

BASBUSA

250 g unsalted butter
 ¾ cup caster sugar
 1 tsp vanilla sugar
 2 eggs
 2 cups fine semolina
 ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
 1 tsp baking powder
 ¾ cup yoghurt

Cream butter and sugar until pale and fluffy. Add vanilla.

Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each one.

Sift all dry ingredients twice and fold in the butter mixture alternatively with the yoghurt.

Pour into a well greased pan 20 x 30 cm.

Cook 180C for 30 minutes.

Pour over the syrup while the cake is still hot.

SYPRUP

2 cups sugar

1 1/2 cups water

1 tbsp lemon juice

Cook over high heat until sugar is completely dissolved. Allow to cool completely to room temperature.

This next step is very important: pour cold syrup over hot cake.

So what *is* Basbousa? – sent in by Claudia

Basbousa which literally translates ‘just a kiss’, is basically a syrupy semolina “cake,” with a prominent buttery flavour, a signature pleasantly sandy texture, made super moist with a generous shower of sugar syrup.

It originated in Egypt, but is also popular throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean under different names and variations like: Semolina Halva, Nammoura, Harissa and Revani to name a few.

So while they share the similarity of being a semolina based treat soaked in syrup, they tend to vary in flavour and texture from one country to the other.

Some recipes call for eggs, others add yogurt. Some add coconut, while others depend on citrus, spice or floral waters for flavor. Some go bold with butter or oil, while others are strictly in the ghee camp. Some are all about the cake-y fluffiness, while others are dense and fudgy. It is sometimes covered in nuts, and a dollop of eshta (country-style clotted cream) is always welcomed.

Okay...first things first. Ingredients:

- **Semolina (aka Semeed in Arabic):** Is the heart and soul of basbousa. It's what gives it structure and that signature sandy texture. It's a type of flour made from durum wheat and is commonly used for making pasta. It is extremely high in gluten, which explains why a lot of basbousas can come out tough, and brick-like. With the right treatment, gluten development can be kept to a minimum, yielding super soft results. For this recipe, you'll want to stick with medium grind semolina.
- **Ghee:** It is the fat of choice here and the main essence of an authentic Egyptian basbousa. Since basbousa doesn't have a lot going on in terms of flavor, the taste of ghee really comes through. So your basbousa will taste as good as your ghee is, so choose the brand you love the most
- **Unsweetened Shredded Coconut (aka desiccated coconut):** I know that pastry shop basbousas don't taste like coconut, but trust me on this...most basbousas you've been eating contain coconut, you just don't know it. The coconut amount here is very little, so the taste is very subtle, and if you didn't know it was there, you wouldn't be able to detect it. It adds a flavor dimension, that wouldn't be present without it; that special somethin' somethin' you can't put your finger on.
- You'll find that most basbousa recipes, will have you pour boiling hot syrup over the hot basbousa, but here we're breaking the rules. Hot syrup causes the basbousa to seize and turn rock hard, so make sure it's cooled down to room temperature.