

Recipes from Sephardic Comfort Food with Susan Barocas - May 3, 2020

SUTLACH

(Sütlaç in Turkish, Sutlag in Ladino)

Rice Pudding

This gentle pudding is also known in Turkey as muhallabeya (aromatic milk pudding). Recipe adapted from *Sephardic Flavors: Jewish Cooking of the Mediterranean* by Joyce Goldstein.

Makes 6-8 servings

6 tablespoons rice flour or cream of rice cereal
6 tablespoons sugar
5-6 tablespoons water
4 cups milk or non-dairy substitute
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon grated orange zest
Ground cinnamon
Toasted almonds or hazelnuts, chopped

In a bowl, combine the rice flour or cream of rice and sugar. Gradually add the water, stirring until a thick lump-free paste forms.

In a saucepan, bring the milk to a slow boil over medium heat. Gradually add the rice-flour paste, whisking constantly to prevent lumps from forming. Continue to whisk the mixture constantly over medium heat until it thickens, 4 to 5 minutes.

Remove from the heat and stir in the vanilla and orange zest or rose water. Pour the pudding into individual dessert cups or a single larger serving bowl. Sprinkle with cinnamon, cover and refrigerate until well chilled before serving. Sprinkle with chopped nuts before serving if desired.

CHICKPEAS WITH ONIONS, HONEY AND POMEGRANATE

Adapted from *A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews* by David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson

Serves 4-6

2 medium onions, diced (1/4 inch)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 tablespoon honey
1 cup pomegranate juice
2 teaspoons pomegranate molasses
1/2 teaspoon wine vinegar
1 30-ounce or 2 15.5-ounce cans chickpeas, drained and rinsed, or about 3 cups cooked chickpeas
1/2 teaspoon salt or to taste
1/8 teaspoon black pepper or to taste
Seeds of 1 pomegranate
Chopped parsley for garnish (optional)

In a large pan, heat the oil over medium. Sauté the onions, stirring occasionally, until soft and sweet, about 10 minutes. Add the ginger and cloves to the pan and mix for a minute, letting the spices begin to release their aromas. Add the honey, pomegranate juice, molasses and vinegar to the pan. Stir well to blend. Add chickpeas, salt and pepper to the mixture and stir well. Simmer for 10 minutes over medium-low heat. Adjust salt and pepper to taste. Add the pomegranate seeds and cook just another minute or two. Serve hot, cold or at room temperature. Sprinkle with parsley before serving if desired.

BAKLAVA BITES

by Susan Barocas

Best flavor is to use two kinds of nuts.

1½ cup chopped nuts (walnuts, pistachios, almonds pecans)
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
30 mini filo shells*

Syrup

1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup water
3/4 cup honey
1 tablespoon lemon juice

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a food processor, add nuts, sugar, cinnamon and cloves. Pulse until chopped into mostly small, but still pieces. The nuts won't be even in size and that's fine. Nuts can also be hand-chopped, then mixed in a bowl with the cinnamon and cloves until well blended.

Place shells on a baking sheet. Spoon about 1 teaspoon of nut mixture into each shell, mounding the mixture slightly. Bake 10-12 minutes just until the shells start to turn golden brown.

Make the syrup before making the bites or while they are baking. In a small saucepan over medium heat combine the water, sugar and honey and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer on low for about 15 minutes until the sauce thickens a bit. Stir in the lemon juice and remove the sauce from the heat. Either cool the syrup to room temperature and pour it over the hot bites, or let the bites cool while you make the syrup and pour the hot syrup over the cooled bites. Either way, pour at least a teaspoon of the syrup all over the surface of each pastry, letting it soak down into the nuts. The bites are ready to serve.

To store, put bites flat in a container and refrigerate or freeze. The bites can be left covered for 3 days, in or out of the refrigerator, and can be frozen baked or unbaked, with or without the syrup. If frozen, thaw for about 30 minutes. If unbaked without syrup, bake the bites 10-12 minutes in a 350 degree oven and proceed with the syrup as directed above. If baked, reheat for 5-7 minutes in a 350 degree oven. Add syrup if there is none yet. The syrup can be made ahead and refrigerated for up to 3 weeks. Warm to room temperature before pouring over the hot pastries.

*Available at Middle Eastern markets, some gourmet shops and online.