

OILY GOODNESS

GETTING READY FOR THE OILY FRAGRANCE AND TASTES OF CHANUKAH

SFENJ (MOROCCAN DOUGHNUTS)

By Michael Solomonov

Makes 8 to 10

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon dry active yeast
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 4 tablespoons plus 3/4 cup warm water
- 2 1/2 cups plus 2 tablespoons flour
- Zest from 1 orange
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 cups canola oil
- 1 cup honey
- 1/2 cup ground pistachios

Directions

1. Dissolve the yeast and sugar in a medium-sized bowl with the 4 tablespoons of warm water. Let the yeast starter stand for approximately 15 minutes until it is frothy and blooming, so the yeast starter doubles in size.
2. Sift the flour into a large mixing bowl, then add the orange zest and salt. Make a small well in the middle of the flour and pour the yeast starter into the well. Incorporate the yeast mixture by making a swirling motion with your fingers in the middle of the well, while slowly streaming in the remaining 3/4 cup of warm water. Knead the mixture inside of the bowl with palm of your hands for approximately 15 minutes until the dough is very smooth. Cover with a clean towel and set aside in a warm place to rise until it's roughly double in size, approximately 1 hour.
3. When the dough has almost finished rising, fill a large pot with the canola oil and heat until it reaches 350°F on a thermometer. With wet hands, lightly punch down the dough to deflate. Pull off a piece of donut batter that is approximately the size of a small egg. Use your thumb to make a hole in the center of the piece of batter. Open the hole with your fingers to form a donut that is approximately 4 inches in diameter. Drop the donut away from you into the pot. Be careful not to crowd the pot (three donuts at a time is about right). Fry the donuts for 2 minutes on one side, then flip and finish cooking on the other side for 1 1/2 minutes.
4. Remove the donuts to a cooling rack lined with paper towels to drain. Cool for approximately 4 minutes and then drizzle each donut with honey, sprinkle with pistachios. Serve immediately, preferably with hot mint tea.

NOTES

The fried, yeasted sfenj are substantially easier to make than sufganiyot (the plural of sufganiyah), which was a reason that they lost popularity in the earlier days of pre-independence Israel. The Israeli National Labor Union that formed in the 1920s under the British Mandate pushed to make the jelly donut the symbolic food of Chanukah because unlike sfenj or even the potato pancake, the sufganiyah needed to be made by paid professionals, which meant more jobs for Jewish workers.

When making sfenj at home, you will find that they are tremendously easy to make and require very few ingredients. This is always a good sign for your prep time but perhaps a bit daunting, as fewer ingredients can often mean greater emphasis on technique (sfenj are typically made with no milk, fat, or eggs).

You will also find that because sfenj is a neutral dough, the flavor impact with your finished donut will come largely from the garnishing syrups or sugars. A good quality honey drizzle will go a very long way. As will a simple sugar syrup that has been infused with super cool ingredients like saffron, rose or orange blossom water, and even a few pinches of cayenne. Be careful to not over-do it with the piquant—some honeys can be on the spicy side. Also make sure that your sugar syrup is saturated—at least 2 to 1 sugar to water. Otherwise, you will end up with a limp sfenj.

VEGETABLE LATKES

By Miriam Szokovski

To make, they are pretty much like any other latke: Grate, mix, fry. One small difference—most recipes call for the onion to be grated in with the other vegetables, but I prefer to dice and sauté it first. I find that the onion cooks slower than the rest of the ingredients, so you have a perfectly fried latke with crunchy bits of raw onion . . . not my taste.

So, dice and sauté the onion. While that's cooking, grate the zucchini, carrots, and potato. Then mix the onion, grated vegetables, chopped spinach, eggs, flour and salt together.

Heat oil in a frying pan. I use a ⅓-cup measuring cup to scoop up the latke batter, so I get even portions. You can use a big spoon, or any other method that works for you!

Fry on medium heat for 2–3 minutes, then flip and fry another minute or two on the second side. Remove each latke and place on a plate covered with paper towel. (The paper absorbs the excess oil without making the latke soggy.) Repeat until all the batter is fried.

Yields: 14 latkes

Tastes best when eaten fresh.

Ingredients:

1 potato

3 carrots

1 zucchini

¼ cup chopped spinach

1 onion—diced and fried

2 eggs

½ cup flour

1 tbsp. kosher salt

Olive oil for frying

TRADITIONAL SUFGANIYOT JELLY DOUGHNUTS

Ashkenazi Jews emigrating from Germany brought the Sufganiyot tradition to Israel in the 1930s.

