

## MA'AMOUL FILLED WITH DATES AND PISTACHIOS

There's nothing as satisfying as giving your ma'amoul mold a good bang on the table to produce an intricately shaped cookie. It's probably the most stress relieving journey to delicious cookies. Ma'amoul are Lebanese celebratory cookies filled with dates, pistachios or walnuts and perfumed with rose water. Semolina is the main ingredient in ma'amoul which gives them a crumbly texture. We add a pinch of yeast before shaping the dough to boost the crumble effect when baking. Because the cookie dough is characterized as more texture than flavor, the quality of your ma'amoul fillings are paramount. This is the time to splurge on the dates (sukari are my favorite) and pistachios (make sure they're freshly ground). These cookies hold their taste for more than a week and can be stored in your freezer, so rest assured, you will feel the longevity of your efforts.

### DESCRIPTION

Holiday cookies that need to be part of our daily life. Ma'amoul cookies have a prep time of 3 hours, a wait time of 10 hours and a baking time of 12 minutes.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 kg semolina
- 500 grams butter, unsalted and at room temperature
- 1 cup wheat flour (tahin firkha)
- 1 tablespoon mahlab
- 2 tablespoons rose water
- 2 tablespoons orange blossom water
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup lukewarm water
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of active dry yeast
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of sugar
- 500 grams of pitted dates
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 250 grams of freshly ground pistachios
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar



### METHOD

#### Step 1: Preparing the Dough

Preparing the dough starts the night before you plan on baking your ma'amoul. It's very important the butter is at room temperature. In a large deep bowl add the semolina, wheat flour and mahlab and combine. Add the butter to the flour mixture and combine with your hands until fully incorporated. The texture will be crumbly, please refer to the photos for a reference. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place on your kitchen counter for 10 hours. No need to refrigerate.

#### Step 2: Preparing the Fillings, the following day.

Dates: Place a saucepan on the stovetop and set the heat at medium high. Add the dates and butter and combine until the dates start softening, this takes around 5 minutes. Once the dates are warm, place them in a blender and pulse until a paste forms. Place the date paste in a small bowl and add  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon of rose water and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon orange blossom water and combine. Pinch off a small portion of the date paste and form a ball. Please refer to the photos for a size guide. Repeat the same process of rolling out the balls until all the paste is completed. Place the date balls on a sheet tray to be used shortly.

Pistachios: In a small bowl, combine the pistachios, sugar, ½ tablespoon of rose water and ½ tablespoon of orange blossom and combine.

### **Step 3: Mixing the Dough**

In a small bowl, add the water, sugar, yeast and combine. Let the mixture rest for 5 minutes. Add the water, 1 tablespoon of rose water and 1 tablespoon of orange blossom to the flour mixture and combine with your hands until a dough takes shape.

### **Step 4: Shaping the Dough**

Preheat your oven to 220 degrees Celsius.

Pinch off a portion of the dough and form a patty in the palm of your hand. Place a date ball at the center of the patty and envelop the date with the dough and form another ball. Place the ball in the ma'amoul mold and pat down until the surface is even. Turn over the ma'amoul mold and bang the mold on the table to release the cookie. Keep repeating this process to form the ma'amoul cookies. You may need to dust the ma'amoul mold with flour, so the dough does not stick. Place the cookies on an unbuttered baking tray.

Repeat the same process with the pistachios by adding a teaspoon of the pistachio mixture to the center of the patty, envelop the pistachio mixture with the dough and form another ball. Place the ball in the ma'amoul mold and pat down until the surface is even. Turn over the ma'amoul mold and bang the mold on the table to release the cookie. Keep repeating this process to form the ma'amoul cookies. You may need to dust the ma'amoul mold with flour, so the dough does not stick. Place the cookies on an unbuttered baking tray.

### **Step 5: Baking**

Place the baking tray in the oven and bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until lightly golden. Once lightly golden from the bottom, switch the oven setting to broil and bake for another minute until the tops are also lightly golden.

A note about the ma'amoul molds:

- Each ma'amoul mold shape is related to its filling. The date filling has a shape, the pistachio filling has a shape and so on. I only had one type of mold on hand, the mold for the pistachio filling, so I used it for the date filling as well, what can I say, that's life.