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## Eid Mubarak, and Many Happy Returns

# Violations against the press in the Arab world

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (Hrinfo) is a central repository for human rights information and websites in Arabic throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Hrinfo depends on the Internet to free the activities of human rights organizations from the restrictions they now face. Hrinfo collects the publications, campaigns, reports, and statements of the various human rights organizations, so that the daily product of those organizations will be available in one place, updated daily.

**By: Arabic Network for Human Rights Information**

**UAE**  
The policies adopted by UAE towards human rights advocates are so contradicted with the statements of the government. While the government says that the country is tolerant and looking for development, the state harasses human rights activists and tries hard to silence them. Dr. Mohamed Al-Mansoury the chairman of UAE Human Rights Association was arrested and prohibited from traveling abroad. Also, Dr.

Mohamed Al-Roken suffered many security harassments.

Since 2004, Ministry of Social Affairs did not respond to two applications submitted by two human rights groups attempting to get the legal license for foundation. UAE Associations' Code binds the ministry to respond to such applications within 30 days.

**KSA**

This week witnesses the memory of Hady ben Said ben Hamad Al Matif, the Saudi citizen who was punished with death in 1996 as a result of charging him

with the so-called "defamation of the Prophet Muhammad" in December 1993.

The Judge was completely against Al Matif because he is a follower of Ismaeli Solimani belief. As a result he had no fair trial. The basic rules of fair trials were not considered, which means that the sentence award is not valid.

**SYRIA**

The Syrian security forces prevented with using force a peaceful strike which was supposed to take place before the Syrian Cabinet headquarter in the 44th memory of exceptional census in Syrian Haska governorate in 1962. It led to degrading more than 150 thousand Kurdish people from their Syrian nationalities. The strikers were beaten and insulted by security forces which arrested most of them.

Syrian authorities arrested the communist activist Eng. Ghassan Ismael

upon a report submitted by one of his students to the Security Forces.

The house of the citizen Mohamed Haout ben Omar in Kassa neighborhood of Halab city was penetrated by policemen. Haout was arrested and his family does not know where he is now and the reason why he was arrested.

Many trials were held this week. They include the trial of Anwar al-Biny and many other citizens only for adopting ancestor's religious ideas. The detainees are Jihad Abdullah, Feras Abdullah, Husam Abdullah, Mohamed Jamil, Ahmed Samak, Mostafa Ali Ka'ka, Fahed Adel Mohsen, Hassan Jasem Al-wasel, Yasser Bayoumi, Khedhr Aloush, Mazen Al-Khateb, and others.

**TUNISIA**

While Tunisian Association for Democratic Women calls for holding a seminar on the national campaign to fight poverty, state authorities put

Khalifa Shoshan on trial with the charge of attacking a police man in civil wear. That took place before the Ministry of Education headquarters which he was visiting to demand his right to work. Authorities also prevented the meeting of Benzart branch of Tunisia Bond for Human Rights with other three US diplomats who asked for visiting the Bond during their visit to Benzart.

**IRAQ**

Do not allow words to pass, if you want to keep Iraqi incidents unknown to the world. This is the slogan adopted by those who kidnap and kill journalists. In mid-September, unidentified gunmen kidnaped Iraqi news announcer; Mohamed Abdul Rahman who works for a local radio station. In another incident, unidentified gunmen attacked the house of journalist and human rights activist; Yasser Abdel Amer who works as the manager of Al-Mathni branch of Iraqi

Association for Journalists' Rights.

The corpse of Azad Mohamed Hassan, the reporter of Dar Al-Salam radio station was discovered seven days of abduction. Torture signs are clearly seen on his body.

