



HARISA

HARISA, a cooked dish made from a mixture of grains, usually half-ground wheat and barley, and meat, usually lamb and more recently sometimes beef, which is very similar to *ḥalim* (q.v.). Dehḵodā comments that “in our times, this dish is made of red meat and wheat and should be cooked until it has the smooth consistency of honey,” but he also quotes Ḥakim Moʿmen as remarking, in his *Toḥfa*, that his favorite Harisa is made of “chicken and wheat” (Dehḵodā, s.v. *Harisa*). In the *Āšpazi-e dawra-ye Šafawi* (p. 250), the following Safavid recipe is given for *harisa*: “Wheat should be half-ground and mixed with meat thrice its weight as well as rice, and then simmered. It must be stirred during the night, so that in the morning the wheat becomes imperceptible. It is then served with ground cinnamon, sugar, and oil (*rowḡan*).” Since harisa must be stirred throughout the night, until it reaches the right consistency to be served, a special wooden skimmer that looks like a small paddle, called *kafča*, was designed for this purpose (Boshāq Širāzi, p. 17).

The many different kinds of harisa are usually distinguished in name by an adjective referring to the specific type of grain or meat it contains. For instance, the *Āšpazi-e dawra-ye Šafawi* (p. 268-69) lists the following varieties: *harisa-ye berenj* (with rice), *harisa-ye ḡāz* (with goose), *harisa-ye jow* (with barley), *harisa-ye šir-berenj* (with a rice and milk mixture), *harisa-ye šir-obar[r]a* (with milk and lamb), *harisa-ye baṭ[ʔ]* (with duck), *harisa-ye kolang* (with crane), *harisa-ye gandom* (with wheat), *harisa-ye morḡ* (with chicken), and *harisa-ye maḡz-e pesta* (with pistachio).

Medieval Persian texts describe harisa as a popular, everyday meal which



cooks (*harisa-paz* or *harisa-gar*) would prepare in stalls (*harisa-pazi*) inside the bazaar (Dehḳodā). The *Tāriḳ-e Boḳārā* (p. 131) relates an account of a fire that started in the *harisa-pazi* of the bazaar of Bukhara. Beyhaqi's references to *harisa* (p. 99) indicate that it was eaten as a snack to accompany wine in banquets.

However, since the Safavid era, *ḥalim*, which differs very little from *harisa* (the sole difference is the exclusive use of stripped wheat in *ḥalim*), has replaced it in writings about Persian cuisine, to the extent that neither the *Sofra-ye aṭ'ema* by 'Ali-Akbar-Ḳān Āšpaz-bāši, nor the *Ṭabḳ-e Irani o farangi* of Rišār Ḳan (Richard Khan) Mo'addab-al-Molk from the Qajar era, make any reference to *harisa* at all, while the translation of the *Ketāb zahr al-rabi'* (p. 98) only refers to it in jest, remarking on how appetizing it is for breaking one's fast.

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