Yields: 12-14

Ingredients

3 cups white bread flour + more for dusting

1 tsp salt

1 envelope dry active yeast (2½ tsp)

¾ cup lukewarm milk

2 tbsp sugar + 2-3 more cups for coating the donuts

2 large eggs, lightly beaten

2 tbsp unsalted butter, melted and cooled

1 jar preserves/jelly of choice

vegetable oil for frying

cinnamon (optional for coating doughnuts)

Equipment: candy thermometer that you can clamp to the inside of your pot

Directions

1. In a small bowl, combine 2 tbsp of warm milk and 2 tbsp of sugar. Add the dry active yeast and let sit until foamy, about 5 minutes.
2. In the bowl of a mixer, combine 3 cups flour and 1 tsp salt. Add yeast mix to the flour. Add the eggs and butter to the flour mixture. Mix the ingredients until they come together into a crumbly mix.
3. Mix in the rest of the milk, 1 tbsp at a time until the dough sticks together in a ball.
4. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until the dough is smooth. (You can do this in a mixer fitted with a dough hook as well.) Form the dough into a ball and transfer it to a lightly oiled bowl, cover with a kitchen towel, and let rise until doubled in size, about 2 hours.
5. Punch down the risen dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface. With a lightly floured rolling pin, gradually roll out the dough to about ½" thick. When rolling dough, let it rest periodically to relax the dough and make it easier to roll out.
6. Cut out 3-4" rounds with a lightly floured biscuit cutter or drinking glass. Re-roll the scraps to make more rounds.
7. Place the doughnuts on lightly floured baking sheets that are lined with parchment paper, spacing them apart, and cover lightly with a dry towel. Let rise in a warm spot until doubled in size, about 30 minutes.
8. Heat a deep, heavy pot filled 3" high with vegetable oil to 350°.
9. Transfer the risen doughnuts to the pot and fry the doughnuts, a few at a time, until golden and puffed. About 1-2 minutes each side.
10. Prepare a plate with 2-3 cups of mixed sugar and cinnamon.
11. Lift the doughnuts from the oil using a slotted spoon and blot briefly on a paper towel-lined plate. While donuts are still hot, sprinkle with cinnamon-sugar (tongs are a good tool for holding the donuts). Set donuts aside.
12. Fill a pastry bag (1/4" round tip), squeeze bottle or zip-top bag with the corner cut off with jelly preserves. Insert the tip into the end of each doughnut and pipe approximately 1-2 tbsp of preserves into them and serve.

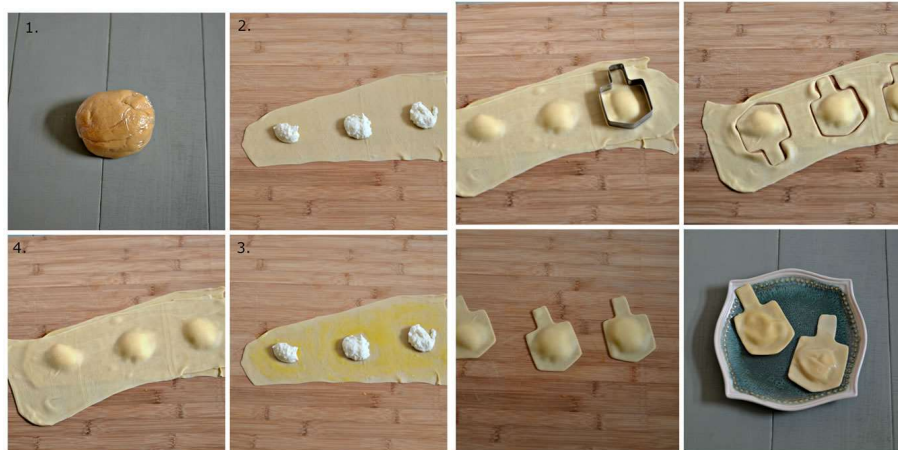
DREIDEL-SHAPED RAVIOLI ST LOUIS

Adapted from a recipe by Miriam Szokovski

We all associate latkes and doughnuts with Chanukah, but why stop there? Chanukah-themed cookie cutters have become more commonly available, and they are so versatile. Use them for cookies, or to shape other food. Why not dreidel-shaped T Ravs? This is also a great recipe that utilizes a cheese filling because on Chanukah it's traditional to eat dairy foods to remember the Jewish heroine Yehudit.

Note: This recipe calls for a pasta machine. If you do not have one, here are some other options:

- If you can find them, use frozen pasta sheets. **(this is what we will be using – pasta sheets)**
- Use eggroll or wonton wrappers. It won't be quite the same but is a decent alternative.
- For an easier, simpler version, cook lasagna sheets, then cut out dreidels and serve with the sauce of your choice. (This version does not have filling.)
- If you are feeling particularly adventurous, ravioli can be made by hand (with a rolling pin), but it is somewhat strenuous and time-consuming.



