

09/16/09 - Pumpkin Borekas

Petite Pumpkin Borekas

Borekas are the Sephardic Jewish version of the turnover or empanada. Turkish in origin, the Sephardic Jews adopted these pastries as their own. I make borekas with homemade dough, the way my mom and my grandmother did, and bake them until crisp and golden. Once a year for Jewish New Year, I make smaller versions filled with cinnamon-scented pumpkin. The kids at the table think of them as mini pumpkin pies, and they can easily eat five.

Make these up to 1 month ahead and freeze in an airtight container. To reheat, defrost, and heat on a baking sheet in a 300° F oven for 10 minutes.

Filling:

1 (28 ounce) can pure pumpkin

1 and 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 egg, beaten

Dough:

4 cups unbleached flour

2 teaspoons salt

3/4 cup safflower oil

1 cup ice water

Topping:

1 egg, beaten

1 cup sesame seeds

Stir filling ingredients together in a medium bowl. The filling should not be runny

and should retain its shape if mounded.

To make dough, measure 4 cups flour into a medium mixing bowl. Add salt and blend. Whisk the oil and water together in a small bowl. Stir liquid into flour with a fork. Using your hands, gently gather the dough into a ball. Squeeze the dough together but do not knead it like bread.

Divide the dough into pieces a little larger than an unshelled walnut. Roll each piece in your hands to make a smooth ball. Place the ball on a wood or stone surface and using a rolling pin, flatten it out into an even circle about 3 inches in diameter. Do not flour or grease the countertop. Take care not to roll over edges of the circles, as this will thin out the edges.



I roll out 2 sets 24 at a time. This number fits onto a baking sheet perfectly if you make three columns of 8. After you have your first 24 circles, place a small teaspoon or so of filling in the center of each. Fold circles in half and seal edges of the resulting half moon shapes by pressing down and then by twisting them into a rope like edge. This signature edge (*repulgo* in Ladino, Judeo Spanish) takes a little practice. Alternatively, use the tines of a fork to seal the edges. Make sure no pumpkin is oozing out, or the borekas will leak when baking. Repeat the rolling and filling with the rest of the balls.



Brush the top of each boreka with beaten egg and dip it in sesame seeds. Place on the baking sheet. I use a silicone baking sheet liner for easy clean up.

Bake borekas at 400° F for 15 to 20 minutes or until light golden. Remove from the oven and place each one gently on a cooling rack.

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