**EGYPT**

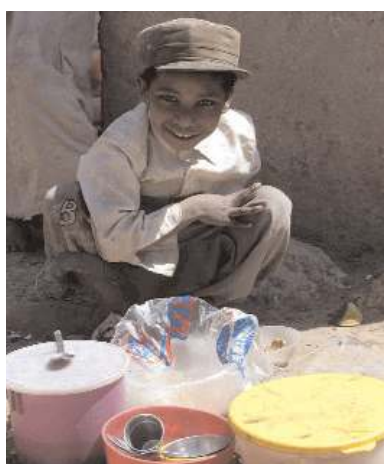
The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (Hrinfo) declares its solidarity with Essa and his colleagues and is taking part in defending them. Hrinfo calls upon the Egyptian community to confront attempts to terrorize and hinder Al-Dostour newspaper, which contributed to regaining trust in Egyptian independent press. Hrinfo thus calls upon Egyptian and international civil society, especially those defending freedom of expression, to support Al-Dostour and advocate the right to freedom of expression and press freedom in Egypt. The court postponed the case to 14 November 2006.

# Elections deprive the poor of Ramadan's tables

**By: Saddam Al-Ashmouri**

"Discontinuing a habit is a causes amenity" repeats the thousands of poor and needy families and orphans who were deprived of the free Ramadan meals they used to get in previous years. Many philanthropists and charitable societies used to throw Iftar feasts for the poor every day during the month of Ramadan. This was exercised in the previous years, but this year only a few groups continued this habit and many others stopped because they dedicated their money in support of the September elections campaigns. Many poor families who hoped to get foods and cloths from charitable societies during Ramadan were disappointed.

After many societies closed their doors on the face of the poor, some of them stayed at home awaiting for deliverance while others went out in search of



A little boy with empty dishes hoping for them to be filled during the charity Ramadan feasts

bread.

"Ramadan is a month of generosity, but people stopped being generous," said Muhsen Ali Al-Auni, a family's breadwinner who has no work. In the past, he used to rely on the Feeding the Faster Project in Ramadan. "Last Ramadan, there was a faster feeding project in our area, but there is nothing this year. I have just come from Al-Hasaba Area to Sana'a Trade Center after we heard of a Ramadan tent distributing meals. Having arrived at the center, everyone was given a modest meal, consisting of chicken, a handful of rice, two sambousas and two dates, "which are not enough for a faster to break the fasting," he complained.

"What about those having large families. How can they feed all the family members? There is no hope on our government. We don't know what to do. There are some societies distributing foods, but we cannot get there due to huge crowds," said Al-Auni.

Mohamed Abdullah Al-Tawili, a mosque preacher, who was in charge of running a feeding project in the previous years, remarked, "in the previous years, we used to collect donations in the mosque and go to traders to receive their support to prepare faster feeding tables and distribute meals to homes of the poor and the needy. But, this year, people have



Large families especially have a difficult time in earning food

become engaged in election campaigning before Ramadan. Also, when we went to traders and philanthropists, we found them engaged in the elections, and what we collected at the mosque is not enough to cover the cost of these projects."

Al-Tawili added: "like many other small societies that quit charities during this Ramadan for several reasons, we are not an official society, nor do we affiliate to any political party to support us. The elections held before Ramadan made people engaged in campaigning at the expense of charity."

Ali Saleh Al-Saghir, a tenant and one of those who depend on faster feeding projects in Ramadan, pointed out that he has five daughters, three sons and an ailing wife. He has been looking for work for a long time.

"In the previous years, we used to get meals from charitable societies, but when we contacted these societies before this Ramadan to receive cards for getting foods as usual, they said the support they used to receive in the past is stopped this year as people have been engaged in the elections," he explained.

Al-Saghir went on: "We then moved

to other societies to get food, but find huge crowds of people queuing for meals. We don't know whether the support we used to get was spent on election campaigning and those who used to give charities has become in need of charity. We hope elections are not conducted before Ramadan in the years to come."

Zakaria Al-Moayyad is the director of a charitable center and he said: "The Feeding the Faster Project this year was not expected because people have been extremely engaged in the elections."

