

Going off the Grid: Feteer Meshaltet

I should actually call this post: "Getting Back to My Roots" because Egyptian pastries are really where I started my baking adventures.



I always had difficulty getting a nice tender pastry when making feteer meshaltet. It usually ended up thick and tough -especially the outer layers. I'd been taught to roll out the dough on a floured surface and then suddenly I changed tack. I rolled out the dough on a surface coated with clarified butter and voila! Much more tender pastry.

The first go with a buttered surface resulted in a nice flaky pastry with tender layers but the outside was still a little too crisp for my liking. However, I was closer.

I realized that two things were making my surface crisp. One was that I was drizzling butter on the top of the pastry right before I put it into the oven. The other thing that helped was laying a towel over the pastry after it was finished baking to allow it to steam the top a little.

3 cups flour

1 cup lukewarm water

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

Start in your mixer with your dough hook at “stir” until it becomes a shaggy dough then turn up to setting “4” and knead for another 2-3 minutes. Let rest at room temp for 1/2 hour to 1 hour.

Set your oven to 500F and grease your 10” cake pan or pizza pan with clarified butter. Grease your work surface with clarified butter as well.

Roll out your dough initially with a wooden rolling pin. My marble rolling pin proved to be too heavy. Once you get it flattened out a bit start stretching out the rest with your hands – similar to stretching strudel dough but you gently lift and pull at the edges. The dough should be paper thin and might tear a little at the edges but don’t worry about that. Slather more clarified butter over the entire surface making sure to get the edges. Pull up one of the longest sides and bring it to the middle. Do the same for the other longest side. The edges should meet in the middle of your circle. Again, slather these newly exposed surfaces with clarified butter. Bring in the two shortest sides to meet in the middle and butter again. Think of creating an envelope.

If you run into tears along the edges you can handle them in two ways: 1) when you’re done rolling the whole thing out you can trim that thick/torn edge off with a knife or a pizza cutter; 2) when you do the first folds, you can tear these scraggly pieces off with your hands by grabbing one end and twisting. Honestly, you will still get a great product even if you do nothing but this is just a way of getting cleaner layers.

Repeat with the longest sides to rough form a rectangle then start folding up the rectangle into triangles similar to folding up a flag – remember to butter the newly exposed surfaces. Place the whole thing seam side down into your buttered pan and use your knuckles to gently stretch the dough to the edges of the pan.

Do not drizzle butter on top of your completed pastry – this gave me a crispier top layer. Bake at 500F for about 20-22 minutes until it gets a nice golden brown on top.

After baking, cover with a towel to “soften” the top of the pastry. You can also brush the top with butter right after baking for an even softer, richer texture.

Store in a plastic bag for 2-3 days at room temp or wrap with saran wrap and store in the freezer for up to a month. You can serve it with a variety of garnishes but the simplest and most popular is a tornado of confectioner’s sugar and drizzled honey over top.



I did not take pictures of the process because that would have required my hands be free or the help of my 2 year old but there are some great videos of “feteer flyers” making feteer in the streets of various Middle Eastern cities on youtube that will give you a good idea of what the dough looks like when it is stretched. I liken this process to a cross between the creation of a laminated dough such as puff pastry where you do several turns of the dough and strudel where you stretch the dough to a paper thin consistency. In taste and

texture it is very similar to puff pastry but since we're really only doing in essence 1-2 turns of the dough there are less layers and they are thicker.