

Poppy Seed Hamentashen

Uri Scheft, owner of Breads Bakery in New York City and Lehamim Bakery in Tel Aviv created this recipe. It is one of many inspiring recipes in his stunning new cookbook, *Breaking Breads: A New World of Israeli Baking*. I have adapted the quantity of the filling as I found it made way too much to fill the 40 hamentashen this dough yields.

Makes 40 hamentashen

Almond Shortbread Dough:

230 grams (2 sticks) cold butter

100 grams (1 scant cup) icing sugar

50 grams (¼ cup) granulated sugar

1½ large eggs (90 grams), beaten

400 grams (3 cups plus 2 Tablespoons), all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting and rolling

50 grams (½ cup) almond flour (I like Bob's Redmill brand)

5 grams (1 teaspoon) fine sea salt

Poppy Seed filling:

110 grams (¾ cup) poppy seeds

160 grams (⅔ cup) whole milk

55 grams (heaping ¼ cup) granulated sugar

Zest of ½ a lemon

22 grams (1 ½ teaspoons) unsalted butter

8 grams (1 ½ teaspoons) apricot jam

10 grams (2 Tablespoons) cake or muffin crumbs* (plain white or yellow cake or muffin works best)

Egg wash:

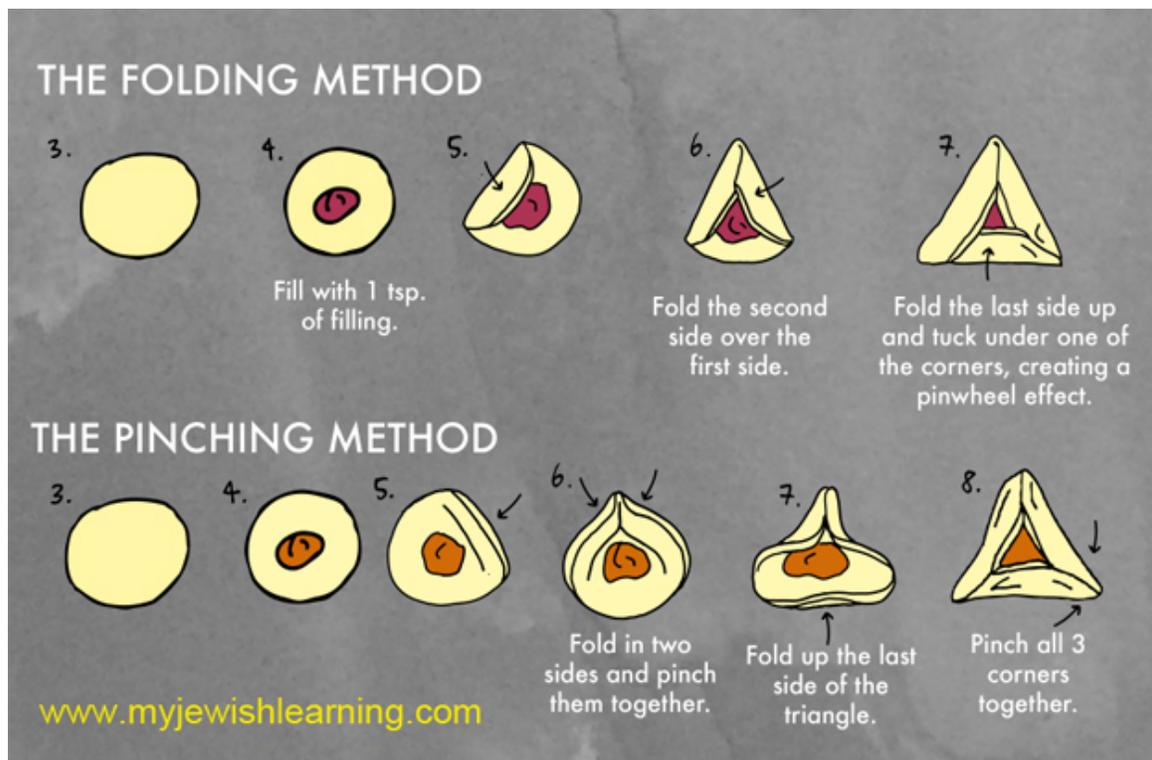
1 large egg

1 Tablespoon water

Pinch fine sea salt

1. Make almond shortbread dough: Set the butter on a piece of parchment paper and whack it with a rolling pin. You want to soften the butter, but keep it cold. Place the smashed butter, confectioners sugar and granulated sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, and mix on low speed until combined, about 30 seconds. Increase the speed to medium low and beat for 30 more seconds, until everything is well mixed, but not airy.

2. Add the beaten eggs and mix on low speed until just combined. Add the all purpose flour, almond flour and salt and mix just until almost combined. Dump dough out onto the counter and use your hands to fold and work the dough until it comes together. Finishing the dough by hand prevents overmixing and ensures a tender dough.
3. Divide dough into 2 pieces and roll each piece, between 2 sheets of parchment paper, into a 10 x 14 inch rectangle, about 1/8 inch thick. Chill rolled dough in fridge for one hour. (Dough will keep in fridge for 5 days or can be frozen for up to a month)
