

FATAYER BIL JIBNEH // SAVORY CHEESE HAND PIES

Dough

5 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1-to-1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1-to-1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4-to-1 teaspoon mahlab
1-to-1 1/2 teaspoons black caraway seeds
3 tablespoons tepid water
1 tablespoon instant yeast
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1/2 cup yoghurt
1-to-2 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 cup safflower oil
1/2-to-1 cup tepid milk, as needed

Filling

2 cups Nabulsi cheese (or Queso Blanco)
1 cup Halloumi cheese (or any high-melting point semi-soft white cheese)
1 cup Ekechil or Meshallaleh braided string cheese (or Oaxaca cheese, mozzarella)
6-to-8 green onions, sliced
2 1/2-to-4 tablespoons fresh parsley, coarsely minced
2 egg whites
1 1/4 teaspoons baking powder
A little dry mint and Aleppo pepper

Egg wash

2 egg yolks
1 tablespoon water
1 or 2 drops lemon juice

Prepare dough. In a bowl, whisk together flour, salt, baking powder, mahlab and black caraway seeds; set aside until ready to use.

Add water into your mixer bowl and whisk in yeast and sugar until dissolved; let proof 10-to-15 minutes until bubbly. To the same bowl add yoghurt, olive oil, safflower oil and about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk; mix on low to combine. Gradually incorporate the flour mixture as you mix on low using the paddle attachment; adding the rest of the milk towards the end as needed. Switch to the dough hook and knead to a non-sticky, medium-soft dough. Form into a ball, grease with a little bit of oil then cover with a damp cloth; set aside 40-to-90 minutes until doubled.

Prepare filling. Process cheese in a food processor, crumble or dice until it resembles coarse breadcrumbs; do this before you measure into cups. Blend all three cheeses together with remaining filling ingredients; set aside until ready to use.

Prepare egg wash. Combine egg yolks, water and lemon juice in a bowl and whisk to blend.

Assemble pastry. Transfer dough onto a clean working surface barely dusted with flour and divide into quarters. Further divide each quarter into eight pieces; you should have a total of 32 pieces. Pinch the ends of each piece at the bottom to form balls. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and set aside 10-to-15 minutes.

Work with one dough ball at a time and flatten each into a 5"x3.5" oval shape. Evenly spread about a heaped tablespoon cheese mixture over dough; leaving a 1/2"-to-3/4" border. Fold the long sides over filling and pinch ends tightly to seal; creating a boat-like shape. Transfer onto a baking sheet covered with parchment paper or silpat. Cover with a piece of wax paper and slightly press to flatten edges; your assembled pastry should be about 5"x2 1/4" in size. Repeat until all pieces are shaped. Lightly brush with egg wash and set aside 20-to-25 minutes.

Bake in a preheated 385F oven for about 15 minutes until slightly golden. Serve warm or at room temperature.

* recipe developed by Christine Bedrossian for atelierchristine.com