

Vasilopita Recipe

New Year's Bread in honor of Saint Basil who performed the miracle of returning the riches to the people by baking their valuables into the sweetened bread. When it was sliced, each owner miraculously received the right valuable. Today a single coin is baked into the bread and the recipient has good luck for the coming year. The loaf is sliced carefully so that the whole loaf is distributed and each member of the family or party receives an equally sized slice. The first slices go to Saint Basil, to the home and to the art. High stakes!

MAHLEPI is ground from a seed from Syria.

MASTHICHA is the resin of a tree that grows on the island of Chios

INGREDIENTS (4 versions)

1. (From A Guide to Greek Traditions and Customs in America)

- 2 Envelopes dry yeast
- 1 T sugar
- 1/3 Cup warm water
- 1 Cup unsalted butter
- 1-1/2 Cups sugar
- 1-1/2 Cups whole milk
- 2 teaspoons machlepi
- (I also add 1 teaspoon ground cardamom)
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed masticha
- 5 eggs
- 9-10 Cups flour

(From Elly's recipe box, handwritten on index cards.)

2. Vasilopita (Evdoxia's)

- 1 pound flour
- 1 envelope yeast
- 1/4 pound sugar + a little with yeast
- 1/4 pound butter + a little extra
- 3 eggs, room temperature
- mahlepi
- sugar 1/4 lb = 1/2 cup

3. Anthoula's pita

- 5 pounds flour
- 4 cups sugar
- 6 packets 50% faster rapid rise dry yeast
- mastiha
- mahlepi
- 6 sticks butter
- 3 cups boiling water
- 12 eggs

- Mix all dry ingredients
- sugar, flour, dry yeast, mastiha, mahlepi - make well
- Pour in boiling water & mix with spoon
- Mix in boiling water and mix
- Pour in beaten eggs & mix and then knead
- Let rise for 2-3 hours
- Knead again & pour in trays

4. Tsourekia (Eleni Panayiotidis)

- 5 pounds flour + a little more
- 4 cups sugar
- 4 envelopes fast yeast
- 2 cups warm milk 1 cup water warm
- 1 pounds unsalted butter
- 8 eggs beaten
- mastiha 1 teaspoon
- vanilla 1/2 teaspoon
- 1 coffee cup anice
- mahlepi 1 teaspoon

METHOD -

Mix yeast with 1 T sugar in some warm water in a cup. Cover and let rest 10-15 minutes until yeast activates. Warm the butter, sugar, milk, machlepi and masticha in a pan until the butter melts and sugar dissolves. Cool. Beat 4 eggs until foamy. Put 2 cups of flour in a large bowl. Add cooled butter mixture, yeast, and eggs and stir. Add most of the remaining flour. While dough is still out 10 sticky, add 1 unbeaten egg. Continue to add flour until dough is very soft but no longer sticky. Knead dough about 10 minutes. Put in a lightly greased bowl, cover with a damp cloth, and let rise in a warm place for about 2 hours. Lightly grease the pan. When doubled, punch down the dough and lay into pan. Find a special coin, wrap it in a little foil and hide it in the bottom of the loaf. Cover and set for a second rise in the pan.

Using a little flour and water, make a paste that is like play-dough. Form into numbers of the New Year e.g. 2-0-1-8. Carefully place them in the center of the loaf. Brush top with egg wash and sprinkle with black and white sesame seeds.

Bake in oven pre-heated to 350 for about 40 minutes until it's browned. Reduce heat to 250 and bake until it's done. It'll be beautifully brown on top and sound hollow when tapped on bottom. Be sure it's cooked through but don't over bake.