

11/26/10 - Bumuelos or Sephardic Beignet

Hot from the sizzling oil, dripping with warm, lemon scented, honey syrup the bumuelo is a Sephardic tradition. That first bite of sweet crispy goodness is worth the calorie conscious guilt I will feel after eating this traditional goodie.

Bumuelos also known as birmuelos, as burmuelos, depending on where Sephardic families are from, are the Jewish version of a doughnut or beignet. Since bumuelos originated in Spain, they traveled with Ladino (Judeo Spanish) speaking Jews in the 15th century to the Ottoman Empire as part of their traditional cuisine. Bumuelos have their counterparts in many other countries. This honey puff is known in Greece as loukoumades, and in Syria, as zalabieh.

Where I grew up in Seattle, Washington, we called them bumuelos and my Turkish decent mother made great ones. She had a special blue enamel pan that she reserved for deep frying French fries or Chanukah bumuelos, and we ate them golden brown, hot out of the oil, after pouring the special syrup on top. My mom or Nona as the kids call her is an ace at Sephardic baking including, borekas, baklava, and biscotios and is still going strong at 92. She wears a homemade terrycloth apron with pockets and her tan hands, still nimble, work quickly with the soft sticky dough. Today, I do that job with my mom at our family Chanukah dinner in sunny southern California.

This Chanukah, try including bumuelos in your Chanukah feast. It enhances a dinner of latkes and brisket or a dairy meal as well. While I was recipe testing last week I served them for desert after a meal of roast rack of veal with wild mushrooms, braised fennel, Brussels sprouts and baked yams.



Bumuelos

Makes 15-18 bumuelos, serves 6-8

1 envelope rapid rise yeast (2 teaspoons)

1 cup plus 1 tablespoon warm water

1 teaspoon sugar

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1/4 teaspoon sea salt

2 cups unbleached flour

Vegetable oil for deep frying, (I use about 2 quarts)

Syrup

1 cup water

1 cup sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup honey

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Place the yeast and sugar in a medium bowl. Pour in the warm water and stir. In a few minutes, when the yeast begins to foam, add the oil. Mix the salt into the flour and starting with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the flour, whisk it into the yeast and water. Add the flour in additions of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup each and mix until smooth and well blended. The dough will be a little loose and sticky. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Set the dough aside in



Prepare the syrup while you wait for the dough to rise. Place all the ingredients in a saucepan on medium heat. When the sugar has dissolved, let the liquid boil for 5 minutes. Remove it from the heat. (You could make the syrup well ahead and just rewarm it.)

When the dough is ready, preheat the oil in a deep 8 quart saucepan pan or deep fat fryer to 360°-365°. The oil should be 3-4 inches deep. Prepare a small bowl with water for wetting your hands. Dough doesn't stick to wet hands.

With your right hand scoop up about 2 tablespoons of dough into your left hand, make a ball, and open a hole in the center with your thumbs. Then slide the dough

off your fingers into the hot oil. The dough will drop into the oil and then unfold into a freeform doughnut with a hole in the center. Fry on the first side until golden, then flip with a tongs, and fry until the second side is a beautiful gold color. Remove the bumuelo from the oil with a tongs and drain on paper towels.

Dip the bumuelos into the hot syrup and serve. Alternatively, you might pass the syrup and let the guests serve themselves.

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