



# PERSIAN HOME COOKING

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A COLLECTION OF MADE-EASY  
FAMILY RECIPES



Gilava Pour

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The moral right of the author has been asserted.



Salam,

My name is Gilava, I am here to share with you my favourite family recipes. I was born in Iran during the 80's war. We were forced to leave our home in Tehran and move to my father's village in Gilan, north of Iran. I grew up among the rice fields and tea plantations where I learned to look at the beautiful side of life during the most difficult times .

The whole family would sit together and share the same meal. My mum and aunties ran the kitchen and I worked as a little kitchen-hand helping them feed our huge extended family every day. I remember we cooked in pots as big as my height!

They taught me to always think about maximising the nourishment of every ingredients to take the most out of food.

Today I cook our family recipe cooking sauces right here in Brisbane with my beautiful team. We use the same traditional and slow cooked techniques that my aunties taught me... and the pots we use have not got any smaller.

This e-book is an evolving collection of some Persian classic and family recipes. All the recipes are vegetarian celebrating what earth gives us first hand.

A huge thanks to everyone who helped me in creation of this book especially :

Azi Parsa, Gareth Shuttleworth,  
Behnam Pour, Mary Vazirian.

*Gilava xx*

## A FEW THINGS BEFORE WE START

Most of the recipes use Exotic Bazaar cooking sauces as the base to shorten the time and steps towards delicious end result. Because who has time these days to start from scratch?

Measurements:

The recipes within this ebook use Australian standard cup and spoon sizes .

Symbols and Abbreviations



Gluten Free



Vegan Friendly



Total Cooking Time



Number of Serves

tbs = Tablespoon

tsp = Teaspoon

g = Grams

ml = Millilitres

Share your creation!

If you upload a photo of your finished recipe, be sure to tag me in the post. I would love to see what you create!

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## A SHOT OF SMILE

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One of the most commonly used spices in Persian cuisine is Saffron. Although mild in flavour, saffron brings a very distinct aroma to any dish, creating a wow factor would otherwise be missing. It is the most expensive spice on earth by weight, but a few strings can change the experience of your dish to a next level. Saffron is definitely value for money.

Not only is saffron a secret for the most delicious recipes, this magical spice is nature's anti-depressant. There is a saying in Iran, when a kid is too happy or silly they would say: "Did your mum put too much saffron in your rice today?"

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Lesson number one in Persian cooking is how to prepare the saffron. The colour and aroma of saffron is maximised when you first "bloom" it into the liquid form.

There are two ways to prepare saffron

1- In boiling water

2- In ice

I personally prefer the method with ice in more humid climates and boiling water in cooler climates.

Whichever method you choose, you will need to grind the saffron threads into powder using a small mortar & pestle.

Tip: To get the best result use a few grains of salt in with the saffron so the coarseness of salt helps with the grinding

## SAFFRON BLOOM

Grind saffron with a few grains of salt or a sugar cube

Option1- Add in a large ice cube

Option2- Add four table spoons of boiling water to the saffron and cover with foil

Let it sit for 5-10 minutes until the ice has melted and the colour of saffron has been difused





## CLASSIC RICE WITH TAHDIG



Rice is the main ingredient of Persian cuisine. There is so much debate around how to cook rice and there are many ways to cook the rice. However, the "proper" way follows the steps of soak, boil, drain & steam. The signature part of Persian rice is its famous bottom crust named Tahdig. Tahdig has many different types and can be made with rice, bread, potatoes, vegetables or batter. It is the part of the dinner gathering where everyone's eyes are fixed upon. You will be judged if you take too much of a big piece!

The key to making the perfect Tahdig is to have extra oil for greasing the bottom of a non-stick pot on a low heat.

### INGREDIENTS FOR RICE:

3 Cups Basmati or Long Grain Rice  
8 Tbsp Salt (don't worry it will get drained away)

### INGREDIENTS FOR RICE TAHDIG:

3 Tbsp Oil Or Ghee  
1/4 Tsp Grounded Saffron  
1/2 Cup Coconut Yoghurt  
1/4 Tsp Salt  
2 Tbsp Butter or Margarine



## METHOD :

1-Soak rice overnight for optimum results or a minimum of half an hour with 4 tbsp salt.