Asked about the center's activities, Al-Moayyad replied: "the center runs five bakeries with their grinding machines, which distribute breads to the poor and needy families around the year. Also, the center runs other occasional activities such as the Feeding the Faster Project, as well as delivering wears and meats to homes of the poor"

With regard to the number of families that benefit from the center, Zakaria said: "The center sponsors around 1800 poor and needy families. When one comes to us saying they are needy, we form a committee and go to his home to then write a report on his living condition, in light of which he/she gets a card to get charities."

Asked about the resources of support, which the center depends on, he explained: "There are many unidentified philanthropists who give us 400 to 500 sacks of wheat and others donate money. Also, we collected donations in the mosque, but the collected sums of money are not enough. We still suffer the lack of support, compared to the increasing numbers of poor people. Having known the living condition of any person who visits the center, we give him/her charity. We invite all the philanthropists to visit the center to evaluate our performance."

Many families depend on the Charitable Center, run by Sheikh Mohamed Al-Moayyad, who is currently detained in a U.S. jail, but his charities are still reaching thousands of the poor and the needy.

In this respect, Umm Samira said, "when I heard of the detention of Al-Moayyad, I was shocked since I sustain four fatherless children. After the death of my husband, who left behind nothing, I, along with my children, have been

receiving aids including foods and wears from this center. We urge philanthropists and generous people to support the center and all the needy. Who will feed us if the center halts work, as the government gives us nothing, nor does it know that I am the breadwinner of four orphans who lost their father."

She expresses the thoughts of many who go to the same charity. "I pray to Allah to release Sheikh Mohamed Al-Moayyad because it is he who returned the smile to my orphans."

Sheikh Mohamed Al-Moayyad, one of the most famous philanthropists in Yemen, has been detained in a U.S. jail for more than three years. He was extradited from Germany to the US in 2003 and has been sentenced to 75 years in prison and fined US \$1.2 million for allegedly conspiring to support and fund al-Qaida and Hamas.

Al-Moayyad is widely respected in Yemen as a champion of the poor. His charities are making sure there is food on Ramadan tables.

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# Yemeni Women and the Eid's atmosphere

By: Fatima Al-Ajel  
fatimafjr@yahoo.com

The days before Eid, Yemenis are busier with the preparations of Eid. Yemeni women have the major responsibilities of welcoming Eid. They care for children and prepare their house to welcome guests and welcome Eid. Many women have unique ways to prepare for Eid.

## Last days of Ramadan, for Eid's preparations

Days before Eid some Yemeni women are busy cleaning houses, cooking different types of cakes and biscuits while others take the charge to buy all the children's requirements. Yemeni women are organized, they make a plan for their few days before Eid. They start with the children's Eid requests. Some say that girls' requests need more time in searching while boys only need simple things.

Kawkab Omar is a housewife and a mother of two girls and two boys and she says Eid is a special day for her boys and it's three days of excitement for her girls. But it's difficult work for her.

"My daughters aren't satisfied with simple things, they look for the new fashions," said Kawkab.

Some women gather together in one house to arrange the Eid tasks.

As a housewife Atigah Musaed likes the help she gets from other women.

"In last days of Ramadan I go to my neighbor Nadia to cook the cake together," she explains. "We help each other



Hands of a woman sticking biscuits with jam.

especially we make different types of biscuits."

Other relatives gather at the grandfather's house to prepare the cakes of Eid where mothers and aunts always cook the traditional cakes while the daughters cook the new cakes and biscuits. Some women follow special cooking programs on TV or read books to learn new recipes so they bring something new to their Eid.

The preparation of the house is one of the feature of Eid. The roofs of houses are full with cleaned furniture as it's a belief the house has to be clean on Eid and when guests come. So, when women prepare the houses by cleaning from top to bottom.

The women also like to present themselves as clean as well so after the cleaning work is complete they enter one of Yemen's natural saunas. Eid preparation leave everything clean and ready.

