

Paskalya Çöreği (Easter Bread) **(V)**

Ingredients:

250 gr. (9 oz.) + 750gr. (1.6 lbs.) Flour
80 gr. (3 oz.) Fresh yeast
300 gr. (10.5 oz.) Water
400 gr. (14 oz.) Sugar
300 gr. (10.5 oz.) Butter
5 Eggs
1 Orange, zested and juiced
5 gr. (2 tsp.) Vanilla extract
5 gr. (1 tsp.) Cardamom, ground
5 gr. (1 tsp.) Mastic, pounded¹
5 gr. (1 tsp.) Mahlep²

For the top:

1 Egg, whisked
50 ml. (4 tbsp.) Milk
50gr. (½ cup) Peanuts, shelled and peeled

Instructions:

- Pre-heat the oven to 170C (340 F). In a large bowl mix the 250gr. (9 oz.) flour, fresh yeast and water, keep in a warm place for about 20 minutes.
- In the meantime, melt the butter in a small pot, add sugar and orange juice and heat for a little while until the sugar is dissolved. Do not boil. Take off the heat and cool slightly before adding the orange zests and eggs. Mix well. (Make sure the mixture is cool enough so that the eggs don't curdle)
- In a separate bowl, combine the 750gr. flour (1.6 lbs.) the yeast mixture and the egg mixture along with all the spices. Mix well until the dough is formed. Keep this the dough in the bowl, covered with plastic wrap or kitchen towel for 1 ½ hours in a warm place.
- Divide the dough into 3 equal pieces and keep covered on the kitchen counter for 30 minutes.
- Later, take each piece of dough and fold over a few times, and keep covered on the kitchen counter for another 30 minutes.
- Take the dough pieces and roll them into cylinders about 25cm (10 in.) bring them together on the kitchen counter and braid them, tucking the two ends slightly under the bread.
- Whisk the egg and milk. Brush this mixture on top of the bread. Sprinkle the peanuts and bake in the oven for about 30 minutes or until the top part has become golden brown.

1) *Mastic*: Mastic is a type of resin found on Mastic Tree (*Pistacia Lentiscus*). This aromatic is available in shops in the Spice Bazaar, or specialty spice shops found around the city in neighbourhood markets.

2) Mahlep: Mahlep is a natural preservative and aromatic that is used in sweet and savoury pastries. It is the grated seed of a certain type of cherry. Mahlep is available in any type of spice shop or in the baking sections of supermarket chains.