Meanwhile bloom the saffron (see page 07)

2-Boil 1 litre of water in a pot.

3-Drain away the salty water from the rice, then add the rice to boiling water.

4-When the water returns to boiling point and the rice starts to dance on the surface, drain the rice in colander. (usually 10 minutes).

## Tahdig :

5-Use a non-stick pot. Add the oil to pot and move in around to make sure the bottom of pot is covered with oil.

6- In a medium bowl mix 1 cup of parboiled rice, bloomed saffron, salt and the yoghurt together.

7-Spread the rice mix evenly to cover the bottom of your non stick pot.

8- Pour the rest of parboiled rice over the top.

9-Wrap the pot's lid with a tea towel (for steam absorption). Add 1/4 cup of boiling water to the pot. Close the lid.

10- Cook on a medium/high setting for the first 5 minutes. Then reduce the heat to low and cook for 30 minutes.

11- Remove the pot from stove. Place a large serving platter over the pot and carefully flip the rice onto the plate. The golden crusty Tahdig will be revealed on top with the perfectly cooked rice underneath.

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## Tips:

- To ensure your rice is ready at step 10, slightly wet your index finger then gently and quickly touch the middle side of the pot. If it immediately make a sizzle sound and dries out your finger, then it is ready. If the pot is not hot enough yet then leave it for a bit longer.
- Don't get tempted to increase the heat to get the tahdig faster, it could burn the bottom. This dish only achieves perfection with patience and time.
- Your first attempt may not be perfect but please don't be disheartened, this rice is worth your effort. The skill of preparing and cooking the Tahdig followed by the final reveal is a proud moment for anyone who loves food.



# GHORMEH SABZI WITH EXOTIC MUSHROOMS



40 mins



Ghormeh Sabzi is the most beloved Persian dish. Made with sauteed herbs, this earthy and aromatic classic is citrusy in taste and has all the five flavours that satisfy our taste buds.

Traditionally this dish is made with diced lamb and kidney beans. However the rich and buttery flavours of shiitake and pine mushrooms match the deep flavours of wilted herbs and Persian lime perfectly.

## INGREDIENTS:

100 g Shiitake Mushroom

100 g Swiss Brown Mushroom

200 g King Oyster Mushroom

1/2 cup Kidney Beans Dry or 200 g Cooked Kidney Beans

1 Jar Exotic Bazaar Ghormeh Sabzi - Persian Five Herbs & Lime

- Optional: 2 Persian Lime - Limoo

## METHOD

- 1- Dice the bottom part of king oyster mushroom into thick pieces , then dice the top part into quarters.
  - 2- Dice the rest of the mushrooms into quarters.
  - 3- If you are using dry kidney beans, boil the kidney beans in a large pot. Make sure you do not add any salt or acid to the water as it slows down the cooking process.
  - 4- Fry all the mushrooms lightly until golden.
  - 5- Empty in one jar of Exotic Bazaar Ghormeh-Sabzi with 100ml of water/stock.
- Optional: Add the pre soaked Persian Limes. (See the Tip for how to)
- 6- Drain and rinse the kidney beans, then add to the pot.
  - 7- Bring to boil and then simmer for 20 minutes.
  - 8-Serve Ghormeh Sabzi with rice and side salad shirazi (see recipe at page 21)
- 



## TIPS

- Feel free to use any other mushroom of your choice.
  - Also try this recipe with eggplants or tofu instead of mushrooms, following the same method.
- If you have decided to add the Persian Lime for extra tanginess, give them a rinse and using a knife or fork, poke one or two holes into the side of them. Place in a bowl with some boiling water, they will then release their unique flavours. Add the lime with its water in the recipe. If you cut the Limoo make sure to take the seeds out as the seeds are bitter.



## KHORESH GHEYMEH



Persian Aromatic Spice stew (Khoresh Gheymeh) is definitely one of the most popular dishes in Iran, Why? Because it is love at first bite. The secret lies in the blend of cinnamon, turmeric, pepper, rose water and dried lime. These ingredients create Gheymeh's unique tangy flavour and distinctive aroma. The addition of dried lime (Limoo) delivers a depth of tart flavour.

