

YEASTED HAMANTASCHEN



Today, hamantaschen are primarily made with a simple oil- or butter-based cookie dough. But the Purim confection was traditionally made with an enriched yeast dough that yielded a puffed and tender pastry encircling the sweet filling. Yeasted hamantaschen are entirely different than their cookie counterparts, and definitely worth trying.

Makes: about 30 pastries
Preparation time: 35 minutes, plus rising
Cooking time: 20 minutes

- 1 packet ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz/7g) active dry yeast (2 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (150 g) plus 1 teaspoon sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (120 ml/4 fl oz) warm water (110°F/43°C)
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ –3 cups (350–420 g) all-purpose (plain) flour, plus more for rolling
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 ml/2 fl oz) vegetable oil or melted butter, plus more for greasing the bowl
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Prune Lekvar (page 408), Apricot Lekvar (page 408), Poppy Seed Filling (page 396), Honey-Walnut Filling (page 400) or other thick jam, for filling

In a large bowl, stir together the yeast, 1 teaspoon of the sugar, and the warm water. Let sit until bubbling and frothy, 5–10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk together 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (350 g) flour, the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (150 g) sugar, and salt.

Whisk the oil, 2 of the eggs, and the vanilla into the yeast mixture until combined. Add the flour mixture and stir until a moist dough forms. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead well, adding up to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (70 g) additional flour, as necessary, until a supple, elastic dough forms, about 10 minutes. You might not use all of the flour. (The kneading can also be done in a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook, 5–7 minutes.) Grease a large bowl with about 1 teaspoon oil, add the dough, and turn to coat. Cover with a tea towel and let sit in a warm place until doubled in size, about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

Line 2 large baking sheets with parchment paper. Remove half of the dough from the bowl (keep the other half covered). On a lightly floured surface using a lightly floured rolling pin, roll the dough to a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (6 mm) thickness. Using a 3-inch (7.5 cm) round biscuit cutter or glass, cut out as many rounds as possible and carefully transfer them to the prepared baking sheets. Gather the scraps, reroll, and cut out additional rounds. Spoon 1 rounded teaspoon of the desired filling into the center of each dough round. Fold the left side over on an angle, followed by the right side. Fold the bottom flap up, tucking one end under the side flap to make a pocket (a little of the filling should still be visible in the center). Pinch the corners firmly to seal. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling. Loosely cover the filled cookies with a tea towel and let rest for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C/Gas Mark 4).

Whisk the remaining egg in a small bowl. Lightly brush the tops of each cookie with a little of the egg wash (you will not use all of it). Bake the cookies until puffed and golden brown, 18–20 minutes. Transfer the cookies to wire racks to cool.

MA' AMOUL



These ancient Levantine cookies encase rose water-perfumed nuts or dates (or in this case, both together) inside a tender, buttery shortbread dough. In other words, they are addictively delicious. Muslim communities typically serve *ma'amoul* at the nightly feasts during Ramadan and on other festive holidays. Jews hailing from Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and other Middle Eastern countries serve them on Rosh Hashanah, Hanukkah, and Purim. *Ma'amoul* are often pressed into elaborately carved wooden molds that imprint ridged patterns on the outside of the cookie. But they can also be simply shaped by hand.

Makes: about 2 dozen cookies
Preparation time: 45 minutes
Cooking time: 20 minutes

For the dough:

- 4 sticks (1 lb/455 g) unsalted butter or nonhydrogenated margarine, at room temperature
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (90 g) powdered (icing) sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2–2 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups (280–315 g) all-purpose (plain) flour

For the filling:

- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (210 g) Medjool dates, pitted and roughly chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (50 g) walnut halves
- 2 tablespoons powdered (icing) sugar
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons rose water
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- Vegetable oil, for greasing
- Powdered sugar, for dusting

Make the dough: In a stand mixer (or using a handheld electric mixer and a large bowl), beat together the butter, powdered (icing) sugar, salt, and vanilla at medium speed until light and fluffy. Beat in 2 cups (280 g) flour in three additions, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary, until a tender, pliable dough comes together. If needed, beat in up to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (35 g) additional flour, 1 table-spoon at a time, until the desired consistency is reached. Set the dough aside.

Make the filling: In a food processor, pulse the dates, walnuts, powdered (icing) sugar, rose water, and cinnamon until a thick paste forms.

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C/Gas Mark 4).
Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

Pinch off a tablespoon of the dough and roll into a ball. Using your thumb, make an indentation in the center of the ball, then gently pinch around the sides to make a small cup shape. Spoon a teaspoon of the date-walnut filling into the cup and close the dough over the filling, gently reshaping it into a ball. If the ball feels too thick on any side, gently remove the excess dough. And if the dough gets too soft to work with, place it in the refrigerator for 10 minutes to firm up.

If using a *ma'amoul* mold, lightly grease the mold with oil then lay a filled cookie inside. Gently press the cookie into the mold then tap it out. Repeat with the rest of the cookies.

Lay the shaped cookies on the prepared baking sheet. Bake until lightly golden, 15–20 minutes. Transfer to wire racks to cool. When fully cool, use a fine-mesh sieve to dust the tops of each cookie generously with powdered sugar.

