



COOKIES

COOKIES (*kolūča*, *nān-e kolūča*, *kolīča*) in Persia. Cookies were already mentioned in such early Persian works as Moḥammad b. Monawwar's *Asrār al-tawḥīd* (p. 150), Moḥammad Zāherī Samarqandī's *Sendbād-nāma* (p. 104), Ḥallāj Šīrāzī's *Dīvān-e aṭ'ema* (pp. 19, 20, 27, 73, 80, 152, 154, 182), Neẓāmī's *Laylī o Majnūn* (pp. 248, 278), and the poetry of Sūzanī Samarqandī (see Dehḵodā, s.v. *kolīča*; B. Forūzānfar's annotations to Bahā'-e Walad, *Ma'āref*, II, pp. 208-09), as well as in the dictionaries *Borhān-e qāṭe'* and *Farhang-e Ānand Rāj*.

Cookies are often specialties of particular regions in Persia (e.g., *nān-e berenjī* in Kermānšāh), though they may be found in other areas as well under different names and with some variations in the recipes. Particular types of cookies made in villages and small towns are, however, rarely known elsewhere. Some, like *kolūča-ye nowrūzī*, are typically made only for special occasions. Women and girls learn the art of baking cookies at home or in classes, and cookies are also made and sold in confectionary shops (*šīrīnī-forūšī*). Such homemade cookies as *nān-e panjerā'ī*, *gūš-e fil*, and *berestū* are considered to be of higher quality and are much in demand.

In this article the cookies most frequently made in major Persian cities today, both traditional types and those reflecting foreign influence, will be described. As in all baking, the quality depends on the quality of the ingredients and careful measurement and procedures. The dough is usually prepared by hand, only rarely by machine. Flour (usually bleached wheat flour, roasted chickpea flour, or rice flour) must be fresh and finely ground. A very fine sieve or cloth



is necessary for sifting rice and chickpea flour. Cookies are usually handmade in uniform size and shape. They are baked in a preheated oven. If they contain sufficient oil the cookie sheet need not be greased, and no special baking dish is required. If the cookies (especially biscuits) are to have a golden color, they are glazed with egg whites or yolks and milk.

Cookies made with wheat flour (*nān-e ārdī*), traditionally served at Nowrūz, are the prototypes of most Persian cookies or biscuits. The basic ingredients, beside flour, are oil, sugar, baking powder, and vanilla or ginger (*nān-e zanjafīlī*, ginger cookies). They are mixed and kneaded (*varz dādan*) into a soft dough (*kamīr*), which is covered with a cloth and allowed to rise for an hour or two. When the dough is ready it is rolled out on a board or table to a thickness of about 2 cm, then cut with round or oval cutters (*qāleb*), the traditional shape of which was a small ball. The cookies are then glazed with a brush (traditionally with chicken feathers), sprinkled with poppy seeds or *sīāh-dāna* (*Nigella sativa*), arranged on sheets, and baked at 350° F for 15-20 minutes. The following are variants of this basic type.

Blossom cookies (*nān-e šekūfa*) contain shredded fruit rinds or ginger, and cinnamon is used instead of vanilla. They were formerly made in most homes in the shape of small balls the size of hazel nuts, though in shops they were sold in different shapes.

Several types of almond cookies (*nān-e bādāmī*) were common in the past. Today they are made in most homes and are also sold in shops under such names as *hājī bādām*, *qorābīya*, *latīfa*, *bīskūvīt-e bādām*, and *nān-e bādām-e kānagī*. Homemade almond cookies contain blanched and ground almonds, egg whites, cardamom, and granulated or powdered sugar. The almonds are ground with the sugar, and beaten egg white is added. The dough is shaped into small balls with a teaspoon, and pistachio nuts are placed on top. In the oven they flatten out somewhat. The cooking time is very short, as the cookies should be light in color, not too brown. In the past almond cookies were made as small as possible, but today larger types are prepared and sold in shops. Large, round, light-brown versions without pistachios are a specialty of Tabrīz and are often given as travel gifts (*rahāvārd*, *sowgātī*). *Hājī bādām* are prepared in the same way but without egg whites. Instead, the yolks are beaten with sugar until they turn white, and the almonds and cardamom are then mixed in to form a paste. These cookies are typical of both Mašhad and Tabrīz and are also often given as travel gifts. The *qorābīya* contains some powdered bitter almonds in addition to the basic ingredients of *nān-e bādāmī*,