## A night before Eid

Most girls decorate their hands with nagash on the night of Eid either with khadab or by henna. Some girls visit the managasha; a woman who decorates bodies while others go to beauty centers. Nagash is a feature of Eid because it's impossible for a girl to celebrate Eid without decorated hands in most regions of Yemen. Some women who have finished the Eid preparations, go to managasha and make simple decoration on hands to feel Eid's festivities.

**Day of Eid, special visits for women and children**  
All numbers of Yemeni family get up early, men

and children wear the new clothes while women tidy the house and especially the guest's room; put the dishes of chocolates, cakes and biscuits on small tables, use different perfumes – especially the Al-Awdah's incense.

After Eid's prayer, women accept the visit of their relatives until mid-day. On Eid all men go with their children to visit their wife's relatives women and they present money to the women and the children as the Eid's gift which called "Al-Asib" or "Al-Eidea."

Children visit the neighbors to say "Eid Moobarek" – Happy Eid – and eat chocolates and receive more gifts. On Eid women and children acquire money as a gift from male relatives.

Afternoon of the first day is the time for women to visit family. Women return to their old family's house, which is the house of the grandfather as a traditional customs. Women use Eid as a great opportunity for social visits, they arrange many visits for friends, neighbors.

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Some girls with sleepy eyes wait their turn to decorate and others have been decorated.



A decorator busy decorating girls hands.

# Ramadan: The season of sweet

By: Yemen Times Staff  
Taiz Bureau

In Ramadan, sweet is thought of as the bride of the meal table due to its taste and nutritional value for the faster. As Ramadan is the month of generosity and charity, people buy different kinds of foods, as if they want to make use of the chance. Sweet is one of the most favourable popular and Arab meals during the holy month.

People have their own taste; some have Vermicelli, Kunafa and Rawani (local dishes) everyday while others prefer different kinds of sweets like jelly and cream. One hardly finds any meal table in Ramadan without sweets. Here's a glimpse into people's opinions regarding their tendency toward sweets in Ramadan.

## Habits and traditions

Umm Ahmad has been accustomed to the inherited traditions from her mother since her childhood with regard to preferring sweet as one of the meal items in Ramadan's table. She usually allocates a special budget for Ramadan's table and welcomes the holy month as though it is a visitor, who has been awaited for a long time. She is interested in preparing sweets and sambousa since she believes that these things are products of the skilled housewife. "I don't buy from the market, I make sweets and sambousa at home and both are always part of my table during Ramadan. This is an inherited habit from our forefathers," Ahmad added. "Sweets help Muslims

compensate for the energy lost owing to fasting during the daytime, and as the faster has a desire to have sweet following dinner, I prepare sweets for my family before Ramadan. Ramadan is the month of generosity, charity and each Yemeni house has the same meal style with only minor differences."

## Sweets following fasting

Umm Saleh talks about habits and traditions pursued in Aden and Abyan; originally this woman is from Abyan, but lives in Taiz. "Ramadan has special foods and sweets are pondered upon as the main dish in Ramadan's table, as people favour to have sweet following fasting. In my ancestral area, Abyan, locals include jelly, cream, vermicelli and rawani, in addition to cake mixed with honey in their tables. We never forget Shaoubia, which is an inherited habit from our forefathers," she explained.

## Ramadan's table should contain sweet

As Ramadan is the month of fasting and abstaining from eating throughout the daytime, people prefer sweets, rich with calories, to compensate for the lost energy. Every housewife is interested in including sweet in Ramadan table.

Ramadan: Month of eating  
Sahar holds the view that Ramadan is a month of eating, which is totally different from other's viewpoints. "In Ramadan, people become infected with the hysteria of sweet and extravagance in sweet consumption. It is

impossible to find any table without sweet, and instead of being a month of worship and penitence, Ramadan tends to be a month of eating. This seems to be an odd habit in a month blessed by the Creator, as most of the families tend to be engaged in making meals and various kinds of sweets," she said.

