

maamoul

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Maamoul

Semolina shortbread stuffed with dates, walnuts or pistachios and pressed in a carved wooden mould called a *tabi*. Made across the Levant for Eid al-Fitr, for Easter, and for Purim, often by the same bakers for all three, and the shape of the mould traditionally says what is inside: round for dates, domed for walnut, oval for pistachio.

The dough is unlike any European cookie dough on this site, and the difference is worth understanding.

What makes it work

- **Semolina must be soaked overnight.** Coarse semolina hydrates slowly. Rub the fat in, add the liquid, cover, and leave it eight hours minimum. Skipping this gives a gritty, sandy cookie that never softens — the failure mode everyone hits on their first attempt.
- **Ghee or clarified butter, not whole butter.** The water in butter develops what little gluten the flour portion has. Clarified fat keeps the crumb short and the flavour is the point.
- **Orange blossom and rose water are structural to the flavour,** not decoration. A tablespoon of each in the dough, and more in the filling.
- **No colour.** Maamoul is baked pale — 20 minutes at 170 °C, out when the bottoms are barely tan. Brown maamoul is overbaked maamoul.
- **Dust with powdered sugar only once cold,** or it dissolves.

Ingredients

Makes about 30.

Dough:

- 400 g fine semolina
- 100 g coarse semolina
- 100 g all-purpose flour
- 250 g ghee or clarified butter, melted
- 60 g granulated sugar
- 3 g fine salt
- 5 g instant yeast, dissolved in 60 ml warm [milk](#)
- 2 tbsp orange blossom water
- 1 tbsp rose water
- 60–120 ml warm water, as needed

Date filling:

- 400 g date paste — see [Dates](#)
- 2 tbsp ghee
- 1 tsp ground [cinnamon](#)

Or nut filling:

- 300 g [walnuts](#) or pistachios, coarsely chopped
- 80 g granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp orange blossom water
- 1 tsp ground [cinnamon](#)

Method

Rub the melted ghee thoroughly into both semolinas and the flour with your hands, five full minutes, until every grain is coated. Cover and leave overnight at room temperature.

Next day, add the sugar, salt, the yeast in milk, and the flower waters. Add warm water a little at a time until

the dough just holds when squeezed — it should not be sticky.

Warm the date paste with the ghee and cinnamon and roll it into 15 g balls. For the nut filling, simply mix.

Take 30 g of dough, flatten it in your palm, put in the filling, and close the dough over it. Press into a floured mould, level the back, and knock it out onto a tray.

Bake **170 °C / 340 °F for 18–22 minutes**, until set and only just coloured underneath. Cool completely, then dust with powdered sugar.

Notes

- **The yeast is not for lift.** A small amount is traditional and works as a tenderiser and a faint flavour; the cookie does not rise.
- No mould? Shape by hand and mark the top with the tines of a fork or with pastry tweezers. The pattern is there to hold the sugar.
- **Keeps three weeks** in a tin, and improves for the first three days as the semolina softens against the filling.

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