

Turkish Pastries Recipes

Börek is a general name for the pastries in Turkey, and several varieties exist. Often it consists of preparing the dough and the filling. The varieties are based on type of dough, the way the dough is used and cut, as well as infinite varieties and combinations you can make with the fillings. You need clean work spaces for these recipes (it will get messy). Below are some traditional recipes that are very commonly baked in Turkey. Our class cooking may vary slightly based on some techniques my mother uses. But these are traditional recipes and safe to use.

Ispanaklı Peynirli Börek (Spinach and Feta Cheese Borek)

Ingredients:

- 5 yufka (round thin cut pieces of dough, filo dough can also be used)
- 1/2 kg of spinach
- 1 large onion + 3 tablespoons olive oil (you can optionally use a bit of garlic)
- 150 gr nonfat feta cheese (chopped into small pieces)
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup water
- Salt & Pepper

Instructions:

1. Clean the spinach and cut into small pieces (this is important for being able to spread). Season with salt and pepper.
2. Heat a pan, add the 3 spoons of olive oil and finely chopped onion. When the onions are cooked add the spinach and mix until the spinach is significantly reduced in size but not overcooked.
3. Spread one of the yufka pieces (or filo pieces) into a large oven pan so that edges are hanging outside the pan (filo dries very fast so use several layers and do this quickly if using filo).
4. Mix the cup of olive oil, egg and water together in a bowl to create a homogenous liquid. Spread one or two spoons of this mixture onto the yufka.
5. Shred 1 and a half of the other yufka peices on top of the one already on the pan. Now add the spinach, evenly distributing the filling around the pan. Spread the cheese on top of the spinach (again evenly, no need to cook the cheese). You can use any herbs you like in this step. Rosemary and thyme are fitting herbs.
6. Cover the filling with another 1 and a half of the yufka, again shredded by hand. Cover this layer with the last remaining yufka piece and either fold in the bottom piece that is hanging from the sides or cut and add to the top before the top layer yufka is added. Now use the rest of your egg and oil mixture to cover the yufka evenly.
6. Pre-heat the oven to 350 Fahrenheit or 180 Celcius. Bake until the top is golden yellow (Turkish cooking isn't that scientific!).



Sigara Boregi (Cigar Borek or cigarette borek -- but I prefer cigar)

Ingredients:

- 24 pieces of yufka cut into triangle shape (you can buy this in the Grand Market on Main Street, it comes in a package that is pre-cut).
- 150 gr nonfat feta cheese (mash into a paste and add herbs if you like)
- Frying oil (vegetable oil)

Instructions:

1. Place a single cut triangle shaped yufka piece on the counter and add the cheese.

2. The folding technique is very important here. Add a little bit of cheese towards the wide part of the triangle like a line, but do not cover all the way. Fold the sides first to cover the feta cheese from the side, then cover the cheese and roll towards the pointy end. Before you are done dip the tip of the dough into some water (this will help it stick together), and complete the roll. Place each prepared roll to the side.

3. You can either deep fry or pan fry these rolls. I recommend pan frying to save on oil. Use a wide pan and add about two tablespoons of the oil into the pan. Heat until the oil is hot. Carefully add as many rolls as you can fit in the pan.

4. Turn the rolls around to make sure all sides are cooked. This is a fast process so don't leave the pan unattended.

Customizing your Borek

This is the simple recipe that traditional cigar borek uses. However you can easily customize this to make it even more yummy. All you need to do is prepare your favourite filling and use that instead of the feta cheese. Make sure your filling is pre-cooked, since the frying won't help cook anything inside the roll. Here are some ideas:

- Mashed potato with onion and tomato paste
- Mashed potato with bacon (Muslims don't eat bacon generally so this is not Turkish)
- Guacamole and feta cheese
- Fried vegetables



Baklava

Here's a baklava recipe from About.com. It's not really a type of Borek because it's sweet (we are entering a different genre there) but the concept is the same. This time however the filling is sweet and you pour syrup over it when it's done.

Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 cups walnuts or pistachio nuts (the more nuts a baklava has the better)
- 4 cups sugar plus 1/2 cup
- 1 lb butter
- 1 package, or 16 oz. frozen filo dough, thawed according to package directions (Baklava uses this thin dough, to create the multiple layers.)
- 2 cups water



- 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons rosewater
- cinnamon if using walnuts

Preparation:

1. Combine 4 cups sugar, lemon juice, and water in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, and allow to boil for 10 minutes. Add rosewater and bring to a boil. Remove from heat immediately. Allow to cool.
2. Combine 1/2 cup sugar and nuts in a bowl. If using walnuts add cinnamon. Preheat oven to 300.
3. Unroll dough and cut into 9x12 pieces to fit into dish.
4. Grease bottom of 9x12 pan with butter. Place two sheets of dough in the baking dish. Brush dough with butter and repeat until half of filo dough is used.
5. Spread about 1 cup of nut mixture over the last layer of dough. Place two sheets of filo dough and brush with butter.
6. Repeat until nut mixture is used. On the final layer of filo dough, be sure to brush with butter.
7. Cut into 3 inch squares. Then, cut each square in half diagonally to make triangles. Bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until golden brown.
8. Remove from oven and pour syrup over top of baklava and allow to seep and saturate it well.