Dough Ingredients:

2 cups flour
1 tsp. salt
3 eggs
1 tbsp. olive oil

Filling Ingredients:

1 cup ricotta cheese, drained
½ tsp. oregano
½ tsp. basil
½ tsp. kosher salt
1 egg
¼ cup mozzarella cheese
¼ cup parmesan cheese

Directions:

1. Put all the dough ingredients (flour, salt, eggs, and oil) into a food processor and pulse until dough forms a soft crumb. Pour the crumbs onto your surface and bring together into a ball of dough. Cover with saran wrap and set aside for at least 30 minutes.
2. In a small bowl combine the filling ingredients. Set aside.
3. Divide the dough into 4 pieces. Keep the pieces wrapped in saran wrap until you're ready to use them.
4. Roll the first piece of dough through a pasta machine until it's paper thin - between 1/8th and 1/16th of an inch. Place spoonful of the filling along the dough, 1-2 inches apart, until half-way down the pasta sheet. Brush the dough around the filling with egg wash and gently fold over the second half of the dough to cover the filling. Gently press down around the filling, as you go, making sure there are as few air pockets as possible.
5. Use a dreidel-shaped cookie cutter to cut around each pocket of filling and press the edges well, to make sure they are properly sealed. (If you do not have a dreidel cookie cutter, you can cut them free hand with a knife.)
6. Set the ravioli aside and repeat with the remaining dough and filling, until there is none left.
7. In another bowl, combine milk and egg in a small bowl. Place breadcrumbs and if desired, salt in a shallow bowl. Dip ravioli in milk mixture, and coat with breadcrumbs.
8. In a large heavy pan, pour oil to depth of 2 inches. Heat oil over medium heat until a small number of breading sizzles and turns brown. Fry ravioli, a few at a time, 1 minute on each side or until golden. Drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and serve immediately with hot marinara sauce.

Yields: Approximately 20-25 ravioli

CHEESE LATKES

The custom of eating dairy foods for Hanukkah dates to the Middle Ages, when the Book of Judith played an important role in the Hanukkah narrative. Judith was a celebrated Jewish heroine who saved her village from an invading Assyrian army. A beautiful widow, she plied the Assyrian army's general with wine and salty cheese. When the general passed out drunk, Judith beheaded him with his own sword. The Israelites launched a surprise attack on the leaderless Assyrian army and emerged victorious. In Judith's honor, we eat dairy foods during Hanukkah.

Of course, we associate potato latkes with Hanukkah, but latkes descend from Italian pancakes that were made with ricotta cheese. The first association between Hanukkah and pancakes was by a rabbi in Italy named Rabbi Kalonymus ben Kalonymus (c. 1286-1328). According to The Encyclopedia of Jewish Food by Gil Marks, the Rabbi "included pancakes in a list of dishes to serve at an idealized Purim feast, as well as a poem about Hanukkah. After the Spanish expelled the Jews from Sicily in 1492, the exiles introduced their ricotta cheese pancakes, which were called cassola in Rome, to the Jews of northern Italy. Consequently, cheese pancakes, because they combined the two traditional types of foods—fried and dairy—became a Hanukkah dish."

Potato latkes are a more recent Ashkenazi invention that gained popularity in Eastern Europe during the mid-1800's. A series of crop failures in Poland and the Ukraine led to mass planting of potatoes, which were easy and cheap to grow. But before potatoes came on the scene, the latke of choice was cheese.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup high quality whole milk ricotta cheese
3/4 cup flour
3 large eggs
2 tbsp granulated white sugar
1 tsp kosher salt
1/2 tsp baking powder
Nonstick cooking oil spray, for frying

INSTRUCTIONS

- Combine all ingredients except the nonstick oil in a food processor. Process the mixture for about 45 seconds, pausing a couple of times to scrape the sides, until the mixture forms a thick batter.
- Spray a skillet with nonstick cooking oil and heat over medium. Use a spoon to scoop up the batter, then pour it onto the hot skillet in the size/shape of silver dollar pancakes. Use 1-2 tablespoons of batter per pancake. Spread it out into a thin circle after it hits the skillet.
- Fry the latkes for 2-3 minutes on each side until they turn golden brown. Test the first latke for doneness and make sure it is cooked all the way through; if the latkes are browning faster than they're cooking, reduce skillet heat. Expect some variation in the shape of the latkes, they won't form a perfect circle. Serve immediately.
- These latkes can be eaten plain or topped with a drizzle of honey. Other toppings include jam or preserves, sour cream, maple syrup, yogurt, or agave nectar.

