Desserts / India

Gulab Jamun

Milk-solid dumplings fried to mahogany, then soaked in cardamom-rosewater syrup until swollen, sticky, and deeply fragrant — the most beloved Indian sweet, at once crisp and yielding, the syrup forcing its way to the very centre during the long soak.

Time 120 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 1 parts Full-fat milk powder
- ☐ 0.005 parts Baking soda
- ☐ 0.2 parts Warm whole milk (for binding)
- ☐ 1 parts Water (for syrup)
- ☐ 0.05 parts Rosewater
- ☐ 2 parts Neutral oil or ghee for deep-frying
- ☐ 0.15 parts All-purpose flour (maida)
- ☐ 0.08 parts Ghee (clarified butter)
- ☐ 1.5 parts Granulated sugar (for syrup)
- ☐ 0.01 parts Green cardamom pods, lightly crushed
- ☐ 0.001 parts Saffron strands

Let's make it.

01 Combine the sugar and water in a wide saucepan over medium heat. Stir until the sugar dissolves, then stop stirring. Add the crushed cardamom pods. Bring to a boil and simmer for 5 to 7 minutes until the syrup is slightly thickened but still pourable — it should feel lightly sticky on a cold plate but not set. Add the rosewater and saffron off the heat and stir once. The syrup must stay warm (not hot, not cold) when the fried dumplings are added — warm syrup penetrates fastest. Keep it on the lowest heat possible or on a warm burner.

02 Sift the milk powder, flour, and baking soda together into a bowl. Rub the ghee into the dry ingredients with your fingertips until the mixture resembles very fine breadcrumbs with no visible fat pockets. Add the warm milk a little at a time, mixing gently with a spatula, until the dough just comes together into a soft, pliable mass that does not stick to the bowl. Do not over-knead — work it only until it is smooth. The dough should feel like firm playdough: soft enough to roll without cracking, stiff enough to hold a perfectly smooth ball. Rest for 5 minutes covered.

03 Divide the dough into equal balls — roll each between your palms with smooth, even pressure until the surface is perfectly crack-free and round. Heat the frying oil in a deep pan to 130°C to 140°C (265–285°F) — this is the critical variable. The low temperature allows the dumplings to cook through slowly before the exterior burns. Add the balls in batches and fry, stirring and turning gently and continuously with a slotted spoon, for 12 to 15 minutes until uniformly deep mahogany-brown all over. They should increase noticeably in size during frying as the baking soda expands. Transfer directly into the warm syrup immediately.

04 Slide the hot dumplings into the warm syrup while still sizzling. They should be fully submerged — tilt the pan to redistribute if needed. Turn the heat off entirely and cover the pan. Let them soak undisturbed for a minimum of 2 hours at room temperature. During this time the dumplings expand further, the syrup is drawn to the centre by osmosis, and the exterior softens from crackly to yielding and syrup-saturated. Serve warm or at room temperature. They keep in the syrup for 3 days and improve on the second day.

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