THE STIRRING LIFE

Iraqi Cheese Bread

Four cheeses, parsley and mint, in a soft yeasted dough

Discs of soft dough pulled up around a herb-heavy cheese filling
More filling over the top, egg washed, and baked until golden

INGREDIENTS

The Yeast

- ½ Tbsp yeast, bloomed in ½ cup warm water with 1 Tbsp sugar

The Wet

- 3 eggs
- ¼ cup milk
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1½–2 cups warm water

The Dry

- 6 cups flour
- 1 Tbsp sugar and 2 tsp salt

The Cheese Filling

- 2 cups Spanish cheese
- 2 cups mozzarella
- 1½ cups feta, generous
- 1 cup cheddar
- 1 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 cup scallions, sliced
- ¾ cup fresh mint, chopped
- 3 Tbsp dried mint
- 2 eggs, to bind
- Crushed red pepper

To Finish

- 1 beaten egg, and sesame seeds

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bloom the yeast. Half a tablespoon of yeast with a tablespoon of sugar in half a cup of warm water, left on its own until foamy and active.
2. Whisk the wet. Eggs, milk, melted butter, olive oil and the warm water, beaten together until smooth.
3. Combine the dry. Flour, sugar and salt, in a separate bowl.
4. Yeast into the wet. Once it is properly active, stir the yeast mixture through the wet ingredients.
5. Mix by hand. Dry into wet, worked by hand until it comes together and the consistency turns smooth.
6. Work it on the table. Keep going on the counter with a bench knife until the dough is properly smooth.
7. Let it rise. Covered, about an hour and a half.
8. Make the filling. All four cheeses with the parsley, scallions, both mints and crushed red pepper, bound with the two eggs.
9. Shape and fill. Press the dough into discs. A little filling into the center of each, then pull all the sides up and over to close it.
10. More filling on top. Another spoonful over the closed side, so they bake with cheese on the surface as well as inside.
11. Wash and bake. Egg wash over the tops, sesame if you want it, into a preheated 400°F oven for about 20 minutes, until golden.

The water is a range because flour takes it differently from one day to the next. Start at a cup and a half and add the rest only if the dough stays stiff. Spanish cheese is what it is called at a Middle Eastern grocery; without it, lean on more mozzarella and feta.