

Brides Fingers (Asabia el Aroos)

These lovely slender crisps of filo filled with sweetened nuts are as heavenly as baklava, much easier to prepare and to eat, and lower in calories and fat. Nuts provide protein and healthy quantities of fiber, as well as containing traces of many important elements necessary to good health.

Ingredients

- **Sweet Syrup: (See recipe below)**
- **1/2 package (16 oz.) frozen filo dough, completely defrosted**
- **1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted (optional)**

Filling

- **1/2 cup almonds or pistachios, pulverized in food processor with**
- **1/3 cup sugar**

Glaze

- **1 egg, beaten**
- **sugar**

Directions

1. Prepare the syrup in advance and chill in the refrigerator.
2. Combine the filling ingredients.
3. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Grease 1 or 2 baking sheets.
4. Cut the filo in half crosswise and again in half, stacking the covering with a slightly dampened towel to prevent drying. Lay 2 rectangles on your work surface with the shorter sides facing you, and brush lightly with melted butter.
5. Place a rounded tablespoon of the filling in a line across the shorter side of filo that faces you. Fold the longer edges of the pastry inward, sealing in the sides of the filling, and roll the pastry up from the short side, forming a fat cigar shape. Place on the baking sheet with the cut edge down. Repeat with remaining dough.
6. Brush the tops of the pastries lightly with a bit of beaten egg and sprinkle with sugar.
7. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until golden brown.
8. Dip the warm fingers into cool Sweet Syrup and arrange on a serving tray. Serve at room temperature.

Syrup

The general rule for syrup is to pour hot syrup over cold (or room temperature) pastries and to serve cold syrup over hot pastries.

In some areas, eating syrup and honey is superstitiously believed to ward off the djinn (evil spirits) and to make life sweeter.

- **3 cups sugar**
- **1-1/2 cups water**
- **1 lemon**
- **1 tbsp. orange-blossom water or rosewater**

1. Boil the sugar with the water until dissolved and viscous, about 10 minutes.
2. Stir in the remaining ingredients and remove from the heat.

Khatai Cookies

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups White Flour
- 1 cup Sugar
- 3/4 cup Corn Oil
- 1 tablespoon crushed Cardamom
- Pistachios

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Mix the white flour with the sugar, and crushed cardamom. Next, add the corn oil and mix well. Make the dough into two inch round balls and put them on a cookie sheet and bake for 15min, or until lightly browned. Sprinkle finely ground pistachios on top of the cookies while they are still hot. Eat when cool.

Gosh Feel (Elephant Ear Pastries)

40 servings

Ingredients

- 2 Eggs
- 2 tsp Sugar
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/2 c Milk
- 4 tsp Oil
- 2 1/2 c Plain flour
- 1/4 c Plain flour for kneading
- 1/2 tsp Ground cardamom
- Oil for deep-frying
- 1 c Confectioners' sugar
- 1/2 tsp Ground cardamom (optional)
- 1/2 c Finely chopped pistachios

***Note: Pistachio nuts should be blanched. Optionally, same amount of finely chopped walnuts may be used instead of pistachios.**

Directions

Beat eggs until frothy, beat in sugar and salt. Stir in milk and oil. Sift flour, add half to egg mixture and blend in with wooden spoon. Gradually stir in remainder of flour, holding back about 1/2 cup. Turn onto floured board and dust with some of reserved flour. Knead for 10 minutes until smooth and glossy, using more flour as required. Dough will still be slightly sticky. Cover with plastic wrap and rest for 2 hours.

Take a piece of dough about the size of a large hazelnut and roll out on a floured board to a circle about 8-10 cm (3-4 inches) in diameter. Gather up dough on one side and pinch, forming a shape resembling an elephant ear. Place on a cloth and cover. Repeat with remaining dough.

Deep fry one at a time in oil, heated to 190 C (375 F) turning to cook evenly. Fry until golden, do not over-brown. As dough is rather elastic, the pastry tends to contract with handling, so just before dropping pastry into hot oil, pull out lightly with fingers to enlarge.

