



KĀČĪ

KĀČĪ, a traditional Persian dish generally made of rice flour, cooking oil, sugar diluted in water, and turmeric or saffron with a sprinkling of *golāb* (rosewater) to give it a pleasant scent.

Kāči, which has been identified in certain classical dictionaries with *ḥariqa*, *qābulā*, *najira*, *ʿašida* (used in present-day Iraq), *saḳina*, and some other terms (Dehḳodā, s.v. *kāči*), seems to have been prepared in various ways, depending on locality, the period in question, and, to some extent, economic considerations regarding the ingredients. ‘Ali-Akbar Nafisi’s *Farhang* defines *kāči* as “an *āš* (a kind of pottage or thick soup) made of milk, and [also] an *āš* prepared from syrup or sugar mixed with flour and cooking oil, specially made for *zača*, i.e., a woman who has newly given birth to a child (Nafisi, s.v. *kāči*). The dictionary *Borhān-e Qāṭe’* defines it as “*halva-ye ravān* [liquefied halva, literally, ‘flowing or running halva’] made of [certain kinds of] medicine and *toḳm-hā-ye garm*” (heat-inducing seeds; see [HUMORALISM](#)). The dictionary of Ānandrāj also describes this dish as “flowing halva consumed by women” in general (see under *kāči* in both dictionaries). At least in two instances, Ṣufi Moḥammad of Herat, a 15th-century poet, alludes to *dušāb* (cooked grape syrup) as one of *kāči*’s ingredients (pp. 98, 120). This indicates that sometimes *dušāb* would be substituted for sugar. A kind of *kāči*, common in Hamadān, contains crushed wheat as one of its components (Adḳā’i, p. 212).

Some of the abovementioned ingredients cited in the dictionaries, such as the medicinal ones, milk and seeds, do not appear in present-day recipes. One of the many satirical verses about *kāči* written by *Boshāq Aṭ’ema* (d. 1423 or



1427), the renowned culinary poet, leaves no doubt that at his time certain seeds were used in this dish (for the verse, Moḥammad Pādšāh, s.v. *kāči*). It can therefore be surmised that, because *kāči* used to be eaten for its medicinal potential, certain medically beneficial seeds and herbs were added to its main components. Though used by most people at various times and on many occasions, *kāči* appears to have been mainly prepared for expectant mothers (Dehḵodā, s.v. *kāči*; *Dā'erat-al-ma'āref-e fārsi*, II/ 2118). There is also evidence of its use as a suitable dish for the sick. In his *Sofra-ye aṭ'ema*, Mirzā 'Ali-Akbar, Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's special cook, has a chapter on food for the sick (*ḡadā-ye bimārān*), where he describes a number of dishes, including *kāči*. He adds that *kāči* is given to *zā'u* (a woman in labor or who has just given birth), apparently counting such a woman among the sick, or at least those requiring special care. Another noticeable use of *kāči*, more a feature of village life than elsewhere, is as a ceremonial offering when invoking divine favor. Those cooking *kāči* for this purpose normally utter certain prayers while the dish is being prepared.

All the same, given that belief in the efficacy of traditional has been on the wane, *kāči* seems to have lost its medicinal and other functions, at least in urban society in Iran; hence the exclusion of seeds from its recipe. The dish itself is no longer so common in larger cities; and it could be said that the majority of the younger generation are hardly acquainted with it. Moreover, although the traditional manner of making *kāči* is still carried out in rural areas and among nomadic tribes, in towns and cities it is prepared by sautéing crushed rice in already heated cooking oil and then adding diluted sugar (almost twice as much as the quantity of the crushed rice). Once the mixture reaches a satisfactory thickness, saffron and rosewater are added. The mixture should not be allowed to boil for longer than two or three minutes before it is removed from heat. Another variety of *kāči* uses wheat flour instead or ground rice (Našāt, p. 41).

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