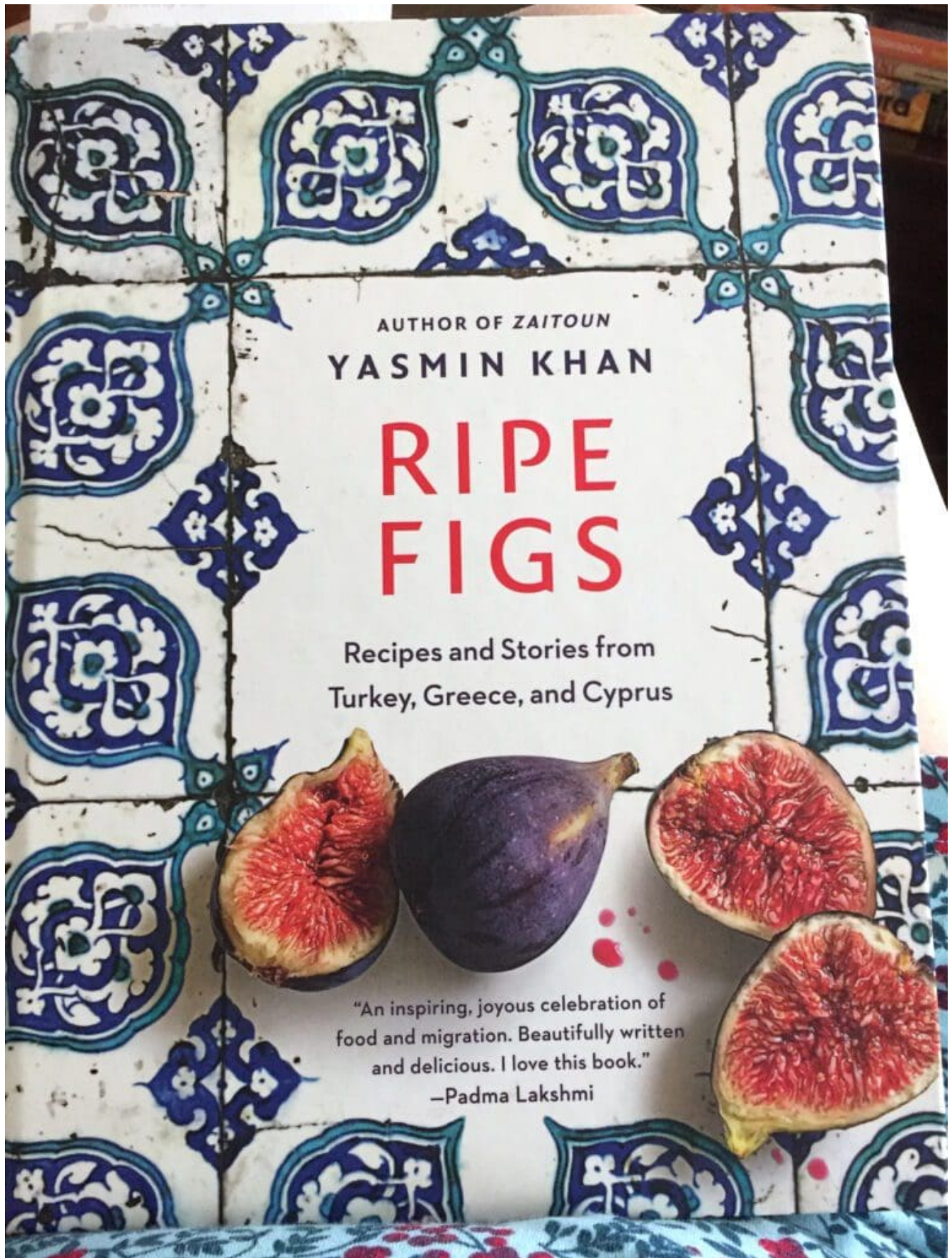


# I LOVE IT WHEN IT WORKS

Usually when I make a recipe for the first time, I never quite get it right. It rarely looks like the pictures in the book, yet that doesn't stop me from trying. But every now and then I come across a cookbook that makes me look good. I've been on a Mediterranean kick lately, and my cousin introduced me to Yasmin Khan's *Ripe Figs*\*. I've dog-eared almost every page. Of course, rather than starting with something simple like *Tzatziki*, (a cucumber, mint and yogurt appetizer), I go for the big Turkish wedding dish, *Perde Pilavi*, a spiced chicken and rice dish hidden inside a "veil" of pastry. It looks like one of those huge *Great British Bake Off* pies, but without that heavy water crust. This crust is actually so thin, I'm not sure how it will hold all the mixture in without an implosion.

It's a bit of an *ungepatchka*, as my grandmother would say—something overly busy and fussy—but in this context, I just mean there are a lot of steps. None are difficult, but this is no 30-minute meal. The only step that gives me a bit of trouble is the crust itself. It seems to have come together nicely, but for the life of me, I just can't roll it out thin enough. I'm afraid if I try to roll it out any thinner, the dough may rip. I know I have enough to cover the bottom of the pan and come up the sides, but if my math is right, it won't completely cover the whole bottom, leaving some of the mixture exposed. But since this dish flips over to serve, you'll never see that flaw—I hope. Rather than taking the chance of ripping the dough, I decide to leave the bottom as is and hope for the best.

This is one of those dishes that you have no idea if it works until you are ready to plate it. That's an awful lot of work and finger crossing. But I am a risk taker in the kitchen and the moment of truth is coming as soon as my timer goes off.



I make sure I've left enough time for the dish to cool before attempting the flip. I clear the counter, leaving myself enough room for this epic feat. I gingerly place the serving

plate on top of the baking pan, steady my feet, place my right hand on top, my left hand on bottom, and pray. In one deft move, I flip the dish over and place it down on the counter. I hear an unambiguous thump, giving me hope that at least the bulk has come loose. I hold my breath, slowly lifting the pie pan. The moment of truth has arrived. I can't believe it.

□“Yes!” I shout, raising my arms in the air as if I'm crossing the line after a marathon. First time out and it looks just like the picture! I slice into it and miraculously everything has held together. And even more importantly, it's absolutely delicious.

\*You can find this recipe in YASMIN KHAN's book *Ripe Figs*.