Desserts / Greece

Galaktoboureko

Shatteringly crisp filo leaves encasing a thick, trembling vanilla semolina custard, drenched at the moment of emergence from the oven with cold lemon-scented syrup so it hisses and absorbs.

Time 120 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 1000 ml Whole milk
- ☐ 120 g Fine semolina
- ☐ 180 g Caster sugar (for custard)
- ☐ 4 pieces Eggs
- ☐ 30 g Unsalted butter (for custard)
- ☐ 8 ml Pure vanilla extract
- ☐ 400 g Filo pastry sheets
- ☐ 150 g Unsalted butter, melted (for filo)
- ☐ 300 g Sugar (for syrup)
- ☐ 200 ml Water (for syrup)
- ☐ 1 piece Lemon peel strip
- ☐ 15 ml Fresh lemon juice

Let's make it.

01 Combine the sugar, water, and lemon peel strip in a saucepan. Heat over medium, stirring only to dissolve the sugar. Once boiling, stop stirring and cook for 8-10 minutes until slightly syrupy. Remove the lemon peel, add the lemon juice, cook 1 minute more. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. This syrup must be cold when it meets the hot pastry — make it first or at least 1 hour ahead.

02 Heat the milk in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat until just simmering. Whisk the semolina, sugar, and eggs together thoroughly in a bowl. Slowly pour a ladleful of the hot milk into the egg mixture while whisking constantly (tempering). Pour the tempered egg mixture back into the hot milk, whisking constantly. Cook over medium heat, whisking without stopping, until the mixture thickens dramatically — it should pull away from the sides of the pan and hold a shape when a spoon is drawn through it, about 8-10 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in butter and vanilla. Immediately cover the surface with plastic wrap touching the custard to prevent a skin.

03 Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F). Butter a 30x20cm baking pan generously. Layer 8-10 sheets of filo in the base, brushing each sheet generously with melted butter before adding the next — including the very first sheet on the pan bottom. Let the edges hang over the sides. Pour the warm custard over the filo base and spread evenly. Fold the overhanging filo edges over the custard. Layer the remaining 8-10 filo sheets on top, again brushing each layer generously with butter. Tuck the edges down into the sides of the pan. Brush the top layer very generously with remaining butter. Score the top layers (not all the way through to the custard) in diamond or square shapes with a sharp knife.

04 Bake at 180°C for 45-55 minutes until the top is deeply golden and the filo is crisp all over. The custard filling will have puffed slightly and the pastry will be blistered and golden at the scored edges.

05 This is the defining moment. The pastry must be smoking hot and the syrup must be completely cold. Pour the cold syrup evenly and slowly over the entire surface of the just-from-the-oven galaktoboureko. The pastry will hiss, steam, and splutter — this is correct. Pour along the score marks first, then over the entire surface. Use all the syrup. Allow to rest for at least 45 minutes before cutting — the syrup needs time to penetrate the layers and the custard needs time to set firmly enough to slice.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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