"Housewives spend around 4 hours in kitchens to prepare their delicacies, which the family members enjoy after breaking the fast. I oppose this habit as one can compensate for fluids the body lost during fasting with a small slice of sweet. I think most of these meals are unhealthy and harmful," Sahar remarked.

## Social habit; not Prophetic Sunna

When we consult the Sunna of Prophet Mohamed, we feel that one to three dates plus a cup of water is enough for breaking the fast. However, every era has its demands of the time, which is why we cannot say eating sweets in Ramadan is a kind of luxury. Most of the families with low and averaged income consider the fasting month the only opportunity before to exploit and satisfy their appetites. In contrast, the well-off families see that sweets are ordinary things as they have them everyday, in Ramadan and in other months. They consider them to be a complementary meal item to Ramadan's table, however, they allocate the biggest budget for the consumption of sweet during the holy month.

**Purchasing rate high in Ramadan**  
People in Ramadan buy everything

related with the Iftar meal, particularly sweets, as including sweet in Ramadan's table has become a vital habit, which people cannot dispense with. "I cannot break my fast without any prepared jelly or cream," said Adnan Al-Shara'abi, a grocer. "People's turnout to buy sweets during the holy month is not a strange thing and many call Ramadan the month of sweet."

## Extravagance

Dawood, a grocer, mentioned that people turn to be extravagant while buying Ramadan foods. "At my grocery, I only sell the top quality foodstuffs during Ramadan," he said. "Ramadan has its special flavour tasted by fasters. People prefer to buy large quantities of sweets as a kind of luxury, however, I think that this is extravagance, as a small amount of food and drink is enough for the faster. Ramadan is a month of worshiping and repentance, not a month of eating and gratifying one's appetite."

"I oppose the extravagant consumption of sweets as such may be harmful to the stomach," he noted, citing Hadith of Prophet Mohamed, who was quoted as saying: "We are people when we eat, we don't feel that our stomachs are full."

Ramadan is the month of mercy, worship, love, repentance and forgiving. It is the month of feeding the poor the needy and making the family bonds stronger. Ramadan is a month of worshiping, as well as a month of luxury, i.e. to have sweets but with rational consumption.

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# The real Ramadan is here in the U.S.

Taqir Washington

## Disagreement on the Beginning of Ramadan

"We live in the United States, not in Saudi Arabia or Egypt, we should not start fasting with either of them."

Those were the words I overheard during a passionate discussion between two of my students at the University of Maryland, after finishing our Arabic lesson last Tuesday morning, the first day of the holy month of Ramadan in many Islamic and Arab countries and the last day of Shaba'an in the United States and some other countries.

One of the students chose to fast with Saudi Arabia, while the other preferred to wait until the next day in order to fast according to the fatwa issued by the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), which is considered one of the largest Islamic organizations in America and Canada. It appears that the disagreement over the beginning of the month of fasting and the chaos that pervades the Muslim community in determining the beginning of the holy month have been customary and common matters here in the U.S. This is due to discrepancies between local mosques, as well as the lack of a single, definite, and binding set of criteria for the whole Muslim community.

ISNA declared that the beginning of Ramadan in the U.S. and Canada was on Wednesday, October 5, based on the fact that the crescent moon was not clearly seen in North America. At the same time, most Arab and Muslim countries announced that Tuesday, October 4 was the first day of Ramadan, which encouraged many American Muslims to begin fasting on Tuesday.

