.

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People Care: Morning circles, check-ins and meditation exercises were only a small part of the People Care aspect of the PDC. The positive energies of the participants, instructors and villagers were almost palpable and sustained our spirits throughout the course. In addition to that, our dear *Em Rabih* sustained our bodies at lunch and dinner with rich home-cooked meals.

Fair Share: It was great to hold the PDC in the old Saidoun **public school building** again. Since we organized the first PDC there last year, our friend and Saidoun resident *Silvana Khawand* has succeeded in refitting the ground floor with the help of the **Saidoun Municipality** and transforming it into a part-time community center offering English courses and art classes. The municipality also transformed the upper floor into a motel and graciously allowed some participants to stay there. The Saidoun ladies *Em Rabih* and *Madeleine* offered to house the remaining participants. Of course, *Em Rabih* cooked our meals, and another Saidoun lady, *Aline*, provided baked snacks. Finally, we tried as much as possible to secure all materials and supplies locally to create a "local economy", even if it was on a small scale and for a limited time.

AN ENRICHING DESIGN PROCESS-----

This year, the participants were divided into 3 groups that worked on the same site: The future SOILS permaculture demonstration garden around our headquarters and the Aaliyyeh - the oldest stone building in the village and the only one that survived the 1956 earthquake - which we mean to convert into **AFIR**, a nature learning center. The teams had similar ideas and interesting plans for the space which we hope to implement soon.

Words can't express how grateful we are for this year's PDC. We only hope the photos in these 3 pages give you a brief idea of what this experience was like.

Shared by the Editorial Team



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SAVE PAPER – Do you really need to print this newsletter?

L.E.T.S. Lebanon

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Check out the full photo gallery on our website: <http://www.soils-permaculture-lebanon.com/photo-gallery-pdc-2015.html>



LET'S FOCUS

LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN - A PERMACULTIVATOR'S INSPIRING GRADUATION SPEECH

George Debs is a friend of SOILS and the valedictorian of the class of 2015 at the American University of Beirut (AUB) - Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences. George earned his degree in Landscape Architecture and also completed his Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC) online from the [Permaculture Research Institute \(PRI\)](#) with Geoff Lawton, and plans on volunteering at the Zaytuna Farm in Australia (home of the PRI) this fall. Here is an excerpt from his inspiring speech at the commencement ceremony on May 30, 2015.

[...] I stand before you all in utter disbelief that the person I was four years ago could have made it this far. Perhaps, a bit of a back story is needed to clarify the significance of my presence here on this stage.

The person I was before my university experience might surprise some of you. Back in school, I was never a top student. I lacked social etiquette and public speaking was always a struggle. And my grades reflected the demeaned self-worth I had set-up for myself. Back then, my achievements were few but my dreams were big and certainly plentiful.

Today, standing here before this splendid community, my achievements are plentiful and my dreams are even bigger.

When I applied to join our honorable institution, as my three brothers had done before me, I had set my intentions, "I'm going to study, be happy with what I study, then graduate and live happily ever after." – little did I know that, what seemed to be the next logical step in achieving my educational ambitions, was actually a lot less of an academic strategy and a lot more of a personal journey of awakening. Along this quest I have discovered who I really am and that my potential for growth transcends anyone else's opinion of my abilities.

The community at AUB and more specifically at my own faculty, the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences, is a testimony, in itself, that regardless of the conditions, with a steady vision we can create an environment for learning and prosperity. Throughout my four years, here, I have had the privilege of studying the successful habits of my professors and have also worked alongside a community of students whom I proudly call my newfound family #LandiesForLife.

Apart from the wealth of professional knowledge I have amassed during my time at the university, there are some valuable realizations I have come to. Through my struggles and my triumphs I've realized that there are three components successful people need to internalize to manifest their visions.

One, a vast library of inspiration – be it through empowering books, wise mentors, or friends and companions who energize you into inspired action and recognize your inner-genius. A mastermind of like-minded individuals is one of the keys to achieving your goals and helping them achieve theirs.

Two, a deep connection to your intrinsic guidance system. This is your gauge, your internal compass. Really, there's no doing without this. It is the inner voice that has your best intentions at heart. Only by aligning with this unique expression, can you experience the epiphany of true happiness and fulfillment.