I don't usually eat them, but when they become soft I use my fork to squeeze and release their beautiful flavours and aroma. Traditionally Gheymeh is served with french fries (yes that's true) and saffron steamed rice.

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### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Jar Exotic Bazaar Gheymeh
- 2 Large Potatoes
- 200g Tofu
- Cooking oil of choice (for frying potatoes)
- 1Tbsp Ghee/Butter/Margarine
- 3 Persian Lime - Limoo (Optional)
- Salt & Pepper

## METHOD:

- 1-To make the french fries: Peel the potato and cut into thin strips and rinse under cold water to clean away the starch. Pat dry with a paper towel and sprinkle with some salt. Fry in oil until golden brown.
  - 2-Meanwhile If you are adding the Persian lime, wash then poke a few wholes in the limoos, put them in a bowl with half a cup of boiling water. Set aside.
  - 3-Cut the tofu in small 2 cm cubes. Then fry them lightly in the oil until golden.
  - 4-Add one jar of Gheymeh to the saucepan . Add in 100 ml of water.
  - 5-Empty in the Limoo and the water they have been soaked in.
  - 6- Add the fried tofu in.
  - 7- Bring to boil then simmer on medium heat for 15 minutes.
  - 8- Serve with the french fries. Enjoy this stew with aromatic saffron steamed rice (page 09) and Salad Shirazi (page 22).
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## Tips:

**To maximise the flavours of Persian Lime cut them in half and take the seeds out before adding to the dish.**

**To make it even more delicious try it with either of the following:**

- 1 large Eggplant. Cut into strips and fry separately with olive oil then serve on top of the Gheymeh when serving.
- 400g Mushrooms (my favourite are shiitake mushrooms), with 1 small capsicum sliced and diced.
- 400g Okra. Leave them whole and simmer to cook with Gheymeh.



# SPLIT PEA AND POTATO VEGGIE BALLS



40 mins



These cute little veggie balls are crispy on outside and soft inside. They really are simple to make and taste delicious with the sweet and sour walnut pomegranate sauce. A beautiful snack or entree dish.

## INGREDIENTS:

1 Grated Cooked Potato  
1 Grated Onion  
1/2 Cup Cooked Splitpeas  
4Tbsp Chickpea Flour  
1/2 Tsp Turmeric Powder  
Spray Olive Oil  
Salt & Pepper

## INGREDIENTS FOR DIP:

1 /2 Jar Exotic Bazaar Fesenjoon  
2 Tbsp Pomegranate Seeds

## METHOD:

Preheat your oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with parchment paper. Combine the veggie ball ingredients, mixing until they all stick together. Shape into little 3cm balls and place them on the baking tray. Spray lightly with olive oil. Bake them for 20-25 min until they are golden brown.

Gently heat up half a jar of Fesenjoon in a saucepan until warm and then transfer to a serving bowl. Sprinkle some pomegranate seeds on top then serve with freshly baked veggie balls.





# VEGETABLE TAGINE ON BULGUR



20 mins



## INGREDIENTS:

1 Jar Exotic Bazaar Tagine  
1 Cup Diced Mushrooms  
1 Cup Sliced Capsicum  
1 Medium Leek Sliced  
1 Can of Chickpeas

2 Cups Bulgur  
1 Tbsp Butter  
Salt & Pepper

## METHOD:

- 1- In a a medium frying pan, lightly fry the mushroom, capsicum, and leek.
- 2- Add the chickpeas and fry for few seconds.
- 3- Stir in one jar of Exotic Bazaar Tagine cooking sauce.
- 4- Add a little water into the jar, shake and add in.
- 5- Let it simmer for 15 min.
- 6- Meanwhile cook the bulgur:
  - Put the bulgur with four cups of water in a saucepan.
  - Add a pinch of salt and a knob of DF butter. Bring to boil.
  - Let it simmer with the lid on until bulgur is cooked and fluffy.
- 7- Serve the Tagine stew on bulgur, with a side of salad.