4. Make poppy seed filling: Grind poppy seeds in a coffee grinder or spice mill (you will need to do this in 3-4 batches) until they are finely ground, but not a paste. It will take about 45 seconds per batch. Pour milk and sugar in a medium sized saucepan and set over medium heat. Stir for about 2 minutes until sugar is dissolved. Add poppy seeds, lemon zest and butter. Turn down heat to low and cook stirring continuously for about 5 minutes, until the mixture thickens, the poppy seeds absorb all the milk and it starts to bubble. Don't be tempted to walk away. Keep stirring as it can burn easily. Remove pan from heat and stir in apricot jam and cake crumbs. Transfer mixture to a shallow bowl and cover surface directly with plastic wrap. Set aside to cool completely.
5. Adjust the oven racks to the upper and lower middle positions and preheat the oven to 350°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
6. Prepare egg wash: In a small bowl, whisk together egg, water and salt.
7. Remove one dough sheet from the fridge and place on work surface. Peel off top parchment sheet and gently lay it back in place. Flip the dough over; peel off and set top parchment layer aside. Use a 3 inch round cookie cutter (or upside down glass) to stamp out as many rounds as possible, leaving as little space between them as possible so that you do not have too many scraps. Place rounds on parchment lined baking sheet, setting them 1½ inches apart. Set scraps aside. Repeat with second sheet.
8. Gather scraps and roll between 2 sheets of parchment to an 1/8 inch thickness. Chill for 30 minutes and cut out more rounds. Place them on a parchment lined cookie sheet.
9. Use a pastry brush to brush the entire surface of each shortbread round with egg wash. Using a spoon or piping bag, place about 1 scant tablespoon of filling in the center of each round. Don't overfill hamentashen, or filling will ooze out when you bake them.
10. Hamentashen can be folded or pinched closed. Try a few of each kind to see which way you like better. I found an excellent tutorial on www.myjewishlearning.com.



11. Form hamentashen using the pinching or folding method, as pictured above.
12. Bake 2 trays of hamentashen at once. Bake for 8 minutes. Switch position of trays and bake for a further 8-9 minutes, until golden brown. Cool hamentashen on baking sheets set upon cooling racks. Store cooled hamentashen in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days.

Notes: The cake or muffin crumbs absorb any moisture in the filling and prevent the hamentashen dough from getting soggy. These hamentashen have a nice crisp bottom crust. I didn't have any cake or muffin crumbs on hand, so I bought a package of 6 inexpensive white cupcakes at the supermarket, scraped off the icing and ground them up in the food processor to make crumbs. I let the crumbs sit out at room temperature for a few hours to let them dry out a bit. Extra crumbs can be stashed in a freezer bag for another day.