And three, the secret ingredient, a healthy dose of negativity. This is the contrast, or for the economists among us, this is the counterfactual – the clarifying tool we can use to refine exactly what we don't want to happen, and thus be able to clearly illustrate what we do want to happen. Most people try to block out negativity; they consider it a threat to their visions of abundance. I've found that the most successful people use these negative thoughts and experiences to rekindle their original life's purpose – why they chose this path to begin with. To every naysayer, to every oppressor, to every disbeliever and dream-crusher, I thank you. You've fueled the fire in hopes of leaving me with scars. But the only scars you see are the tracks I've left as I've blazed my way to where I stand.

A dear mentor of mine once shared with me a quote by Napoleon Hill which said, "Whatever the mind of man can conceive and bring itself to believe, it can achieve." [...]

I stand before you all in utter belief of the sheer power and ability we each have as individuals to make our dreams and aspirations come true.

I hope, through the spirit this university has instilled within each of you, that you challenge your fears and gather the courage to stand up and claim your own voice and use it to better our country, our region and the entire world. It's been done before, by people who have sat in these very seats before you. So, why not you?

Ladies and gentlemen, my friends, Champions, let's make it happen.

Thank you.

Shared by George Debs



LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

"HALAWA LWAYHIYYE" SAIDOUN'S RESURRECTED DESSERT

On **May 20, 2015**, I had the chance to represent my hometown of **Saidoun** (Jezzine caza—South Lebanon) with my fellow university students and "Saidounites" **Reine** and **Roy Khawand** at the **Discover Your Region** cultural and culinary heritage competition, held at the **Université Saint Joseph University (USJ)**. Together, we presented a glimpse of Saidoun's heritage and cooked 2 of its signature dishes: The **lentil tabbouleh** [See recipe in *L.E.T.S. Lebanon Issue 20*] and the **halawa lwayhiyyeh**, a rural dessert we recently rediscovered thanks to my aunt Julia.

Students from 10 villages across Lebanon participated in the competition and had to prepare by themselves 2 unique dishes (one regular dish and one dessert) from their respective hometowns. A jury made of 4 chefs then had to select the winning group.

Our entries came in third place behind the town of Batroun (North Lebanon) and Qaaqaiyet el Jisr (caza of Nabatiyeh - South Lebanon), although the judges and other visitors loved our tabbouleh. However, our *halawa lawhiyyeh* had to compete against Batroun's famous orange blossom scented lemonade and other richer desserts.

But the greatest prize for us was rediscovering a traditional rural dessert from Saidoun before it was completely forgotten. We were lucky my aunt Julia remembered it (almost by accident), and it was an adventure for us to cook it. But we were really happy with the results. The *halawa lawhiyyeh* is a vegetarian dessert made from plants traditionally grown in or around the village.

The recipe is quite easy to prepare and I really encourage anyone to try it:

INGREDIENTS (FOR 4 PERSONS)

- 6 cups of wheat flour
- 1 cup of extra virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp of lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp of rose water
- 1 Tbsp of orange blossom water
- 2 Tbsps of sesame seeds
- Pine seeds (to taste)
- Chopped pistachio nuts (to taste)
- 1 cup of sugar syrup*

**This is the recipe as my aunt Julia remembered it. Sugar syrup is simple enough to make but sugar was never a common crop in rural Lebanon. We believe the syrup can be replaced by honey or molasses but we haven't had time to try it yet*

INSTRUCTIONS

Mix the flour and olive oil well, then add all other ingredients except the pine seeds and chopped pistachio nuts. Spread the paste evenly in an oven tray and sprinkle the pine seeds on top. After cooking for 10-15 minutes, remove the tray and sprinkle the chopped pistachio nuts on top. Once the dessert has cooled down, cut it into long bars and enjoy.

Shared by Toni Khawand



The Saidoun stand at Université Saint Joseph
"Discover Your Heritage" Competition



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UPCOMING EVENTS

"BEIRUT CYCLEHACK" (GLOBAL MOVEMENT) TALKS, WORKSHOPS, IDEA COMPETITION



JUNE 19-21, 2015

Innovative ideas to improve cycling in cities. Friday: Open talks. Saturday & Sunday: \$35 per person

Beirut Digital District
1499, Bashoura

<https://www.facebook.com/events/928944680459981/>

"HAMMANA CHERRY DAY" FOOD AND FEAST



JUNE 14, 2015

11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Souk, traditional lunch and eco-activities, including cherry picking, hiking and rappel.