ADDITIONAL INTERESTING OILY RECIPES FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT.

CLASSIC LATKES: THE EASIEST, SIMPLEST METHOD

Makes 12 (4-inch) latkes

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 pounds baking potatoes (3 to 4 potatoes)
- 1/2 medium yellow onion, peeled and quartered
- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons matzo meal
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup canola oil or chicken schmaltz, or a combination of both
- Applesauce and sour cream, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat the oven and fit one baking sheet with paper towels and another with a cooling rack. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat to 200°F. Line 1 rimmed baking sheet with a double layer of paper towels. Fit a wire cooling rack into another baking sheet. Set both aside.
2. Prepare the potatoes. Scrub the potatoes well, but do not peel. Cut each potato in half crosswise.
3. Grate potatoes and onion with a food processor. Grate the potatoes and onion using the shredding disk of a food processor.
4. Make a cheesecloth tourniquet and squeeze liquid from potato and onion. Transfer the grated potato and onion onto a large triple layer of cheesecloth. Gather the corners and tie around the handle of a wooden spoon. Dangle the bundle over a large bowl, then twist and squeeze the potatoes and onion as hard as you can until no more liquid comes out of the potatoes and onion shreds.
5. Pour off the liquid but keep the potato starch. Give the liquid a few minutes to allow the potato starch to settle and then pour off and discard the liquid but leave the potato starch.
6. Toss the latke ingredients together with your fingers. Add the potatoes, onion, eggs, matzo meal, salt, and pepper to the bowl of starch. Mix with your fingers, making sure that the potato starch breaks up and is evenly distributed with the rest of the ingredients. Set batter aside for 10 minutes.
7. Heat the oil. Place the oil or schmaltz (or a combination of the two) in a large skillet so that when melted there is a depth of 1/4 inch (for a 10-inch skillet you'll need 1 cup of melted oil/schmaltz). Heat over medium-high heat until a piece of the latke mixture sizzles immediately.
8. Form latkes one at a time. Scoop 1/4 cup of the mixture onto a fish or flat spatula. Flatten with your fingers to a 4-inch patty.

9. Fry the latkes until golden on both sides. Slide the latke into the hot oil, using a fork to nudge the latke into the pan. Repeat until the pan is full but the latkes aren't crowded. Cook until deeply golden-brown, 4 to 5 minutes per side, adjusting the heat if necessary.
10. Drain the latkes. Transfer the latkes to a paper towel-lined baking sheet to drain for 2 minutes.
11. Serve with applesauce and sour cream or keep warm in the oven. Serve immediately with applesauce and sour cream, or transfer the latkes to the wire cooling rack set in the baking sheet and keep warm in the oven for up to 30 minutes while you continue cooking the rest of the latkes.

RECIPE NOTES

Make ahead: Latkes are best made and served right away. They can be fried and kept warm in a 200°F oven for up to 30 minutes.

Storage: Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container and re crisp in a 300°F for 5 to 10 minutes. Keep a close eye on the latkes when reheating so they do not burn.

Doubling: The recipe can be doubled, although you will need an extra sheet of cheesecloth to squeeze the extra potato and onion shreds. The oil (and schmaltz, if using) will need to be replaced halfway through frying. Pour the used oil into a heatproof bowl, wipe out the skillet, then heat fresh oil and continue frying.

CHICKEN 'LEUVIOT'

Slightly adapted from a recipe by Ron and Leetal Arazi of NYShuk

The fritters can be made ahead and reheated. Once fried, let them cool, then wrap tightly in plastic and refrigerate up to 2 days or freeze up to 1 month. To reheat, preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Arrange the fritters in a single layer on a large, rimmed baking sheet and cook until warmed through, 15-20 minutes.

For *levivot*:

- 1 whole chicken (about 4 pounds)
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds
- 1 tablespoon dried sage
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon allspice
- 4 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 large Russet potato (about 1/2 pound), peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 large bunch fresh, flat-leaf parsley, bottom stems removed and finely chopped
- 1 large bunch fresh cilantro, bottom stems removed and finely chopped
- 5 eggs, lightly beaten
- vegetable oil, for frying

For harissa dip:

- 4 tablespoons harissa
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 small garlic cloves, peeled and finely grated or pushed through a press
- zest of 1 lemon
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