## Tips:

To make sure your bulgur isn't going mushy, start with less water, and add water gradually if needed.



## SALAD SHIRAZI



10 mins



Salad Shirazi is a Persian cucumber and tomato salad. This salad is named after the city of Shiraz, where Perspolis is located. This fresh tangy salad is a popular side dish found on every Persian dinner table.

### INGREDIENTS:

2 Lebanese Cucumber

1 Medium Firm Tomato

1/2 Red Onion

1 Tsp Dried Mint or Few Spring of Fresh Mint

Juice of 1 Lime

Salt & Pepper

### METHOD:

- 1- Peel the cucumbers and dice into very small cubes.
- 2- Dice the tomato and onion.
- 3- Mix cucumber, tomato, onion in serving bowl and sprinkle with the dried mint or chopped fresh mint.
- 4-Season with salt and pepper and drizzle lime juice.Toss gently to coat. Serve immediately.



## SABZI POLO WITH KALE CRUST



This herb infused queen of rice will have you coming back for more. Sabzi Polo (green rice) is the dish of spring. It is a staple for the Persian New Year's dinner table.

Traditionally this dish is made with fresh herbs, but here we use our Ghormeh Sabzi cooking sauce to take a shortcut through all the chopping and washing of the herbs. Also the tanginess of lime in Ghormeh Sabzi adds another layer of excitement to this all time favourite dish.

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### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Jar Exotic Bazaar Ghorme Sabzi
- 3 Cups Basmati Rice
- 4-5 Kale Leave
- 2 Tbsp Olive Oil

## METHOD:

- 1-Wash and soak rice overnight for optimum results or for a minimum of half an hour with 4 tbsp salt.
  - 2-Boil 1 litre of water in a pot with another 4 tbsp of salt.
  - 3-Drain the water from the soaked rice, add the rice to the boiling water.
  - 4-When water comes back to boil again and rice grains start dancing on the surface, drain the rice in a colander.
  - 5 -Use a non stick pot. Add the oil to pot and tilt in around to make sure the bottom of pot is covered with oil.
  - 6-Then sprinkle some salt and arrange the kale leaves to cover the bottom of your pot.
  - 7-Add a layer of Rice followed by a spoonful of Ghorme Sabzi Sauce. Repeat this process adding layers until you have used all of your rice and sauce. Gently mix the rice with the Ghorme Sabzi Sauce using a fork as you go.
  - 8-Put the lid on and let the rice and sauce mix steam gently for about 25 minutes on a medium heat. The kale leaves will be fried to form a beautiful crust aka the Tah-dig.
- 

## Tips:

### **Add one of my recommended additional ingredients:**

- 400g Sliced swiss brown mushrooms added during the laying process.
- 400g Firm tofu. Dice and fry separately in a little olive oil until golden brown add to Sabzi Polo during the layering process.
- 1 Large Eggplant. Cut into strips and fry separately with olive oil add on top of the Sabzi Polo when serving.



## GRILLED EGGPLANT BULGUR PILAF

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This recipe is inspired by Persian Gheymeh Bademjan (eggplant). I use bulgur in many of my recipes, it is a great source of fiber and protein and it's a welcomed change from eating rice. I just love it's rich and nutty flavour.

And so the great eggplant debate ... to salt or not to salt? I do not salt my eggplants before grilling them, in my humble opinion they just don't need it. I always leave the skin on, they become so delicious with those slightly charred edges, so tender yet full of flavour.

You can make the same recipe with Freekeh as well. Bulgur and Freekeh are both made of wheat. Bulgur is steamed before being cut, and Freekeh is roasted pre cut. This makes Freekeh a bit chewier with a more smoky flavour.

