

# HOW TO MAKE KUNAFI

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**Difficulty Level:** Easy

**Time:** Preparation --- 20min

Cooking --- 40 min

**Yield:** 10-12 servings

# Introduction

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Every culture has a distinguished cuisine of food, drinks and desserts. In the Middle East for instance, the dessert dishes constitute a major part of the Middle Eastern cuisine. One of the most famous desserts and my personal favorite is the kunafa. The kunafa is a **Levantine** cheese pastry soaked in sweet sugar-based syrup, and is found in cuisines around the Eastern Mediterranean region. Kunafa is usually served during the holy month of **Ramadan** and during special events and occasions such as: weddings, engagement ceremonies and family gatherings.

The kunafa's beauty lies not only in its delightful taste, but also in its simplicity. This is a simple instruction set to help Middle Eastern Students, especially those who study abroad and miss the taste of Mediterranean dishes, on how to make the kunafa. Also, people interested in making international dishes and desserts would find this document helpful as well. The document starts with identifying all ingredients and materials required for making the kunafa. This is followed by step-by-step procedures of preparing both the dough and the filling. Images, notes, and feedback are provided alongside the steps to help readers to fully understand the recipe.

**Ramadan:** The ninth month of the Muslim year, during which strict fasting is observed from sunrise to sunset.

**Levantine:** A historical geographical term referring to a large area in the Eastern Mediterranean, the area formerly known as the Ottoman Empire

# Safety Information

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**Warning:** Do not attempt to begin the recipe unless you are at least 12 years old or have parental guidance.

**Food Allergy Notice:** Please be advice that the kunafa contains the following ingredients: wheat products, eggs, pistachios, and dairy products.

# What You Need



## Ingredients

*Note: Ingredients can be found in most International and Middle Eastern markets.*

- 1 lb (454 g) Akawi cheese – Mozzarella
- 2 cups (400 g) Granulated white sugar
- 1 cup (237 mL) Water
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) Lemon juice
- 1 tsp (10 mL) Rose water
- ½ cup (120 g) Ricotta cheese
- 1 Tbsp (15 mL) Unsalted butter (melted)
- ½ tsp (2.5 mL) Kunafa pastry colouring
- 1 lb (454 g) Kataifi shredded dough
- ½ cup (118 mL) Milk
- ¾ cup (187 mL) Unsalted butter (melted)
- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) Nuts/Pistachio (ground)

*Note: Tbsp is a tablespoon, and tsp is a teaspoon*



## Materials

- Mixing bowl
- Large Platter
- Spatula
- Small Pot
- Small sharp knife
- Kitchen hot pads

*Note: Use a consistent way of measuring the ingredients. I suggest using measuring cups and measuring spoons.*

# Step By Step Instructions

1

- Cut the Akawi cheese into 1 inch (2.5cm) cubes.
- Soak in cold water for 6 hours in the refrigerator.
- After soaking, drain the cheese, then shred it and combine with the ricotta cheese.

*Note: Cottage cheese acts as a good alternative if ricotta cheese is unavailable.*



2

- Preheat the oven to 350<sup>o</sup> F (175<sup>o</sup> C).

*Note: Make sure to choose the bake option if available.*



3

- Butter and color the bottom and sides of a pan with 1 tablespoon of melted butter and ½ a teaspoon of kunafa pastry coloring.

*Note: Orange food coloring can work as an alternative to the pastry coloring.*



4

- Cut the kataifi dough into 4 equal pieces.
- Add the milk and butter.
- Make sure there are no lumps and that the dough is fluffy.



5

- Place  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the kataifi in the pan.
- Press down and along the sides of the pan.



6

- Place all of the cheese.
- Level and press down.



7

- Cover with the remaining  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the kataifi.
- Press well with a spatula.

*Note: You can use the palm of your hands if you do not have a spatula. Please remember to clean your hands if you do decide to use them.*



8

- Bake in a preheated oven at 350° F (175° C)

*Caution: Be careful when opening the hot oven, you may get serious burns if you do not use kitchen hot pads or gloves. And remember to turn off the oven once you remove the kunafa.*



9

- Let the kunafa cool down for 10 minutes before switching it over to a large platter or cake stand.
- Decorate with nuts.



## Preparing The Syrup

1

- Place the small pot on the stove on high heat.

*Caution: Remember that the pot and stove are hot, so be careful when handling the pot to avoid burns, and turn off the stove when the syrup is ready.*



2

- Add one cup of water to the pot and let it reach the boiling point.



3

- Add 2 cups of sugar to the pot.



4

- Add 1 tablespoon of lemon juice.



5

- Add 1 teaspoon of rose water.

*Note: Other alternative such as vanilla extract or honey might be used to get a variation of the traditional kunafa taste.*



6

- Stir the mixture every other minute for 6 minutes.

*Note: The mixture should become more viscous and gluey.*



## Feedback

- The syrup mixture should be viscous as shown in the picture.



# Serving Suggestions

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The following steps show the traditional way of serving kunafa in the Middle East:

1

- Cut the kunafa into small sized cubes and place them on a clean plate.

*Caution: Be careful when handling and using the very sharp cutting knife to not cut yourself.*



2

- Pour the syrup over the kunafa cubes.

*Note: The syrup amount poured over the cubes can be varied depending on how sweet you want it.*



4

- Serve the kunafa and enjoy.

*Note: Kunafa is best served with a cup of mint tea or Arabic coffee.*





# Troubleshooting

*What should I do with leftover sugar syrup if I only used some amount of it?*

You can pour it into a small covered bowl and keep it in the fridge. It should be good to use for a couple of weeks. However, the syrup needs to be reheated when used again.

*Where should I store the leftover kunafa cubes?*

Store the kunafa in the fridge for up to 5 days.

# References

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<http://xawaash.com/?p=6888#sthash.S1QXxJZg.PiOrfgu9.dpbs>

<http://www.beyondtheplate.net/events/30for30/konafa-middle-eastern-delights/>