1. Place the chicken, cinnamon sticks, fennel, sage, bay leaves, all spices, and 4 tablespoons salt in a large pot and cover with cold water by 1 inch. Set mixture over high heat, cover pot, and bring to a boil; lower heat to low and simmer, partially covered, until chicken is cooked through, 45-60 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, add potato pieces to a small saucepan and cover with water. Set over high heat and bring to a boil; cook until potato is very tender, 10-15 minutes. Remove from heat and drain, then mash potato with a potato masher; set aside. (This should yield about 1 cup of mashed potatoes.)
3. When the chicken is cooked, remove pot from the heat and let the chicken cool in the broth until it is cool enough to handle. Remove the chicken and transfer to a flat work surface. (If desired, strain the liquid through a fine mesh sieve, discarding the spices and keeping the liquid for another use.)
4. Using your fingers, remove meat from the bones and shred finely. (Discard the bones and skin, or reserve for another use.) Mix shredded chicken together with the mashed potato, chopped parsley, chopped cilantro, eggs, and remaining teaspoon of salt.

5. Heat 1/4 inch of vegetable oil in a large saucepan set over medium heat.
6. Lightly wet your hands and form patties that are approximately 2 inches in diameter and 1/2 inch thick. Working in batches, fry the patties, flipping once, until browned and cooked through, 2-3 minutes per side. (Add more oil as necessary, and adjust heat if fritters are browning too quickly.) Remove fritters and let drain on paper towels.
7. Make harissa dip: In a small bowl, whisk together the harissa, vegetable oil, garlic, lemon zest and juice, and salt. Serve patties warm with harissa sauce on the side for dipping.

Makes about 2 dozen 2-inch fritters

CAULIFLOWER LATKES

Adapted from recipes by Giora Shimoni and Miri Rotkowitz

Total:55 mins

Prep:25 mins

Cook:30 mins

Servings:3 to 5 servings

Ingredients

1 large head cauliflower (fresh, washed, and cut into florets)

2 large eggs (beaten)

1/2 cup white whole wheat flour or matzah meal (plus extra if needed)

1 teaspoon sea or kosher salt

1/2 teaspoon white or black pepper

2 quarts sunflower or canola oil (or enough for frying)

Directions:

1. In a large stockpot, bring a few inches of water to a boil. Add the cauliflower florets, reduce heat, and simmer, partially covered, for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the florets are soft enough to be mash easily with a fork.
2. Drain the cauliflower in a colander. Mash lightly with a fork, leaving some texture rather than creating a puree. Set aside the cauliflower to cool a bit.
3. Place cauliflower in a mixing bowl. Stir in the beaten eggs. Sprinkle with the flour or matzah meal and mix well to create a pancake-like batter. (If needed, add more flour or matzah meal 1 tablespoon at a time, mixing after each addition.) Season with the salt and pepper.
4. Line a plate with paper towels. In a large skillet set over medium-high heat, warm a few tablespoons of oil. Set the oven to warm (200 F).
5. When the oil is hot, drop the batter by tablespoonfuls into the pan, taking care not to crowd the pan. Flatten the pancakes a bit so they cook evenly. Fry approximately 3 to 5 minutes per side, or until the latkes are browned on both sides and firm in the middle.
6. Remove latkes from frying pan onto the paper towel-lined plate to drain off excess oil. Place on a baking sheet and keep warm in the oven while you make remaining batches.
7. Add more oil to the pan, heat, and continue frying the remaining latkes in batches, until the rest of the batter is used. Serve hot.

To Oven Fry

Although not considered the traditional method (since frying in the oil is significant during this Jewish holiday), you can oven bake the latkes for a healthier preparation. Preheat the oven to 425 F. Line 2 large, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper and drizzle with a little oil. Drop the batter by the tablespoon onto the prepared sheets and flatten slightly with the back of the spoon. Drizzle the pancakes with more oil.

Cook in the preheated oven for 10 to 12 minutes. Carefully turn with a spatula and cook for 10 to 12 minutes more, or until the latkes are cooked through and golden brown on both sides. Serve immediately.

Tips

- If you have a very large head of cauliflower, you may find another egg useful for binding the batter but will probably need to add additional flour as well.
- If you're feeling intimidated by frying, there are a few latke making tips you can follow that will have you turning out pancakes like a pro.

Recipe Variations

- To add even more nutrients to this dish, you can include steamed and mashed broccoli in the pancake batter. Either swap out half of the cauliflower or use a whole head of cauliflower and a whole head of broccoli—just remember to double the rest of the ingredients.
- Want to spice up your latkes? Try accenting the batter with a little curry powder, garam masala, za'atar, or Old Bay.
- Instead of topping these delicate latkes with applesauce and sour cream, take a cue from Indian cuisine and pair them with your favorite store-bought or homemade chutney and sliced scallions or mint. If you're serving a dairy meal, add a dollop of cucumber raita.