



ĶĀGINA

ĶĀGINA (from Per. *kāg*, egg, and *-ina*, related to), a traditional Persian dish, dating back at least to the 15th century. John Platts defines the term as a contracted form of *kāya+gina*, meaning fried eggs; a kind of dish made of eggs, an omelet, pancake (s.v. *kāgina*). In fact, *kāya* (*e*) in the sense of an ‘egg’ appears in many early specimens of Persian prose and poetry (see Dehḳodā, s.v. *kāya*).

In *Asrār-al-tawḥid* (q.v.), composed in the second half of the 12th century, *kāya-ye morḡ* clearly denotes both an egg and the simple meal made of it (Moḥammad b. Monawwar, I, p. 383). In the satirical poetry of the 15th century parodist, Boshāq-e Aṭ’ema (q.v.), the term *kāgina* appears at least in five places (pp. 19, 46, 82, 155, 241) with no indication of how it was prepared at the poet’s time. The “Fifteenth Plate of the Sixteenth Table” described in Mirzā ‘Ali-Akbar Āšpaz-bāši’s *Sofra-ye aṭ’ema* is *kāgina*, which, according to his recipe, is made by beating eggs with wheat flour and pouring the mixture onto preheated fat. Once it has set on one side, the mixture is turned over for the other side to set. Then *širini* (ground sugar or some syrup-like liquid) is added (pp. 55-56). The 19th-century dictionary, *Farhang-e Neẓām*, gives a similar description with the additional information that “occasionally sugar is added” (s.v. *kāgina*). In *Maḳzan al-adwiya*, we read that the Arabic *kabiš al-bayẓ* (literally, halva made with flour, honey, and fat, and sometimes with egg yolk) is the equivalent of Persian *kāgina*. It is very nutritious, hard to digest, stimulant of thick phlegm; and when mixed with certain medicinal substances



such as cinnamon, it could increase sexual potency (‘Aqili, p. 2535).

Regarding the ingredients and manner of making *kāgina* in Iran, the recipes vary in different cookbooks; most of the recipes are very similar to those for making a plain omelet, with various parts of the country following their own respective local tradition. While according to certain recipes flour is regarded as an essential ingredient, others, such as Najaf Daryā-bandari’s *Ketāb-e mostaṭāb*, regard it as a matter of choice. However, he discourages the use of flour in order to avoid too thick a texture. Some cookbooks present more sophisticated varieties of *kāgina*, not only with ground sugar and baking powder, but also with crumbled walnuts and pistachios or coconut, a small amount of powdered ginger, cinnamon, and cardamom.

Bibliography:

Mirzā ‘Ali-Akbar Khan Āšpaz-bāši, *Sofra-ye aṭ‘ema*, Tehran, 1974.

Mir Ḥosayn b. Hādi ‘Aqili Korāsāni, *Maḳzan al-adwia*, Tehran, 1954.

Jamāl-al-Din Boshāq-e Aṭ‘ema-ye Širāzi, *Kolliyāt*, ed. Maṣṣur Rastgār Fasā‘i, Tehran, 2003.

Sayyed Moḥammad-‘Ali Dā‘i-al-Eslām, *Farhang-e Neẓām*, 5 vols., Hyderabad, 1927-39.

‘Ali-Akbar Dehḳodā, *Loḡat-nāma*, 30 vols., Tehran, 1958-66.

Najaf Daryā-bandari, 2 vols., *Ketāb-e mostaṭāb-e āšpazi az sir tā piyāz*, Tehran, 2000.

Moḥammad b. Monawwar, *Asrār al-tawḥid*, 2 vols., ed. Moḥammad-Rezā Šafi‘i Kadkani, Tehran, 1997.

John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdū, Classical Hindī and English*, 3rd ed., Oxford, 1968.