

SAUDI ARABIA

"The sweet semolina cake called basboosa is beloved throughout the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia," Martin says. "My version, bright with lemon juice and fragrant with rose water, is quick to make, dense but moist, and best with a hefty dollop of whipped cream and a strong cup of tea."

Sweet Semolina Cake with Rose Water

Active 20 min

Total 3 hr plus overnight soaking; Makes One 8-inch cake

CAKE

1/4 cup ghee, melted, plus more for greasing

3 cups (17 oz.) fine durum semolina

1 1/4 cups sugar

1 Tbsp. baking powder

1 tsp. rose water

Slivered almonds, for garnish

SYRUP

1/2 cup sugar

1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice

1/4 tsp. rose water

Whipped cream, for serving

1. Make the cake

Grease an 8-inch round cake pan. In a large bowl, combine all of the ingredients except the almonds. Add 1 1/4 cups of warm water and mix with a wooden spoon until a thick batter forms. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and let rest at room temperature until set and semi-firm, about 30 minutes.

2. Preheat the oven to 325°.

Using the tip of a sharp paring knife, score the top of the cake in a diamond pattern, cutting 1/4 inch deep into the cake. Place a few almond slivers in each diamond, pressing gently to help them adhere. Bake the

cake for about 45 minutes, until golden and a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Transfer to a rack and let cool for 30 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, make the syrup

In a small saucepan, combine the sugar, lemon juice, rose water and 1/2 cup of water and bring to a simmer. Cook over moderate heat, stirring, until the sugar dissolves, about 2 minutes. Let cool.

4. Using a sharp paring knife, cut the cake along the score lines all the way to the bottom of the pan. Pour the syrup evenly all over the cake. Let the cake stand for at least 1 hour or overnight to absorb the syrup. Serve with whipped cream.

CHINA

"Who knew cooked cucumbers could be so delicious?" says Martin. "Northern China is the inspiration for my tangy, spicy recipe, which combines sautéed cucumbers with mushrooms, jalapeño, vinegar and a bit of sugar."

Hot and Sour Cucumbers

⌚ Total 30 min; Serves 4

2 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil

2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1 tsp. minced fresh ginger

4 oz. shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and thinly sliced

1 jalapeño, minced

2 Tbsp. unseasoned rice vinegar

1 Tbsp. light brown sugar

1 hothouse cucumber, sliced 1/2 inch thick on the diagonal

1 1/2 tsp. fresh lemon juice

Kosher salt

In a large nonstick skillet, heat the sesame oil. Add the garlic and ginger and cook over moderately high heat, stirring, until fragrant, 30 seconds. Add the mushrooms and jalapeño and cook, stirring, until the mushrooms start to soften, about 2 minutes. Stir in the vinegar, sugar, cucumber slices and 2 tablespoons of water and stir to coat in the sauce. Cover and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the cucumbers are tender and the sauce is thickened, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in the lemon juice and season with salt. Serve warm.

continued on p. 146

Pan from Mill Mercantile.