TURKEY

Turkish Borek (Chicken Pie)

Turkish Borek with cheese and filling is one of the best savory pies around.

Ingredients

Filling:

- Ground chicken - 1/2 pound
- Olive oil - 1 tablespoon
- Garlic cloves - 4, minced
- Large eggs - 2
- Onion - 1/2, diced
- Frozen peas - 1/2 cup
- Mozzarella cheese - 1/2 cup, shredded
- Freshly ground black pepper - 1 teaspoon
- Cumin powder - 1/2 teaspoon
- Salt - 1/2 teaspoon
- Chilli powder - 1/2 teaspoon (optional)
- Ginger powder - 1/2 teaspoon (optional)
- Fresh parsley - as needed (I used about a handful)

Dough:

- Whole milk - 1 1/2 cups
- Yufka package or Phyllo - 1/2 (thaw in the refrigerator, overnight)
- Salt - 1/2 teaspoon
- Butter - 2 tablespoons melted
- Nigella or sesame seeds - 1/2 teaspoon (optional)

Method

01 Prepare the filling: Heat a skillet on medium high and add the olive oil. Add the onions and saute till they turn translucent. Add the spices for a minute and mix in the chicken. When the chicken is fully browned and cooked add the peas and parsley. Saute for a minute and turn off the stove.

02 Prepare the mixture for layering the dough: This is the mixture that helps the pastry layers stick to each other. Whisk milk, eggs, melted butter and salt in a small bowl. Set aside.

03 Preheat the oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.

04 Grease a 10 by 12 inch baking pan or something close in dimensions to it.

05 Open the package of yufka and separate half of it. The remaining pastry should be wrapped in a plastic wrap and refrigerate.

06 Assembly: Start layering the yufka in the greased pan. The dough size will be larger than the pan and that's by design. It traps the liquid inside when you fold the dough.

07 Lay the shortest side of the dough against the longest side of the pan and let the excess dough hang over the side of the pan. Place the second layer on the opposite side of the pan so that we have two dough layers with opposite sides hanging from the sides of the baking pan.

08 Using a spoon pour 2-3 tablespoons of the milk mixture over the dough and evenly spread the milky mixture with a brush. Close one of the overlapping sides, covering the milky mixture. Add 2-3 tablespoons of milk mixture on top of the covered dough and use the other side of the overlapping dough over the milky mixture.

Method, continued

09 Continue this layering process until you are half way through the dough. Now, spread the cheese over the top and place one more phyllo sheet, brush with the milk mixture, fold over the overlapping side and brush again.

10 Spread the filling evenly over the top. Place another dough sheet over the meat mixture, brush with milk mixture and continue layering until you are done with all the sheets. Add the milk mixture one last time on top and sprinkle the sesame or nigella seeds on top.

11 Bake: Place the pie in the preheated oven and bake it until the top of the pie is golden brown. It typically takes me about 30-35 minutes to bake.

12 When the pie is ready, take it out of the oven and let it rest for about 5 minutes. Slice and serve hot. You can freeze the remaining sliced pie in airtight boxes or bags and when ready just warm them up in the oven or airfryer. They turn out perfect every time.

Techniques and tips

- You can replace Yufka with phyllo dough. They even come packaged in a similar fashion so you can use the recipe proportions and directions as is for either one.
- Yufka is an unleavened flatbread from the Turkish cuisine. The dough is thinner than a tortilla and heartier than phyllo dough.
- The dough size will be larger than the pan and that's by design. It traps the liquid inside when you fold the dough.
- You could do a vegetarian version of this with spinach and cheese or attempt a fusion with Indian paneer and peas.
- You can freeze the remaining sliced pie in airtight boxes or bags and when ready just warm them up in the oven or airfryer. They turn out perfect every time.