KALI OREXI

sharing our Greek culinary heritage

Antigoni's Sousamopita

My yiayia Stavroula would make this sousamopita once a year, on the feast day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross – Ύψωση του Τιμίου Σταυρού – 14th September. Strict vegan fasting was observed on this important feast day. Normally my yiayia would use lard to baste her pan and her fillo sheets when she made a pita, but on this day she would use precious olive oil. After baking the sousamopita, she would take it to the fields, where her family toiled and serve it with petimezi (grape molasses).

This day was also my yiayia's name day and as is customary in Greece, the person that is celebrating offers the treats. This was her way of sharing a celebratory sweet with her family in honour of her name!

For the dough you will need...

500g plain flour

1 teaspoon salt

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)

1 tablespoon white vinegar

1 ¼ cups warm tap water, approximately (see dough making notes)

Making the dough...

- Combine the flour and salt in a large bowl
- Add the olive oil and vinegar and combine with the flour
- Add one cup of warm water and combine with the flour to form a dough
- There will be unincorporated flour in your bowl. Add a small amount of water at a time and mix into the dough and remaining flour. Keep doing this until all the flour combines with the dough (the dough should be soft and pliable and even a tiny bit sticky)
- Turn the dough onto your work surface and knead it for 1-2 minutes
- Place the dough in a bowl, cover it with a clean damp towel and leave it to rest at room temperature for 2 hours

For the filling you will need...

1kg sesame seeds

1 cup sugar

2 tablespoons cinnamon

100ml rosewater

1-2 tablespoon vanilla extract

Preparing the filling

- Soak the sesame seeds overnight with 2-3 cups water
- Crush the sesame seeds in batches with a mortar and pestle
- Add the sugar, cinnamon, rosewater and vanilla extract and combine well

Preparing the flour-cornflour dusting mixture (used to dust the fillo with as you roll it out)...

- Combine 250g plain flour with 75g cornflour and set aside

Making the sousamopta...

- After the dough has rested, divide it into 9 equal portions
- Roll the portions into balls, place them on your work surface and cover them with the damp towel
- Take one of the balls of dough, place it on a floured work surface (use the dusting flour) and using your Greek rolling pin, roll it out so it forms a disc of approximately 20cm in diameter
- Take the disc of dough (fillo) and wrap it snugly around the rolling pin. Starting with both hands in the middle of the fillo-pastry rolling pin, press the fillo lightly while moving your hands away from each other. Ensure that the pressure on the fillo is uniform and you press all the way to the outer edges of the fillo.
- Unravel the fillo sheet at an angle to its original orientation
- Wrap the fillo onto the rolling pin again
- Repeat the process above until the fillo sheet is approximately 45-50cm in diameter
- Whenever the fillo becomes sticky, dust it with the flour-cornflour dusting mixture
- Generously oil the base of a round baking dish (preferably aluminium or stainless steel and approximately 36-38cm in internal diameter)
- Drape the ***1st*** fillo sheet across the pan and over the edges of the pan – drizzle the fillo sheet with EVOO
- Roll out a ***2nd*** fillo sheet to 40-45cm in diameter and place it completely within the pan – drizzle the fillo sheet with EVOO
- Roll out a ***3rd*** fillo sheet to 45-50cm in diameter and place fillo sheet across the pan and over the edges of the pan – drizzle the fillo sheet with olive oil
- Add a generous layer of the sesame-seed filling and drizzle with more EVOO

- Roll out a ***4th*** fillo sheet to 40-45cm in diameter and place it completely within the pan – drizzle the fillo sheet with EVOO
- Add another generous layer of the sesame-seed filling and drizzle with more EVOO
- Roll out a ***5th*** fillo sheet to 40-45cm in diameter and place it completely within the pan – drizzle the fillo sheet with EVOO
- Add another generous layer of the sesame-seed filling and drizzle with more EVOO
- Roll out a ***6th*** fillo sheet to 40-45cm in diameter and place it completely within the pan – drizzle the fillo sheet with EVOO
- Add another generous layer of the sesame-seed filling and drizzle with more EVOO
- Fold in the overhanging edges of the ***3rd*** fillo sheet and drizzle them with EVOO
- Sprinkle pita with water
- Roll out a ***7th*** fillo sheet to 40-45cm in diameter and place it completely within the pan – drizzle the fillo sheet with EVOO
- Roll out an ***8th*** fillo sheet to 40-45cm in diameter and place it completely within the pan – drizzle the fillo sheet with EVOO
- Roll out a ***9th*** fillo sheet to 40-45cm in diameter and place it completely within the pan – drizzle the fillo sheet with EVOO
- Fold in the overhanging edges of the ***1st*** fillo sheet and drizzle them with EVOO
- Sprinkle the top of the pita with water

Baking and serving the sousamopita

- Bake at 180°C fan-forced for 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until deep golden-brown in colour
- Allow to cool a little and serve with a generous drizzle of petimezi
- Kali Orexi!

Key Points

- The fillo-pastry rolling pin is curtain dowel, which can be purchased from most timber/hardware stores. It is 16mm in diameter and 90cm long. Sand it back to smooth the surface of the dowel and then wipe it clean with a damp cloth.
- You may want to pulse the sesame seeds, in batches, a couple times in a food processor, rather than use a mortar and pestle to crush them. Don't over process them or you will end up with tahini!
- 4/5 of the filling was used for this pita. You can make some extra dough and make a couple of sousamopita scrolls or logs if you like.