Drain pastries on paper towels. Sift confectioners sugar with cardamom if used and dust pastries with mixture. Sprinkle with nuts and serve warm or cold. Store in a sealed container.

Alternative topping: Make a syrup with 1 cup sugar and 1/2 cup water. Bring to the boil when sugar is dissolved and boil for 5 minutes. Dribble syrup onto warm pastries and sprinkle with cardamom and nuts.

Halwaua-e-Aurd-e-Sujee

Ingredients

- **1 cup of Sugar**
- **2 cup of Water**
- **3/4 cup of Ghee ***
- **1 cup of Coarse semolina (farina)**
- **1/4 cup of Pistachio nuts - blanched**
- **1/4 up of Almonds - blanched & Slivered**
- **1/2 tablespoons of Ground cardamom or to taste**
- **1 tablespoons of Rosewater - See note Additional nuts to decorate**

Directions

Combine sugar & water in saucepan & stir occasionally until dissolved, over medium heat. Bring to a boil, & boil briskly for 5 minutes without stirring. Remove from heat & leave aside in pan.

In a deep heavy pan heat ghee & add semolina. Stir over medium heat for 5 minutes. Semolina should not color.

Pour hot syrup into semolina, stirring constantly. When smoothly blended, reduce heat & leave to cook, uncovered, until liquid is absorbed. Mixture should be thick but still moist at this stage. Stir in nuts, cardamon & rosewater to taste.

Cover rim of pan with a cloth or 2 paper towels, put lid on tightly & leave on low heat for 5 minutes. Turn off heat & leave pan undisturbed for 10 minutes.

Spread halwau on a flat, lightly oiled platter & decorate with nuts. Serve warm or cold, cutting pieces into diamond shapes or squares.

***Ghee** is Indian clarified butter. If it isn't available at the grocery store, you can easily make it.

How to make Ghee At Home:

Pure unsalted Butter (not margarine)

Procedure:

Heat butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat until it boils or bubbles.

Reduce heat to medium-low and cook uncovered until butter turns to a clear golden color. When it is almost done, it will have foam on top.

Ghee is done when water is completely evaporated from the butter. To test, pour heated butter into a small piece of paper. Light the paper on fire. If it gives a crackling noise, it is showing the presence of water, which means you should heat the butter more. With experience one can tell if ghee is done by the smell and color.

Cool and store it in a dry container. Ghee can be used in your regular cooking.

Ghee does not have to be refrigerated. For long lasting ghee, keep it away from moisture, i.e., don't use a wet spoon to take out ghee.

Noni Afghani (Afghan Bread)

Ingredients

- 1½ cup warm water
- 1 pack (¼ oz.) dry yeast
- 1 Tblspn. Sugar
- 4 cups flour
- 1 tspn. Salt
- ¼ cup corn oil
- 1 egg yolk mixed with a bit of water
- 1 Tblspn. Water
- 1 Tblspn. Black cumin seeds or caraway seeds

In Afghanistan, these small oval breads are baked in a tandoor, the stove of the region -- sometimes buried in the ground as it is in India. The Afghan oven is above ground and is of rounded bricks. A wood fire is made in the bottom of the oven, a cover is placed over the oven opening and the oven is heated. The matzoh and noni doughs are shaped and then slapped onto and stuck to the inside surface of the hot bricks for fast baking.

Directions

1. Mix 1/2 cup of warm water, yeast, and sugar together and let it proof for 10 mins. When froth appears, sprinkle 1/2 ts flour on top and let it continue to proof for 5 mins more. The froth will rise quickly.

2. Put flour in a large mixing bowl and sprinkle salt over it. Make a well in middle of the flour and add oil and the yeast mixture. Stir this in and add small amounts of water until you have produced a soft, moist dough that can be handled. Knead well for 5 mins. Put dough ball back in bowl, cover with a towel, and let it rise for 1-1/2 hours. Punch down dough.

