



Food prep with the dadas
Photography: Rick Poon

Someone Else's Kitchen

By Bora Kim

[Africa](#), [Morocco](#), [Marrakech](#)

Under the watchful eye and pursed lips of the head dada (traditional Moroccan female cook), I was sweating bullets and tripping over my own hands and feet, even when doing something as basic as peeling a carrot. Really.

I thought the cooking class we had scheduled at [Dar Les Cigognes](#) was going to be a reprieve—a bit of a break from the exhilarating and exhausting chaos of Marrakech, a chance to breathe and do something familiar while learning a few tricks. But there wasn't anything familiar about it at all.

The market tour we took to shop for our ingredients had me staring wide-eyed and clutching every piece of new produce I came across. Once back in the tiny kitchen of the riad where all their amazing meals are produced, any sense of confidence I had in my cooking skills completely dissipated. I stuttered nervously when asking questions, burned my hands peeling *ouarqa* (paper-thin pastry sheets) off a frying pan, and apparently I couldn't even score an eggplant properly. But I loved every minute of it. And that first bite of our finished seafood pastilla? Kind of epic.

Bora Kim is an avid traveler who divides her time sniffing out new ingredients in markets, poking through bookstores around the globe, and teaching at a performing arts school in downtown Los Angeles.