SFRATTI



Sfratti are a cookie with a curious history. The word *sfratto* means "eviction" in Italian, and the long, cylindrical cookies are meant to resemble the sticks used by landlords to physically push out Jewish tenants during times of expulsion. Tuscan Jewish bakers found a way to turn that sad legacy on its head, creating a treat that celebrates the Jewish community's perseverance. *Sfratti* are traditionally served on Rosh Hashanah and Purim, but taste wonderful any time of year. The dough and filling can both be a bit finicky. For best results, keep the dough cold and the rolling surface well floured.

Serves: 6

Preparation time: 30 minutes, plus chilling

Cooking time: 30 minutes

For the dough:

- 2½ cups (350 g) all-purpose (plain) flour, plus more for rolling
- 1 cup (200 g) sugar
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 stick (4 oz/115 g) cold unsalted butter or nonhydrogenated margarine, cut into small pieces
- ½ cup (75 ml/2½ fl oz) dry white wine, plus more as needed

For the filling:

- 2 cups (210 g) walnut halves, chopped
- ½ cup (170 g) honey
- ¼ cup (50 g) sugar
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

For baking:

- Egg wash: 1 egg beaten with 1 teaspoon water

Make the dough: In a food processor, pulse together the flour, sugar, salt, and butter pieces, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary, until the mixture resembles coarse cornmeal. With the motor running, slowly pour in the wine, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl several times, until the dough just comes together. If necessary, add a little more wine, 1 tablespoon at a time, until the desired consistency is reached. Gather the dough and knead it a few times on a work surface. Form into a disc, wrap tightly in plastic wrap (cling film), and refrigerate until well chilled, about 2 hours.

Make the filling: In a medium saucepan, combine the walnuts, honey, sugar, and salt and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring often, until the honey thickens and turns golden brown, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the orange zest, ginger, and pepper. Let the mixture sit until just cool enough to handle.

Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C/Gas Mark 5). Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

Divide the dough into 4 equal portions. Working with 1 piece at a time (keeping the others refrigerated) and working on a well-floured surface with a floured rolling pin, roll the dough out into a rectangle ¼ inch (6 mm) thick. Trim off the ragged edges (discard the scraps). Spoon a thick line of the honey-nut mixture along one of the long sides of the rectangle, then tightly roll the dough around the filling, tucking it inside. Trim off both ends of the roll until the dough is flush with the filling (discard the scraps). Cut the roll crosswise into 2-inch (5 cm) lengths and place on the prepared baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling, sprinkling the board with more flour, as needed.

To bake: Brush the tops and sides of the cookies with a little of the egg wash (you might not use all of it). Bake, rotating the pan front to back halfway through, until golden brown, about 20 minutes. Transfer the cookies to a wire rack to cool. The filling will be very hot, so allow the cookies to cool for at least 20 minutes before serving.

SESAME SEED COOKIE RINGS



With roots in pre-Inquisition Spain, these mildly sweet, crisp cookie rings—called *biscochos de susam*, or sometimes just *biscochos*—have become a hallmark of Sephardi cuisine. Middle Eastern Jews bake a similar cookie called *kaak*, which is typically even less sweet and often flavored with anise. The cookie's crunchy texture pairs perfectly with tea or coffee—and indeed, they are often enjoyed at breakfast and for an afternoon snack. *Biscochos* are also served on Rosh Hashanah (the ring shape symbolizes hopes for a full and round year to come), to break the Yom Kippur fast, and as part of a larger sweets platter on Purim.

Makes: about 40 cookies
Preparation time: 45 minutes
Cooking time: 25 minutes

- 2¾–3 cups (385–420 g) all-purpose (plain) flour, plus more for rolling
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup (120 ml/4 fl oz) vegetable oil
- 1 cup (200 g) sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest
- Sesame seeds, for sprinkling

Preheat the oven to 350°F (°180C/Gas Mark 4). Line 2 large baking sheets with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, whisk together 2¾ cups (385 g) flour, the baking powder, and salt.

In a stand mixer (or using a handheld electric mixer and a large bowl), beat 2 of the eggs, the oil, sugar, vanilla, and orange zest at medium-high speed until pale and creamy, 2–3 minutes. Add the flour mixture in two additions, beating to incorporate and scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary, until a firm but pliable dough forms. If the dough is too wet or sticky to handle, add up to ¼ cup (35 g) additional flour, 1 tablespoon at a time as needed, until the desired consistency is reached. (You may not need all of the additional flour.)

Working on a lightly floured surface, pinch off a walnut-size piece of dough and roll it into a rope that is 6 inches (15 cm) long and about ½ inch (1.25 cm) thick. Repeat with several more pieces of dough. Using a sharp knife, score little notches about ¼ inch (6 mm) apart along the length of each of the ropes. With the notched edge facing out, form each rope into a ring, gently pressing the ends together to seal. Place on the prepared baking sheets. Repeat the rolling, scoring, and shaping process until all of the dough is used.

In a small bowl, beat the remaining egg. Brush the rings with a little beaten egg (you may not use all of it) and sprinkle generously with sesame seeds. Bake, rotating the sheets front to back halfway through, until the cookies are gently puffed and golden brown, 20–25 minutes. Transfer the cookies to wire racks to cool. They will continue to firm up as they cool.