

TABOON



SWEET & SAVOURY
DELIGHTS FROM THE
LEBANESE BAKERY

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Sambousik Lahme/Jebne

Meat or cheese hand pies

Another classic hot appetiser, sambousik is one of many pastries of similar shape and name. Filled with minced (ground) meat and onions, the toughest part of making them is pinching them shut with a unique braid intricately formed with the tips of the fingers. Of course, they can be crimped like empanada or sealed with a fork, but the beauty of them is in those small twists of dough. The uncooked pastries freeze well and can be fried immediately from frozen – this is why the recipe makes so many, as you'll always want some to hand.

In a large bowl or a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook, combine the flour, 3 tablespoons of the olive oil, the salt and milk and mix until you have a shaggy dough. If using a stand mixer, run until the dough comes together into a ball and cleans the sides of the bowl. If kneading by hand, transfer to the work surface and knead until a ball forms and it's no longer sticky. Coat the inside of the bowl with the remaining oil, turn the ball of dough in it to coat and cover with cling film (plastic wrap). Leave to rest for at least 20 minutes.

Grab a baseball-sized piece of dough and roll it on the work surface (no need for extra flour) to a thickness of 5 mm (¼ in). Using a cutter or the rim of a cup, cut the dough into circles, 6–7 cm (2¾ in) in diameter. Return the scraps to the covered bowl with the rest of the dough.

For the fillings, simply mix all the ingredients for each filling in a separate bowl until well combined.

Fill each circle of dough with a teaspoon of the filling, fold it in half in a half-moon shape and pinch it shut. To shape it, you can use a fork to crimp the edges like empanadas, but the method I learned from my mom is a bit more intricate. After pinching it, thin out the edges. Starting from the top of the crescent, fold what's between your thumb and forefinger onto the next piece of dough along the crescent and pinch, then take this part and repeat until all of the side is braided like a Cornish pasty. Arrange on a tray without them touching while you make the rest.

If deep-frying, fry in hot oil until golden, turning as needed. Drain on kitchen paper.

If baking, generously brush all sides with olive oil, place on a baking sheet and bake in a 200°C (400°F/gas 6) oven for 12–15 minutes until golden.

Freeze any uncooked pies in a single layer until solid, then store in an airtight container in the freezer for up to 4 months. Cook straight from the freezer in hot frying oil until golden or bake as above.

MAKES 24 SMALL PIES OF EACH FILLING

vegetable oil for deep-frying,
or olive oil for coating if baking

FOR THE DOUGH

500 g (3½ cups) plain (all-purpose) flour
4 tablespoons olive oil
10 g (generous ½ teaspoons) salt
300 ml (scant 1¼ cups) milk

FOR THE MEAT FILLING

200 g (7 oz) minced (ground) beef
200 g (7 oz) onion, finely chopped
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon Lebanese 7-spice blend
2 tablespoons olive oil

FOR THE CHEESE FILLING

100 g (3½ oz) Czech Akkawi cheese,
soaked in 2 changes of water,
then grated
100 g (3½ oz) mozzarella cheese,
grated
50 g (1¾ oz) feta cheese
50 g (1¾ oz) labneh (or sour cream)
50 g (1¾ oz) onion, grated
2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf
parsley



Rqaaqat Ardi Shawki w Sbanekh

Artichoke and spinach rolls

I follow my mom's example here and make a large batch of this recipe to use when I'm in need of a quick fix or some party finger food. The filling is my personal take on an artichoke and spinach dip and it makes a perfect bite-sized snack. Fried until crisp and golden, these have the ideal combination of crispness from the pastry and creaminess and gooey stretchiness from the cheesy filling.

In a food processor, blitz the artichokes with the garlic and salt until chopped to 5 mm (¼ in) chunks or a little smaller.

In a deep frying pan, heat the olive oil and cook the artichoke and garlic mix until fragrant. Add the spinach and stir until all the liquid has evaporated, then set aside to cool.

Once cooled, add the labneh, cheese/s and red pepper flakes and mix to combine.

To assemble, lay a spring roll wrapper with one of the pointy edges facing you. Place 2 tablespoons, around 40 g (1½ oz), of filling in the corner closest to you, fold the pointy edge over the filling, then fold the sides in to seal in the filling. Roll the dough until a small triangle remains. Brush a little bit of water, or water with mixed with a little flour, on the triangle to help seal and roll all the way up. Repeat to fill the remaining rolls. Arrange on a tray in a single layer and freeze until solid. They will keep frozen for up to 2 months in a sealed container.

To bake, take out of the freezer and brush all sides with olive oil. Arrange on a baking sheet and either bake for 20 minutes in a 200°C (400°F/gas 6) oven, or cook in an air fryer at the same temperature, until golden.

To deep fry, heat a 5 cm (2 in) depth of vegetable oil in a deep frying pan until hot. Drop the rolls straight from the freezer into the oil and fry until golden, flipping as needed. Remove with a slotted spoon to drain on kitchen paper.

Serve immediately.

MAKES 20

250 g (9 oz) frozen artichoke bottoms, defrosted

25 g (1 oz) garlic cloves

½ teaspoons salt

60 ml (¼ cup) olive oil

400 g (14 oz) frozen chopped spinach, defrosted

100 g (3½ oz) thick labneh

300 g (2 cups) grated mozzarella

100 g (¾ cup) grated desalinated Czech Akkawi cheese (or queso fresco or more mozzarella)

2 teaspoons red pepper flakes

20 spring roll wrappers
(I use square ones)

olive oil (for baking or air-frying) or vegetable oil (for deep-frying)

