

Bosnian burek

Bosnian burek is considered by many to be the best version of the pie which is found all over the Balkans including Turkey. It usually comes in three varieties - meat, cheese and potato - and is sold by the kilo at special burek restaurants. It's best enjoyed with a sour creamy drizzle on top and a large glass of thin plain yoghurt to drink. After visiting Sarajevo in August 2013 I came up with this recipe - my attempt to recreate the delicious savoury, sticky, buttery pies I had enjoyed in the Old Town. I recommend using large sheets of fine baklava pastry from the refrigerator section in a Turkish shop. Do not skimp on the onion, salt, pepper or butter - they are all essential!



Serves: 6

For the meat filling:

350g minced beef
350g minced veal
1 large onion, two if small, peeled and very finely diced
1 egg
1 egg yolk
25g melted butter
salt and pepper

To assemble:

approx. 6 large sheets fine filo pastry
c.125g melted butter
1 egg yolk
1 tbsp yoghurt or cream

For the drizzle:

85ml sour cream
85ml buttermilk
85ml plain yoghurt



1. A few hours before you want to bake, or the day before, make the filling by combining all ingredients. Mix very well with your hands and season generously with salt and pepper. Test a small patty by frying it in a little butter. It should taste peppery, oniony and well seasoned. Add more seasoning if needed. Let the mix rest in the fridge for the flavours to develop.
2. Heat the oven to 200C. Unwrap the filo and lay a slightly damp cloth over the top so the sheets don't dry out. Brush a c.10 inch round metal pie dish with some of the butter. Alternatively you can use a rectangular metal roasting tin.
3. Lay a sheet of filo in front of you on a clean work surface, long side horizontal. Brush with melted butter all over. Take one good handful of the filling and distribute it along the long side nearest you, half an inch from the edge. It should form a thin sausage, but doesn't need to be perfect. Roll the pastry up around the meat, rolling away from you, to form a thin roll, neither too tight nor too loose!
4. Using both hands, gently squeeze the roll in places so that the pastry slightly bunches up like a concertina. This makes it less likely to tear. Lay the roll around the edge of the tin, curving it to follow the contour. If you are using a rectangular tin, simply lay it in a straight line along one edge.
5. Repeat with remaining meat and pastry until you have filled the whole pan with rolls - in a spiral if using a round tin, or in neat rows if using a rectangular tin. Brush the top with any remaining melted butter.
6. Mix the egg yolk with the yoghurt or cream, plus a tiny drizzle of water if it is very thick, and brush over the top to glaze the pie.
7. Bake at 200C for about half an hour until the pie is puffed, golden brown and sizzling. Meanwhile make the drizzle by mixing together all the ingredients. Let the pie rest for five minutes before serving.