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### INGREDIENTS:

4 Eggplants Thin - Sliced Lengthways

1 Large Potato

Spray Oil or Cooking Oil

1 Jar Exotic Bazaar's Gheymeh

2 Cups Cooked Bulgur

1 Cup of Cherry Tomatoes

Handful of Parsley for Garnish

## METHOD:

- 1- Spray oil on eggplants and grill them in oven for 20 minutes fan force (180°C). After they turned golden, put them on paper towel to absorb extra oil.
- 2- Cut the potatoes in your desired shape (e.g. half moon or stars) then fry potatoes and set aside.
- 3- In a medium sized saucepan add 2 cups of boiling water, add the bulgur and bring to boil. Cover, then simmer for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally until tender. If your bulgur is tender but still has water remaining, drain the excess water.
- 4- Combine Exotic Bazaar's Gheymeh and cooked bulgur, stirring together for about 5 minutes.
- 5- Preheat oven to 180°C fan force.
- 6- Use a 20 cm cake tin and arrange the eggplants on the bottom. Make sure that there is no gap between eggplant slices.
- 7- Place the bulgur and gheymeh mix on top of the eggplants until the tin is filled.
- 8- Bake in oven for about 30 minutes.
- 9- Gently flip the grilled eggplant pilaff to a serving dish.
- 10- Garnish with the fried potatoes, cherry tomatoes and parsley.



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## Tips:

- For gluten free version of this recipe, you can replace bulgur with rice or quinoa.
- To get crispy top layer, after flipping the grilled eggplant pilaff, put it back in oven and grill for 5 minutes until the eggplants are golden.



# ROASTED PUMPKIN STUFFED WITH WALNUT POMEGRANATE SAUCE AND COUSCOUS



This is the dish to impress! Enjoy warm or cold, as the centrepiece for your dinner table or as a show stopping entree dish to begin the night. For a theatrical effect, serve the pumpkin whole on the table and cut into wedges in front of your guests. The pumpkin opens up like a flower.

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Whole Jack Pumpkin
- 1 Cup Pearl Couscous
- 2 Tbsp Olive Oil
- 1 Jar Exotic Bazaar Fesenjoon Sauce - Walnut & Pomegranate
- 1 Cup of Pre-cooked Lentils
- 1 Cup Baby Spinach
- 1/3 Cup Pomegranate Seeds
- 1 Tbsp Pomegranate Syrup



## **METHOD:**

### **Prepare the pumpkin**

- 1-Cut the top of your pumpkin like a lid and remove the seeds.
  - 2-Preheat oven to 180°C and line a baking Tray. Transfer the pumpkin bowl, with the lid to the baking tray (separated from each other).
  - 3-Spray them with olive oil and a sprinkle some salt, then bake for 35 - 40 minutes.
  - 4-Set aside to cool down.
- 

### **Prepare couscous mix**

- 1-Heat 2 tbsp of olive oil in a medium sized saucepan.
  - 2-Add couscous and stir for one minute.
  - 3-Add the Walnut & Pomegranate Fesenjoon sauce with the lentils and mix well.
  - 4-Add 1/2 cup of boiling water, reduce the heat and put the lid on. Cook for almost 20 minutes until the couscous is soft.
  - 5-Set aside to cool down.
- 

### **Stuff the pumpkin**

- 1-Dice the flesh from pumpkin lid.
  - 2-In a medium bowl mix together the couscous, diced pumpkin, pomegranate seeds and baby spinach.
  - 3-Put the salad mix inside the pumpkin. Fill in one spoon at the time and let it slightly overflow.
  - 4-Garnish with pomegranate seeds.
  - 5-Drizzle pomegranate syrup.
- 

### **Serve**

Cut the pumpkin into equal sized wedges. The pumpkin will open up like a flower and the salad mix will sit in the middle.



# MOUSSAKA



40 mins



Moussaka is a favourite Greek/Mediterranean dish similar to lasagna. If you have never tried this dish before it is super tasty, creamy and all round delicious. Also known as Greek lasagna, Moussaka is made with layers of eggplant instead of pasta. Traditionally this dish is made with meat, and béchamel sauce. But we made a lighter and healthier version with lentils and Exotic Bazaar's Turmeric & Pepper Tagine sauce.

