



Ma'moul or Holy Land Biscuits

These are traditional festive Middle Eastern biscuits eaten at Easter by Christians and at Eid by Muslims. They are quite complicated and time consuming to make, so, if you can, enlist the help of friends and children. Everyone enjoys making dough balls between the palms of their hands.

Every Middle Eastern family has its own favourite version of the recipe. Everyone has their preferred fillings. Here is a recipe using dates, walnuts or pistachios. These are made using the traditional *ma'moul* moulds which you can find in Middle Eastern shops. If you don't have, or cannot find, them you can mould the dough in the palms of your hands. **For**

Easter, our colleagues from Bethlehem and Beit Jala gather their friends together during Lent for Ma'moul baking sessions for Easter Sunday celebrations. Some of the dough is made into small balls, stuffed and then flattened slightly, just enough for a small circle to be cut from the middle, leaving a small ring that represents the 'crown of thorns'. The rest of the dough is left in small oval shapes representing the stone that was rolled back from the tomb.

1 cup plain flour
2 cups semolina
8 oz unsalted butter
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp baking powder
1/4 cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons rose flower water
1 tablespoon orange blossom water
7 tablespoons water

Mix the flour, semolina, salt, baking powder and sugar. Stir in the melted butter until it forms a fine meal. Cover and leave overnight.

Next day, for the filling:

Dates:

1 1/2 cups stoned and chopped dates

3 ounces butter

Cook the dates with the butter over a low heat, stirring occasionally until the form a purée. Form into small marble size balls between the palms of your hands, and set aside.

Walnuts or Pistachios:

1 1/2 cups finely chopped walnuts or pistachios

2 tablespoons orange blossom or rose flower water

1/4 cup sugar

1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Combine all ingredients together and mix well

Combine the flower waters with 7 tablespoons of water and sprinkle over the meal left in a bowl overnight. Put in a blender and mix. It will form and malleable dough.

Roll this out on a board and cut into scone-sized rounds, gently depressing the centre as you place a ball of filling there. Curl up the sides of the circle over the filling. There is no need to cover *all* the filling. This will disappear from view as you roll the ball between your palms. Press this stuffed ball into one of your wooden moulds. You will be able to tap out about 18 cookies. Place them on a buttered baking sheet in a 180C oven and cook for 18-20 minutes.

Dust with icing sugar while still warm.