



Featured Grain: Semolina – Grain in Africa, Europe, Asia

Maamoul Shortbread Cookies

Festive Mid-Eastern semolina grain cookie filled with date or pistachio flavor

- 2 cups fine semolina
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup melted unsalted butter
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 cup milk warm or at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla or favorite flavoring
- 6 Tablespoon granulated sugar

Pistachio Filling:

- 1 cup ground pistachio nuts
- 2 Tablespoon ghee or unsalted butter
- 4 Tablespoon granulated sugar

Date Filling:

- 1 cup pitted dates, chopped
- 1 Tablespoon ghee or unsalted butter
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon sesame seeds

Garnish: Confectioners' sugar as desired

Make the Dough:

- In a bowl, add the semolina and all-purpose flour. Mix well for one minute.
- Add the melted unsalted butter to the flour mixture; mix until well combined. (In this step, we are trying to coat the semolina and flour with the fat from the butter to bring out a shortbread-like taste.)
- Add the baking powder, milk, vanilla flavoring, and sugar. Mix well until combined on low speed. Do not overmix the dough; you want to prevent the cookies from turning hard.
- Cover the dough with a plastic wrap; place in the refrigerator for 20 minutes to an hour. (This is an important step because it allows the semolina to absorb the moisture and increase in size.)

Make the Pistachio Filling:

In a food processor, process pistachio nuts until ground; add butter and sugar to the ground pistachio nuts; mix well. Form filling into 12 balls; set aside.

Make the Date Filling:

In a food processor, process dates until soft; add butter, cinnamon, and sesame seeds; mix well. Form filling into 12 balls; set aside.

Note from the Cook: You might want to add some additional bold flavors to the fillings such as spices, extracts, or syrups.

Form the Cookies:

- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Line several baking sheets with parchment paper; set aside...
- Remove the dough from the refrigerator; using about 1-1/2 Tablespoons for each cookie, form the dough into 24 balls.
- Flatten the balls; place a filling ball in the middle; close the dough ball enclosing the filling inside.
- Place filled dough ball in the underside of a citrus juicer that can act like a mold for the dough; press it gently to help the dough shape the mold.
- Gently tap the bottom of the mold multiple times over a hard surface like your kitchen counter until dough is released. (Do not tap the mold over your hand.) (We used a small knife to make the lines a little deeper on the sides of the shaped cookie dough.

Bake the Cookies:

- Place the shaped cookie on the cookie sheet, keeping two-inch space between each cookie; bake on the middle shelf for 18 to 20 minutes, or until the edges of the cookie turn light brown. (Do not overbake) Remove from the oven; let rest 10 minutes; transfer to cooling rack.
- If desired, sprinkle the cooled cookie with confectioner's sugar before serving.

Recipe by: Munaty Cooking, For More Information See:

<https://www.munatycooking.com/maamoul-cookies-made-with-semolina/>

Hint from Muna: If dough sticks to the mold, place plastic wrap in mold; then add the dough ball or dust mold with flour before placing the dough ball in it.

About the Recipe: This Arabian cookie is popular in the Middle East. The cookies taste similar to shortbread and can be filled with dates, pistachio, almonds, or a flavorful combination filling. They use special molds, but a citrus juicer makes an attractive substitute. The cookies will store well at room temperature for three days.

What is Semolina?

Durum grain is a member of the grass family and golden in color. It's also known as semolina and is very elastic. It's called bulgur when ground. Semolina is coarser than traditional flour and may be darker and more golden in color, but this will depend on the specific varieties. It can also have a more earthy aroma.

Semolina flour is used in pasta and is very common in Italy. You may see semolina in other recipes such as cakes, breads, or pies.

For More Information See: <https://www.bobsredmill.com/blog/baking-101/what-is-semolina/>