## Bush Sends Ramadan Greetings to Muslims

Since the beginning of the war on terror, President Bush has been keen on sending his greetings to Muslims on various occasions - notably religious feasts - and praising the role played by the Muslim community in making



America a stronger and more hopeful place. In a statement released by the White House on Wednesday, October 4, Bush sent his warmest greetings to Muslims in the U.S. and around the world at the outset of the holy month. In the statement, Bush described the month of Ramadan as the holiest month of the Muslim year and the month of fasting and prayer, as well as an occasion to remember the less fortunate. Bush also said that America has been blessed by the contributions of people of many different faiths, and that Muslim citizens have helped make

America a stronger and more hopeful place through their faith, generosity,

and compassion. Apart from the White House's official statement, American educational institutions have also provided information on Ramadan and offered greetings to Muslims as well. For example, a deputy dean at a university in Washington sent such a greeting to students and teachers at the university, informing them that Ramadan coincided with the eve of the Hebrew New Year this year. He praised the fact that religious diversity exists on the university campus. In addition to this, the American media, notably the newspapers, have become increasingly concerned with announcing the

beginning of Ramadan and of informing readers of the rituals associated with Ramadan and the month's significance to Muslims.

## Ramadan in the Eyes of American Muslims

Sherif Mustafa, owner of a Middle Eastern coffee shop in the suburb of Alexandria near Washington, said that Ramadan is the busiest month of the year for him. He said he works more during the month of Ramadan because the coffee shop must be ready with khushaf (a Middle Eastern sweet dish) and other delicious meals for which Ramadan is famous, hours before the

iftar, or the daily breaking of the fast at sundown. He added that the number of his customer doubles in Ramadan and that his working hours extend well into the early morning.

As for the type of customers during Ramadan, Sherif said that most of them are Arab immigrants who try to reenact the celebration of Ramadan as it takes place in their homelands by spending time in an Arab atmosphere and staying up late watching Arab satellite channels, smoking shisha (a tobacco hookah), and eating Middle Eastern sweets such as kanafa and aatayaf.

Dina Elhefnawi, who has lived in the U.S. since 1985, said that she senses the genuine and true meaning of Ramadan here in the U.S. and not in the Arab or Islamic world. Back in Egypt, where she grew up, she said that people waste the true significance of Ramadan by sleeping for long hours and being careless about work ethics such as punctuality and accuracy at work. In addition to that, she said there is sheer extravagance in preparing iftar banquets, to the extent that we can call Ramadan in the Arab world the month of gluttony instead of the month of fasting.

Reda Kraazy, a Tunisian who came to the United States a year ago, agreed. He added that productivity in the Arab world not only decreases in Ramadan, but that the rate of consumption increases significantly at the same time. This poorly reflects the true image of Ramadan and obscures its true essence and values.

As for the merits of Ramadan and its influence on the life of American Muslims, Elhefnawi said that in a serious country like the United States, Ramadan represents an opportunity to take a break and strengthen family and social ties. During the month of Ramadan, the Muslim family has thirty chances to gather with all family members at the same table at the same time. Whereas American families gather only once a year to have dinner

on Thanksgiving, American Muslims have one whole month.

On the social level, Ramadan is considered a rare chance to keep in touch with friends and acquaintances through the exchange of Ramadan greetings, visits to friends and family, and extending invitations to iftar meals.

As for the impact of Ramadan on the coming generations in the Arab community, Elhefnawi said she was surprised by the behavior of her children during Ramadan. She said they exercised strong wills and showed pride for their Islamic identities among their peers at school. She added that her children told the school administration that they would not eat lunch because they were fasting. Not only were they not ridiculed by their school mates, but some of the students offered to fast with them. Apart from the increased activity associated with the rituals of Ramadan, such as fasting, praying, and the giving of alms, Muslims also stress the importance of the strength of family and social ties during the month. Throughout the month, Arab and Islamic institutions also seek to make the most out of the opportunities presented by Ramadan. The Muslim Students Association (MSA) in many American universities conduct various activities, such as hosting iftars for all students, Muslims and non-Muslims, holding seminars on Islam, and preparing special programs for Muslim students that include iftars, prayer, and reading of the holy Quran. As for mosques in America, Ramadan becomes similar to a continuous festival, as many people of different races and ages frequent the mosques throughout the month.

If we look beyond the disagreements within the Muslim community about determining the beginning of Ramadan in the U.S., it is an ideal time for the true essence of fasting to emerge. Unlike in the Islamic world, in the U.S. the individual's choice to fast stems from personal faith and not from laws or social conventions!