## INGREDIENTS:

3 Large Eggplants

Olive Oil

1 Jar of Exotic Bazaar Tagine

3 Large Potatoes

2 Garlic Cloves

Salt & pepper

## METHOD:

- 1-Preheat oven to 180°C .
- 2-Remove the stalks from the eggplants and cut them lengthway into 1 cm thick slices.
- 3-Drizzle some olive oil and bake them for 20 minutes(Keep the oven warm for the second bake).
- 4-Meanwhile boil the potatoes until cooked.
- 5-Peel the potatoes skin off. Add salt, pepper, garlic, and olive oil, then mash them together until smooth.
- 6-To assemble Moussaka, use a small baking dish.
- 7-Start with a layer of eggplants. Then add an even layer of mashed potato. Next add half a jar of Exotic Bazaar Tagine and smooth out with a spatula. Repeat with another layer of eggplants and finish with mashed potato.
- 8-Bake in the 180°C hot oven for about 30 minutes or until golden brown.

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## Tips:

- You can slice the potatoes instead and bake them with your eggplants in the oven
- You can have more layers as you wish but make sure you finish it off with the mashed potatoes on the top layer.



# BASTANI SONNATI - SAFFRON ICE CREAM



20 mins



6

Bastani Sonnati translates to "Traditional Ice-Cream". The name suggests the history of this beautiful dessert. There are famous ice cream shops in Iran owned by family businesses that have been running for generations serving nothing but this scrumptious ice cream, each with a unique secret recipe. I have many beautiful memories with my friends gathering at one of these shops in Tehran for hours enjoying each others company and our many servings of this Bastani.

Here is my quick and easy dairy free version of this exotic ice cream.

## INGREDIENTS:

1 Litre of Coconut Ice Cream

1/2 Tsp Grounded Cardamom

1/4 Cup Rose Water

1/3 Cup Crushed Pistachios

1/4 Tsp Grounded Saffron - Bloomed (page 06)

## METHOD:

- 1-Let your ice cream soften at room temperature or in the fridge.
- 2-Add all the other ingredients and mix through the softened ice cream gently until thoroughly combined.
- 3-Place the ice cream back in freezer for at least 1 hour.
- 4-Once set garnish the Ice cream with dried rose petals.

\*\*As an alternative option you can use wafers to serve this as an ice-cream sandwich or on a cone.



## PERSIAN LOVE CAKE



40 mins



8

This is undoubtedly the most well known Persian cake around, it has many fans!. The cake harmoniously combines all of the most famous aromatic ingredients and I just love it.

This is my dairy and egg free version. You can chose to make it with or without icing and/or fairy floss garnish or just leave it plain.

I personally prefer it plain, without the icing.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Cup Sugar
- 1 Cup Coconut Yoghurt
- 1/2 Tsp Cardamom Powder
- 1/2 Cup Rose Water
- 2 Tsp Baking Powder
- 2 Cup Plain Flour
- 1/2 Cup Oil
- Pinch of Salt
- 2 Tsp Orange Blossom Water
- 3 Tbsp White Vinegar
- Zest of Half an Orange

### INGREDIENTS FOR SYRUP:

- 1/2 Cup Sugar
- 1/4 Cup Water
- Juice of 1 Orange
- 2 Tsp Rose Water

### GARNISH:

- 2 Tbsp Crushed Pistachio
- Edible Dried Rose Petals



## METHOD:

- 1-Line a bread loaf tin or 25 cm round cake tin.
  - 2-Preheat oven to 180°C.
  - 3-Mix the coconut yoghurt with sugar until sugar dissolved.
  - 4-Add cardamom, rose water, orange blossom water, orange zest and oil.
  - 5-Sift flour, baking powder and salt. Mix gently until it is combined (not too much).
  - 6-Pour the batter in to tin and bake for about 40 minutes until the skewer comes out clean.
  - 7-While the cake is baking prepare the syrup by mixing all ingredients in a saucepan and bring it to boil. Let it boil for 5 min and set aside.
  - 8-Transfer the cake cooling rack and brush with syrup while it is still warm.
- 

## Tips:

- To make the icing, mix 300 g of icing sugar with rose water little by little until a yoghurt consistency is achieved. To go an extra mile, add a bit of saffron to the icing.
- This recipe would make 12 medium cupcakes. Simply put the batter in cupcake pan and lower the cooking time to about 25 min.

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*Thank You!*

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