Hammana

<https://www.facebook.com/events/111085002558899/>

"SPIRITED AWAY" MOVIE SCREENING & FUNDRAISING



JUNE 17, 2015

5:00 p.m. (kids / parents)
7:30 p.m. (others)

\$15 per person - Proceeds will fund a children's Environmental Championship Program

Dawawine, Gemmayzeh

Email maya@ecoconsulting.net to find out more or reserve

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LET'S SHARE OUR NEWS

RODRIGUE'S VEGAN BITES: WHEN A DESIGNER COOKS

I recently discovered I had become a chef, and not just any chef, but a **vegan** one. It started about 7 years ago when I earned my degree in graphic design. By then, hiking was among my favorite activities, and I was already passionate about exploring and creating new things. I began to notice how certain lifestyle choices affected the way I felt and performed.

One of the many things I changed was my **food habits**; what I ate and how I ate. I realized that the way I had grown used to eating red meat and dairy products regularly was affecting me physically and psychologically. My grandmothers and the elderly people I met on my hikes helped me understand the reason behind this. Our Lebanese culture is already rich in vegan dishes, and our traditional cuisine never contained much meat and dairy products anyway - the way we consume these foods nowadays is way off balance. So I guess I became known as a "vegan" by default - and I have never looked back since. I began spending more time in the kitchen experimenting with traditional recipes. I spent long hours looking for healthy and tasty alternatives to meat and dairy, replacing them with grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables.

I also incorporated my graphic design experience and work processes into my cooking, playing with textures, colors, and moods. After all, we can all agree that food is considered an art itself. I would invite my friends over to taste my creations, then ask them for their feedback. How did it look? How did it taste? How did it make them feel? I kept trying until I had more hits than misses and I was finally proud of the outcome: **Rodrigue's Vegan Bites** was born.

Lebanese cuisine was the inspiration and starting point for my career and lifestyle change. I like my food to be a reflection of my personality as a combination of my heritage mixed with contemporary influences. I have recreated many traditional dishes with a "vegan twist". For example, the bread I make is from a sourdough base I learned from my grandmother. On the other hand, my vegan version of the beloved Lebanese *kebbeh nayyeh* (raw minced meat and bulgur) is made from... avocado! I make dairy-free cheese, including the Lebanese *shanklish* (aged cheese made in balls and covered with spices) from almonds and other nuts. I also make other foods with a vegan twist, such as burger patties from beans, chocolate spreads from carobs, etc. Finally, I try as much as I can to use local ingredients from sources I know and trust, so cooking can be a really sustainable activity. Oh, and the "sugar" in my desserts actually comes from molasses or fruits.

For now, my "bites" are still a small home business - just a little more than a hobby. I am working on building a website eventually, but you can already check out my Facebook page and leave a comment or ask me a question. I am currently collaborating with some nutritionists to better present the health benefits and nutritional value of my food. For me it's not a matter of promoting some philosophy but more like sharing what I learned about healthy foods from others. You can even find recipes from my kitchen and others submitted by contributors on my page, so you might be encouraged to start cooking yourself.

I deliver my food personally (all you have to do is check out my page and, if there's something you like, just let me know). I am considering making my debut at **Souk El Tayeb** and other venues. I also want to organize workshops or cooking events. It's all coming together, but I just need some time to finalize the details. Stay tuned to my page (<https://www.facebook.com/rodriguesveganbites?fref=ts>) for the latest updates.

Shared by Rodrigue Harb - rodrigues.vegan.bites@gmail.com



Non-dairy shanklish cheese



Carob chocolate spread



Sourdough bread



Avocado kebbeh nayyeh



Left: meatless
vegan burger
made with a
bean patty

rodrigues's
vegan bites

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PHOTO OF THE MONTH

You sent us your submissions and you voted for your favorites. Here it is, the PHOTO OF THE MONTH:
To send us your photos, email us on contact.soilslebanon@gmail.com



Acorn germination near the village of Damour, South Lebanon
Photo by Tony Shaheen

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GET IN TOUCH, GET INVOLVED


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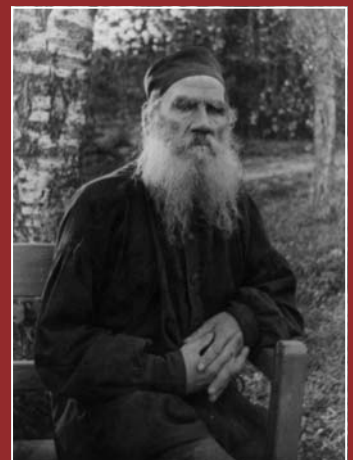
 SOILS Permaculture Association Lebanon

 +961-71-617988

 twitter.com/SOILSLebanon

A THOUGHT TO SHARE ...

"One of the first conditions of happiness is that the link between Man and Nature shall not be broken."



–Lev Nikolayevich (LEO) Tolstoy (1828-1910)

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