

# What to cook this Shab-e-Barat: Traditional and festive recipes

On Shab-e-Barat, kitchens of South Asia come alive long after dusk. It is a night shaped by quiet devotion and the sharing of sweetness. From slow-cooked halwas to carefully shaped breads, each dish carries patience and love. The following recipes draw from familiar festive traditions as well as distant culinary memories, coming together in the spirit of Shab-e-Barat's generosity. In every bite lies a reminder that faith is often expressed not just in prayer, but in the quiet act of feeding one another.

## BREADS

### Stuffed Carrot Halwa Buns

A celebration bake that combines wintertime carrot halwa with soft, home-style bread, echoing the scent of festivities lingering in warm kitchens.

#### Ingredients

For the bread –  
3 cups flour  
½ tsp salt  
1½ tsp sugar  
2½ tsp yeast  
1 egg  
¼ cup lukewarm milk  
1½ tbsp lukewarm water  
1 tbsp oil  
Water as required  
For the filling —  
500g carrots  
1 cup milk  
2-3 cardamom pods  
¼ cup sugar  
2 tbsp ghee  
¼ cup mawa  
¼ cup nuts

#### Method

In a bowl, add and mix the dry ingredients — flour, salt, sugar, and yeast. Then, pour in the egg and milk and add sufficient water to form a dough. When the dough has a very sticky consistency, add oil and make the dough smooth. Give it a final coating of oil and let it rest, covered in a warm place, for a couple of hours.

Now, peel and grate the carrots. Pour milk in a pan and add in the carrots and



cardamom and mix. Wait for the milk to come to a boil. When it starts to boil, cover with a lid and let it cook for 20 minutes on medium-low heat, stirring occasionally. Then, pour in ghee.

Once fully cooked, set the flame to medium-high and add sugar. The sugar will release juices, so stir and cook until all the liquid evaporates. After that add mawa and mix. Finally, add in chopped nuts and stir,



and then remove from the heat.

Once the dough is done, punch out all the air and form balls. Spread out the balls and place sufficient carrot halwa in the centre. Seal the edges to make a crescent shape and let these rest for 10 minutes. Then bake in a preheated oven at 170°C for 20-25 minutes, and they will be ready to serve!

### Nokshi Bread

*Ornamental and celebratory, this flower-shaped bread recalls special occasions when baking was as much about beauty as it was about sharing.*

#### Ingredients

4 cups flour  
1 egg  
3 tbsp sugar  
½ cup lukewarm milk  
1½ tsp yeast  
1 tbsp sesame seeds  
1 tbsp butter  
3 tbsp oil  
¼ cup raisins  
¼ cup candied fruits  
Water as required  
A pinch of salt

#### Method

Add in flour, salt, sugar, and yeast to a bowl and mix. Crack one egg and then pour in warm milk and oil. Mix these together to form a dough and add warm water as



needed to make the dough smooth. Once the dough is formed, place it in a bowl coated with oil and leave it covered in a warm place for 25-30 minutes.

After that, the dough should have risen. Punch the dough to eliminate all the air and form little discs from it. At the bottom of the disc, place some candied fruits, and then fold it to form a semi-circle. Then, place raisins on one side and fold again to resemble a petal. Place a raisin on top of each piece of dough.

Take a round baking dish and brush it with oil. Start placing the pieces of dough from the edge and move towards the centre to make a complete flower. Then, let this rest for 20 minutes and brush the top with milk. After that, sprinkle sesame seeds on top and let this bake in a preheated oven at 180°C for 40-45 minutes. Once done, while the bread is still warm, brush with butter on top and enjoy!

## TRADITIONAL PLATTER

### Sweet Potato Halwa (Mishti Alu Halwa)

*A winter favourite steeped in nostalgia, bringing back memories of slow-cooked sweets made on quiet afternoons.*

#### Ingredients

2 cups grated sweet potato  
1 cup full cream milk powder  
¼ tsp cardamom powder  
¼ cup ghee  
¼ cup mixed nuts, chopped  
1½ cup sugar or as per taste

#### Method

Heat ghee in a non-stick pan. Add grated potatoes. Fry on low heat until it turns slightly golden in colour. Add milk, sugar, and cardamom powder and mix well. There should not be any lumps. Stir continuously until the halwa turns dry. Add mixed nuts and mix well. Cook for another 2 minutes. Garnish with nuts and rose petals and serve.

### Habshi Halwa

*Dark, dense and indulgent, this halwa recalls old banquet tables and the grandeur of festive feasts.*

#### Ingredients

2 litres of fresh milk  
3 tbsp white vinegar  
1 tsp citric acid, mix it with 1 cup of water or 1 lemon juice  
1 cup sugar  
2 tbsp cocoa powder  
½ cup flour  
½ cup crushed almonds  
½ cup crushed walnuts  
1½ cups ghee  
1 tsp cardamom powder  
8-10 pieces of pistachios sliced  
4 tbsp liquid glucose

#### Method

Bring the milk to a boil. Add citric acid and water. Mix in the milk. Turn off the flame and cover it for a few minutes till the milk separates. Now cook it on high flame till the water dries up.

While drying the water, add cocoa powder, cardamom powder and mix well. Switch off the flame; add sugar, vinegar, plain flour, and half of the ghee.

Mix well, and on the flame set to low or medium, keep stirring. While stirring, keep adding the remaining ghee (1 tbsp at a time), till the ghee comes to the surface.

Once the ghee comes on the surface add some nuts, mix well. Add the liquid glucose, mix well. Make sure there is no water in it. Now transfer the halwa to a ghee-greased tray, garnish it with the remaining nuts and pistachios. Leave to cool down. Cut in pieces and serve.

By LS Desk

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed