

Middle Eastern Tabouleh Salad

2 bunches of curly parsley
½ c. fine bulgur wheat
3-4 Roma tomatoes
½ small Spanish or white onion
1 English cucumber
1 head of romaine lettuce, washed and leaves separated
10-12 fresh mint leaves chopped finely (optional)

Dressing

Juice from 2-3 lemons
2-3 tbsp. olive oil
Salt to taste

Place the bulgur wheat in a bowl and cover with warm water from the tap, soak for 30 mins. While that's soaking, wash and drain the parsley. Separate the leaves from the stems and place some leaves in a food processor, pulse to finely chop, dump into a large bowl. Once it is all chopped and, in the bowl, chop the onion finely and add to the chopped parsley. Chop the cucumber into small chunks and add it to the bowl. Chop the tomatoes into small chunks. If you want your salad on the drier side, drain the juice from the chopped tomatoes before adding it to the bowl with the other ingredients.

If you would like to add the chopped mint, you can do that now. Check the bulgur, if it has absorbed most of the water, it's ready. To drain the wheat, grab a handful and squeeze out the water and add each handful to the bowl with the other ingredients. Squeeze the lemons, combine with the olive oil and salt, pour over the "salad", mix, taste, and adjust the salt as needed.

To serve, scoop some salad into a romaine leaf "boat" and enjoy.

Pierogies

As remembered and described by Renata Engel

This dish was one that my mother, Margaret (Gebadlo) King always made for Christmas and Easter meals. And because we did not eat meat on Friday, she often made these pierogies to accompany the Friday fish dinner. What I remember most about making the pierogies was the group effort. Lots of little hands, cutting the dough into circles, filling the dough (usually too full), closing and crimping with a fork. Years later, when I would be home for the holidays, the little hands were replaced by my father's hands. And even as he became my mother's helper, he also tended to overfill, which always had my mother rolling her eyes.

Even though the traditional shape is a half moon, I make mine rectangular. I find that it is easier to roll out so that I maximize the use of the dough, and avoid having to use dough scraps, and then reworking (toughening) the dough.

Fillings

Cottage cheese filling for one batch of dough

¾ cup dry curd cottage cheese (if you do not have dry curd, place creamy cottage cheese in a strainer for several hours to drain some of the liquid)

1 Tbsp melted butter

¼ tsp salt

¼ tsp black pepper

2 Tbsp fresh parsley

1 egg yolk

Combine all ingredients with a fork, retaining the curd texture of the cottage cheese.

Sweet prune filling for one batch of dough

½ cup pitted prunes, chopped into 1/4 inch pieces

3 Tbsp water

1 Tbsp sugar

¼ tsp of a warm spice (cinnamon or clove)

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan and cook over medium heat until a soft paste forms, water may need to be added depending on the moisture that is in the prunes.

Dough – 1 batch makes about 1 dozen pierogies

1 cup flour

¼ tsp salt

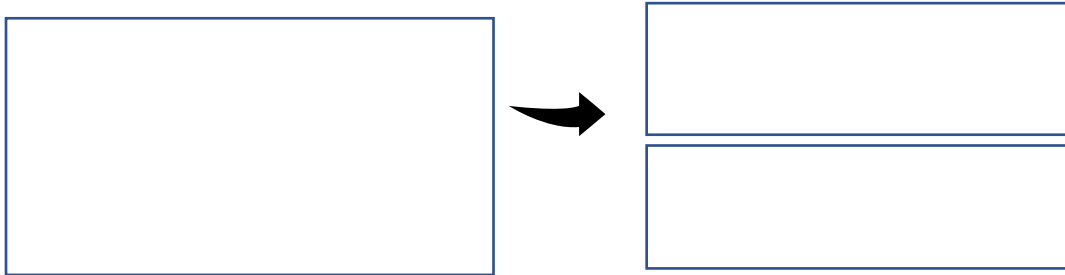
1 egg

4 Tbsp cold water

Combine flour and salt. Using a fork, blend egg into the flour. Add water and mix well with hands to form a soft dough. Add more water if needed, being careful to work the dough well before adding more water.

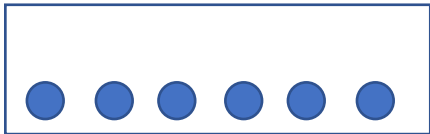
Assembly

Dust a large wood cutting board with flour and roll dough out to about a rectangle 18 inches by 9 inches. Cut along length to separate into two sections.



Each strip will make 6 rectangular pierogies as described below. Take one strip and place a 1 tsp of filling spaced evenly on the lower half of the strip, as shown.

Moisten with water the bottom edge and the space between the dollops of filling.



Fold the top half down over the filling. Press the edges and the spaces between the fillings. And cut them with a knife to separate. Crimp the edges with a fork.



Place in boiling water for about 5 minutes. Drain. And then melt about 3 Tbsp of butter in a pan and saute them before serving.

Persian (Iranian) Baklava

1 pkg. Fillo Pastry (found in the freezer section) thawed
2 sticks unsalted butter (do not substitute)
3 ½ - 4 cups finely chopped walnuts and pistachios
2 tsp. ground cardamom
½ cup sugar

Syrup

1 ½ cups sugar dissolved in ¾ cup water
4 Tablespoons Rosewater
½ cup honey
¼ cup lemon juice

Melt butter in microwave safe bowl. Brush 12 x 15 pan with butter. Unwrap thawed fillo pastry and gently lay one sheet onto pan. Brush with butter and repeat with about half of the pastry, one sheet at a time and brushing with butter between each layer. In food processor, chop nuts until desired consistency. Add in ground cardamom and ½ cup sugar. Mix well and pour evenly over pastry. Even out the nuts and begin layering remaining fillo pastry, one sheet at a time, brushing each with butter. Brush final (top) layer well with butter. **Using a very sharp knife, cut pastry all the way through to the bottom layer in diamond shapes.** This MUST be done BEFORE pastry is baked!!!!

Bake at 350 degrees F for about 25-30 minutes, then increase heat to 450 degrees F for a few minutes until baklava is browned to your liking.

While baklava is cooking, mix all syrup ingredients together in a sauce pan and cook over medium-high heat. Mixture should boil gently for about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool.

As soon as baklava is removed from the oven, immediately pour cooled syrup evenly over the pastry. It should sizzle and suck up most of the syrup. Allow the baklava to cool at room temperature for an hour or so, then cover lightly with parchment paper and refrigerate until ready to serve.

To serve, remove from refrigerator and let it warm up at room temperature for about 20 minutes. Cut again along same lines and gently remove one piece at a time to serving plate.