for the distinctive aroma that they provide. Traditionally equal amounts of sweet and bitter almonds were used, but in recent years the latter have been less available, and bitter-almond extract is used instead. This type is made primarily in Tabrīz. *Laṭīfas* are usually baked only at Nowrūz and are made with flour, powdered almonds, baking powder, cardamom, sugar, and oil in tiny half-moon or round shapes. The finished cookies are sprinkled with powdered sugar. *Bīskūvīt-e bādām* are made with ground almonds, sugar, flour, egg whites, baking powder, and butter, and the preparation is similar to that for *laṭīfas*; the dough is, however, placed in a special pastry bag and squeezed in balls onto the cookie sheet, then flattened with a wet fork, and baked until brown. Sometimes blanched orange peel and a few drops of red food coloring are added to make pink cookies. After the *bīskūvīts* are baked one side of each is dipped in melted chocolate and allowed to cool.

Rice-flour cookies (*nān-e berenjī*) are very popular but difficult to make. The dough consists of rice flour, powdered sugar, rose water, eggs, and oil. Eggs are beaten into an oil-and-sugar mixture one at a time; then the flour and rose water are added and the dough kneaded until soft. It is rolled out to a thickness of about 1 cm and shaped with a cookie cutter 2 cm in diameter. The tiny cookies are placed on a baking sheet and stamped with a special wooden tool, then sprinkled with ground pistachio nuts or *sīāh-dāna*. Traditionally small pieces of dough were flattened in the palm of one hand and imprinted with a thimble. *Nān-e berenjī* is sold in larger sizes in stores. The best *nān-e berenjī* comes from Kermānšāh, Qazvīn, and Shiraz, which have long been renowned for them. As they are very brittle, they must be stored between sheets of wax paper in wooden boxes. They are extremely popular as travel gifts. *Qors-e k̄voršīd* (sun cookies) is a type of *nān-e berenjī*, formerly made primarily in villages. Powdered saffron is dissolved in boiling water and added to the dough, which is made into balls the size of walnuts and stuffed with ground almonds and sugar, then imprinted with a thimble. This variant takes longer to bake than *nān-e berenjī*.

There are two kinds of *bereštūk*. The first, *bereštūk-e ārdī*, is made with flour browned in oil, to which sugar and cardamom are added; the mixture is flattened on square trays or in metal or plastic boxes. Once it has cooled, it is cut with a sharp knife into square or lozenge shapes and sprinkled with powdered sugar and if made at home also with chopped slivered pistachio nuts. For *bereštūk-e noḳoḳčī* roasted chickpea flour is used instead of wheat flour.



Window cookies (*nān-e panjera'ī*) owe their name to their resemblance to latticed windows. The dough is made with flour, rose water, wheat starch, eggs, and milk. A rosette iron mold is heated in hot oil, then dipped halfway into the mixture and returned to the oil for about two minutes; when done, the dough is shaken loose from the iron. The cookies are thus fried one by one, then sprinkled with a mixture of powdered sugar and cardamom. In recent years *nān-e panjera'ī* has also been made in the shapes of butterflies, cats, and flowers.

Nān-e pādarāzī is made with flour, sugar, oil, eggs, baking soda, salt, and sesame and poppy seeds. The dough is rolled out and cut 5-7 cm in diameter. The cookies are brushed with beaten eggs, sprinkled with the seeds, and baked until brown. This type is usually made only in bakeries and is a particular specialty of Mašhad.

