



KOMĀJ



Figure 1. Photograph of Komāj.

KOMĀJ, a type of sweetened flat bread or pie, which originally camel drivers baked in a copper or earthenware pot with a cover, called *komāj-dān*, buried in hot ashes (Dehḵodā, s.v. *komāj*). *Komāj* bread is usually made with wheat flour and sugar but it is also made with rice flour (Moʿin, III, p. 3054). The dough is made with either water or milk. *Komāj* is mentioned in a couplet by Abu Eshāq Širāzi (BOSHĀQ AṬEʿMA, d. 827 or 830/1423 or 1427) in his *Divān-e aṭʿema* (Dehḵodā, s.v. *komāj*: *bahr-e kāči o ʿadas dar kāna-i bāšam moqim // bā komāj-e garm o yaḵni man ke bāšam dar safar* ‘I reside at home for the sake of *kāči* [a kind of thick soup] and lentils // why should I go away on a journey with warm *komāj* and *yaḵni* [a meat stew, see *ĀB-GUŠT*]).



In his *Kār-nāma dar bāb-e ṭabbāki wa ṣaṇ'at-e ān* (Manual on cooking and its craft), written in 927/1521, Ḥāji Moḥammad-‘Ali Bāvarči Baḡdādi devotes one chapter to *komāj* bread and pies including plain *komāj*, [quince komāj](#), and “bejeweled” *komāj*. Uncharacteristically for Persian cooking manuals (see [COOKBOOKS](#)) prior to the 20th century, Bāvarči’s recipes are very detailed, and he gives descriptions of ingredients for *komāj* and their quality, methods of preparing and baking *komāj*, and also methods of moving the cooked *komāj* onto porcelain platters (Ghanoonparvar, 2017, p. xi). In addition to the ingredients already mentioned, Bāvarči’s *komāj* include different kinds of nuts such as almonds and pistachios, yogurt, mastic, yeast, musk, rosewater, onions, boiled eggs, oil or butter, mutton, and chicken. Saffron is used in all his recipes and some include [cumin](#), coriander, and lemon juice. Unlike Bāvarči’s cooking manual, the other extant Safavid (q.v.) cookbook, *Māddat al-ḥayāt, resāla dar ‘elm-e ṭabbāki* (The substance of life, a treatise on the art of cooking), which was written by Nur-Allāh, a chef for [Shah ‘Abbās I](#) (r. 996-1038/1588-1629), does not even mention the word *komāj*, nor is the word mentioned in the 19th century *Sofra-ye aṭ‘ema* (comp. 1301/1883-84), written by Mirzā ‘Ali-Akbar Khan Āšpaz-bāši Kāšāni, chef at the court of Nāṣer-al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1264-1313/1848-96; [QAJAR DYNASTY xiv. Qajar Cuisine](#)).



Figure 2. Isfahan-style *komāj* (called *nān-e kāmāji*).
Photograph courtesy of M. R. Ghanoonparvar.

In contrast to the elaborate Safavid-era recipes for *komāj*, the modern versions of this food are relatively simple and are merely variations of Bāvarči’s plain *komāj*. Modern Persian cookbooks rarely include bread, including *komāj*, recipes. In several provinces including [Isfahan](#), Kurdistan, and

Māzandarān, *komāj* bread is still common. In Isfahan for instance, where this bread is called *n ān-e kāmāj i* or *n ān kāmāj i* (Figure 2), it is usually sold in special bakeries called *kamājpazi*. The round loaves are around 8 to 10 inches in diameter and about half an inch in thickness and are sprinkled with poppy or sesame seeds before baking. Homemade versions of *komāj* in Isfahan and also in Kurdistan are called *n ān-e rowḡani*, which is covered with sesame seeds before baking (Ghanoonparvar, 2006, 210-11). Both the bazaar-bought and homemade *komāj* include sparse amounts of saffron. The main ingredient in the *Māzandarān komāj* is rice flour, although a small amount of wheat flour is also added for the bread to hold together. Turmeric gives this version its color. Hamadan, Shiraz, and other cities also have their own variety of this bread, and in some cases they use dates or raisins for the topping. In most versions, the dough is prepared with milk rather than water. In contrast to the Isfahan *komāj*, the diameter of *komāj* in most other cities and provinces is similar to that of a large cookie.

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