3. Divide dough into 8 equal parts and roll each part into a ball. Roll each ball into a oval shape 6 to 7 inches long and 1/2 inch thick. Draw tines of a fork in 3 lines along length of each noni for a decorative design. Paint each noni w/egg mixture and sprinkle over all 1/2 ts black cumin seeds. (This is traditional seed to use, but caraway seeds may be substituted if black cumin seed is unobtainable. Put noni on an ungreased cookie sheet and bake in a preheated 350 F. oven for 20 to 25 mins. The brown top will glisten. Makes 8 noni.

NOTE: Black Cumin (*Bunium persicum* B. Fedtsch): Smaller and sweeter than standard cumin seed; plants grow wild in Middle East. The seeds are used in Afghanistan, Iran, Afghan Recipes and Turkey. Black cumin seeds are sprinkled on Afghan bread.

Afghan Fudge

Sheer Payra
(Makes 45 pieces)

Try this rich fudge, a traditional Afghan candy flavored with cardamom, pistachios and walnuts.

Ingredients

2 C sugar
2/3 C milk
1/4 tsp. salt
2 T light corn syrup
2 T butter
1/2 tsp. cardamom (see sidebar)
1/4 C pistachios (finely chopped)
1/4 C walnuts (finely chopped)

Directions

In a saucepan over a medium heat, combine milk, sugar, corn syrup, and salt. Stir occasionally, making sure sugar dissolves. Heat to 240 on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat and add butter. Cool to 120 without stirring. Add cardamom and beat vigorously for about 5-10 minutes, till fudge is thick and no longer glossy. Stir in nuts and spread into a buttered 9 x 5 x 3 loaf pan. Let rest until firm and cut into 1" squares.

Afghan Biscuits

A chocolate and cornflake Afghan biscuit. The biscuit, also known as a "cookie" is topped with chocolate icing and walnuts or flaked almonds.

It's important to use unsweetened corn flakes otherwise the biscuits will be too sweet. A tip on the cookie dough -- you really need to roll and press the dough firmly into a ball because the cornflakes can make the dough a little crumbly.

Ingredients

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 2 Tbsp of butter, at room temperature
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour
- 3 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups unsweetened corn flakes

Icing

- 1 cup confectioners sugar
- 2 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3 Tbsp water
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sliced almonds (optional)

Directions

Pre-heat the oven to 350F (180C). Line a baking sheet with baking paper. Set aside. Cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.

Sift together the flour and cocoa powder and mix into butter mixture with a wooden spoon. Fold in cornflakes and don't worry if they crumble.

Roll or press 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoonfuls of the dough into balls and flatten them slightly.

Place them about 2 inches apart on the baking sheet.

Bake in the oven for 10-15 minutes. Remove from oven and cool on a wire rack.

Prepare the icing by combining the confectioners sugar, unsweetened cocoa powder and water in a bowl. Mix well until the mixture is free of lumps and of a creamy consistency.

Spoon a little icing on each cookie and then decorate with sliced almonds.

Afghan Butter Cookies

Kulche Birinjee

Ingredients

3/4 cup butter (1 1/2 sticks), softened to room temperature

3/4 cup sugar

2 egg whites

2 cups white rice flour

1/2 tsp. ground cardamom

1/4 cup coarsely chopped pistachios

1/4 cup shelled whole pistachios

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Beat butter and sugar with an electric mixer until light and creamy. Add the egg whites and mix until smooth. Gradually add the rice flour, cardamom and pistachios. Mix well. Scoop up a tablespoon of dough and set on a cookie sheet (ungreased is ok). Flatten the dough with the palm of your hand. The cookie will not rise or spread during cooking. Next, press the back of a fork into the dough, making a criss-cross with the tines of the fork (like you would with a peanut butter cookie). If the fork begins to stick, dip it in a glass of cold water from time to time. Place a pistachio in the center of the cookie.

Continue with the remainder of the dough, setting the cookies 1 1/2 inches apart.

Bake for 12-14 minutes. Let it cool before eating