Raisin cookies (*nān-e kešmešī*) are made with white flour, oil or butter, sugar, small red raisins, eggs, and vanilla or orange extract. Small walnut-sized pieces of dough are dropped onto a cookie sheet and baked for twenty minutes. As they tend to spread out and stick together, they must be separated with a sharp knife.

Butter cookies (*nān-e kara'ī* or *bīskūvīt-e kara'ī*) are made with white flour, sugar, baking powder, and lemon extract or grated lemon peel or vanilla. The dough is shaped into squares, which are sprinkled with pistachio nuts or sesame seeds.

Nān-e kolūča is made with flour, oil, baking soda, sugar, and vanilla or ginger and is a specialty of northern Persia. The dough is prepared as for *nān-e ārdī* and cut with a large round cookie cutter. A mixture of finely chopped walnuts (or coconut) and honey is placed in the middle and covered with another piece of dough and the edges pressed together, though formerly cookie cutters were not used; balls of dough were hollowed out and filled with walnuts and honey before sealing. Designs are stamped on the cookies, and a glaze of eggs and milk is brushed on the tops. The cookies turn white and brown in the oven.

Nān-e kāg is a specialty of Kermānšāh and is sold commercially. The ingredients are flour, water, eggs, milk, oil, and powdered sugar. The dough is rolled very thin, as for baklava, then cut into strips 5 cm wide, which are rolled. After baking they are sprinkled with powdered sugar and powdered cardamom.



Walnut cookies (*nān-e gerdū'ī*) are made with egg yolks, vanilla, sugar, chopped walnuts, and lemon powder or extract. The dough is dropped in pieces the size of hazelnuts onto waxed paper on a cookie sheet, then sprinkled with slivered pistachio nuts and baked for 10-15 minutes. This cookie should be quite white and small. It is made mostly for Nowrūz. A different variety is made with ground walnuts mixed with beaten egg whites and powdered sugar and poured onto waxed paper through special funnels. The cookies are topped with pistachios. The first kind is the more traditional.

Roasted chickpea-flour cookies (*nān-e noḳoḳčī* or *kolūča-ye noḳod*) also include oil, sugar, eggs, and powdered green cardamom. They are prepared by a method similar to that for *nān-e berenjī* and *nān-e ārdī*, but traditionally they were shaped like hazelnuts, and small designs were made with a thimble or the tip of a knife. Nowadays they are usually prepared with very small square, diamond, heart-shaped, or spade-shaped cutters and decorated with pistachio nuts.

Tea cookies (*nān-e čāyī*) used to be prepared in most villages and small cities at the same time that bread was being baked in common ovens and were sometimes served for breakfast. The ingredients are flour, sugar, oil, eggs (formerly) or milk (today), and baking powder or baking soda; the preparation is similar to that for *nān-e kara'ī*. The cookies are made into oval or nowadays often round shapes. Some families used to send these cookies, along with *lavāš* (see [bread](#)), to relatives and friends in Tehran as gifts. With minor changes they are also served at Nowrūz and on other occasions. As they are somewhat difficult to prepare and bake, most people prefer to buy them.

Coconut cookies (*nān-e nargīlī*) are prepared in two ways, either in the same way as *nān-e bādāmī*, with powdered coconut instead of almonds, or with flour, powdered coconut, sugar, and oil. The dough is shaped into small balls and topped with pistachio nuts. “Snake” cookies (*nān-e māri*) are delicate cookies that are very popular but difficult to make. The ingredients include rice flour, wheat flour, oil, sugar, and eggs, and they are prepared in the same way as *nān-e berenjī*. The dough is shaped into bars only about 1 cm wide and 10 cm long. They are then folded into the shape of a hollow bow, in the middle of which nigella seeds are sprinkled. When baked they should be white.



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