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## Eid yummies

### Coloured Eid cookies

#### Ingredients

- 7 eggs
- One cup of butter
- One cup starch
- One-cup flour
- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- one tspn coco powder
- 3 cups sugar
- One vanilla flavour
- Jam or marmalade
- Grounded coconut for decoration
- 2 spoons oil

#### Instructions:

1. Blend the butter well until it becomes white and creamy
2. Add the three cups of sugar gradually while continuing to mix
3. Add the eggs while continuing to blend but one egg at a time
4. Add the vanilla and the backing powder

5. Now add the flour and starch alternatively one spoon at a time and mix continuously. You will need to start mixing with your hand when the dough becomes tough
6. Make sure you get a flexible and homogenous
7. Cut it into two equal parts
8. Mix the coco powder with one part
9. Heat the oven to medium level
10. Start making the shapes using the cookie machine with both the chocolate and white dough
11. Wipe the oven plan with oil and place the cookie pieces
12. Bake until they become golden or when cooked
13. Let them cool and remove them from the oven flat
14. Take one yellow cookie and one chocolate one and stick them together with jam



Coloured Eid cookies.

PHOTO BY FATIMA AL-AGEI

15. Dip the front of the coloured cookie with jam and then decorate with grounded coconut.

### Mamoul



Walnut or Pistachio filling mamoul



Date Filling mamoul

IMAGES COURTESY OF BAKLAVAFACORY.COM

Mamoul are Middle Eastern cookies served typically for special holidays such as Pascha. The cookies have three traditional fillings including walnut, pistachio and date. Each is formed in a specific designed wooden mold. The design on the cookie lets you know what the filling is inside.

To make the cookie the mold is floured, then round, filled, balls of dough are packed into the mold. The mold is rapped on the work surface to remove the cookie. Cookies are then baked, cooled and coated in powdered (confectioner's) sugar.

We have not found any historical reference yet but the recipe and the mold are very similar to Chinese moon cakes.

#### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup solid shortening
- 8 tablespoons or 4 ounces butter
- 1 cup flour, all purpose
- 2 cups semolina
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking power
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon rose flower water OR

- 1 tablespoon orange flower water
- 7 tablespoons water walnut, pistachio or date filling confectioners suga

#### Instructions

Do not expect the dough to be cohesive but it will be damp enough to form into balls to pack into the cookie molds. This recipe needs to be started a day ahead.

Melt shortening and butter together or use all butter if you wish a richer cookie. cool slightly. Mix flour, semolina, salt, baking powder and sugar together. Rub melted shortening into dough with fingertips until it is like fine soft meal.

Cover bowl and let it rest overnight. Combine flower waters with 7 tablespoons water and sprinkle over the dough. Toss lightly with a fork to distribute liquid evenly. Mix until just combined, like pie dough. (another person says to knead the dough well).

Dust maamoul molds well with flour. Invert and tap gently to remove excess flour. Estimate the amount of dough need to fill maamoul mold and make a ball of dough. Flatten it out slightly and place a good tablespoon of filling in center. Close dough around

filling to cover it. Pack ball into mold. Level off cookie even with the lip of the mold. Be sure you have not revealed filling or it will stick to the pan as it bakes.

Tap cookies out onto the work area with a sharp firm hit to the top of the mold. Transfer cookies to baking sheet with a spatula. Bake at 300 to 325deg F about 12 minutes, until barely colored. Cool.

Sprinkle with confectioners sugar before serving.

#### Walnut or Pistachio Filling

- 1 1/2 cups finely chopped walnuts or pistachios
- 2 Tablespoons orange or rose flower water
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

#### Date Filling

- 1 1/2 cups chopped dates
- 6 tablespoons butter

Cook dates with butter over low heat for 15-20 minutes. Mash occasionally until dates are completely pureed. Cool before filling.

Source: gourmetsleuth.com

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