



Dressed-up halla for Purim

• Text and photos by PASCALE PEREZ-RUBIN



Halla is a special type of bread that is not like any other. I compare it to a beautiful queen who rises high and is then braided, and has a golden-brown crown full of poppy or sesame seeds.

Halla is the highlight of the Shabbat meal. It's placed in the center of the table, on a fancy cutting board. Every homemade halla has a unique texture and shape. There are endless ways to braid a halla.

Each Jewish festival calls for a different shape and toppings. This year for Purim, I decided to visit Inbar Asouline in Yavne so that she could show me the special halla she makes for the holiday.

She studied at Estella master-class bakery in Tel Aviv, and is also a teacher at the Ma'ayan School in Yavne. Asouline loves the juxtaposition of the two worlds dear to her: education and baking. She is dedicated to her students and to her own children, and also embraces her love of creative baking in workshops she offers to the public. She came in first and second place, respectively, in a recent baking/cooking competition.

When I step into her kitchen, the aroma of yeast and rising dough wafts through the air. As I peek inside the covered bowls and trays that cover the countertops, Asouline describes the various recipes and styles she's used to create four- and six-strand hallot. She loves to play around with colors – in some she adds beets, in another pistachios, and in a third harissa.

This year for Purim, Asouline chose to show me some creations that make the holiday so much more fun.

TIPascale

- Bake hallot in an oven that has been preheated to 230°. Reduce temperature to 220° and bake for 5 minutes. Reduce temperature again to 180° and bake for another 15 minutes.

- Brush egg wash of one egg yolk + one egg + 1 Tbsp. water on hallot twice, once after braiding, and another time just before putting hallot in oven.

- Put a few ice cubes inside oven at start of baking.

HALLA SHAPES

Four-strand halla

Take the first strand on the right and place it over the second strand. Then, take the third strand and place it over No. 1. Now, do the same things, but on the left side. Continue until halla is completely braided. Secure ends. Set aside to rise.

Six-strand halla

Place six strands of halla on a work surface and number them from one to six, from right to left. Take strand No. 2 and cross over all the other strands. Make space between the four middle strands (four to six). Next, take strand No. 1 and place it between strands four and five. Now, do the same starting from the left. Continue until halla is completely braided.

Snail and flower halla

You can use different colored dough (make red dough using beets) and roll up the strands to form snails and flowers.

Fast halla

If you're short on time, mix one strand with harissa and one strand with pesto. Then braid the halla normally.





CHAMELEON HALLA

Makes 2 hallot

460 ml. (2¼ cups) water
25 gr. (2½ Tbsp.) dry yeast
2 large eggs
1 kg. flour, sifted
50 gr. (¼ cup) honey
100 gr. (½ Tbsp.) sugar
80 gr. (¼ cup) canola oil
10 gr. (1½ Tbsp.) salt
1 heaping Tbsp. pistachio paste + pistachio green food coloring
100 gr. bittersweet chocolate, grated finely

In the bowl of an electric mixer, place the water, yeast and egg. Mix with dough hook. Mix the flour, honey and sugar in a separate bowl and then put in mixing bowl. Mix for two minutes and then add the oil and salt. Mix for another eight minutes.

Remove dough from bowl and separate into three sections. Add pistachio paste and green food coloring to one third, and the chocolate to the second third. There are no additions for the third section. Let the dough rise again until it doubles in volume. Knead again and let rise again. Knead and get all the air out of the dough.

Make four strands with each section. Take two strands from each color to make a six-strand chameleon halla (see directions above). Brush with egg wash. Let rise again. Brush a second time with egg wash and then bake.



BLUSHING HALLA

Makes 2 hallot

400 gr. (2 cups) water
2½ Tbsp. dry yeast
50 gr. (or 1 medium-sized) carrot, cooked and mashed
220 gr. (or 1 medium-sized) beet, raw and chopped in food processor
1 kg. flour, sifted
40 gr. (4 Tbsp.) sugar
80 gr. (½ cup + 2 Tbsp.) olive oil
20 gr. (2 Tbsp.) salt

Additions:
1½ Tbsp. caraway seeds
¼ cup nuts, finely chopped

In the bowl of an electric mixer, place the water and yeast. Mix well with a dough hook. Add the chopped beet, carrot, flour and sugar. Mix with dough hook for 2 minutes. Add the oil, salt and additions. Mix for another 8 minutes.

Cover and let rise until dough doubles in volume. Knead again and let rise again.

Roll dough into 12 strands. Braid two six-strand halot (see directions above). Brush with egg wash and let rise. Brush with egg wash again and bake.

SPOTTED HALLA

Makes 3 hallot

450 ml. (2¼ cups) water
25 gr. dry yeast
2 large eggs
1 kg. flour, sifted
50 gr. (¼ cup) honey
60 gr. (6 Tbsp.) sugar
80 gr. (½ cup + 2 Tbsp.) canola oil
15 gr. (1½ Tbsp.) salt

Additions:
1 Tbsp. pistachio paste
100 gr. bittersweet chocolate, grated finely
1 Tbsp. tiramisu paste or 1 Tbsp. instant coffee dissolved in water with a little powdered sugar

In the bowl of an electric mixer, add the water, yeast and egg and mix with a dough hook. In a separate bowl, mix together flour, honey and sugar. Add this to mixing bowl while mixing and mix for 2 minutes. Add the oil and salt.

Continue mixing for another 8 minutes. Separate dough into four equal sections. The first section will remain white. Add the pistachio paste to the second section, the chocolate to the third section, and the tiramisu paste to the fourth section.

Knead all of the sections and let them rise until they double in volume. Knead out the air and let rise once more. Knead out the air again and then prepare different-sized balls with each color. The white balls should be large, the dark brown balls medium, and the light brown and green balls should be small.

Arrange the balls in any design that you want on a baking tray and let rise. There's no need to cover with egg wash.



PESTO HALLA

Makes 2-3 medium hallot

600 ml. (3 cups) water
20 gr. (2 Tbsp.) dry yeast
30 gr. (3 Tbsp.) sugar
1 kg. flour, sifted
80 gr. (¼ cup) olive oil
20 gr. (2 Tbsp.) salt

Filling No. 1:
Prepared pesto spread, roasted anti pasti vegetables, 1 cup grated Bulgarian cheese

Filling No. 2:
2 Tbsp. za'atar, ¾ cup olive oil, 200 gr. white cheese

Topping:
2 Tbsp. nigella or sesame seeds

In the bowl of a mixer, add the water and yeast and mix well. Add the sugar and flour. Begin mixing with the dough hook. After 2 minutes, add the oil and salt. Mix for a total of 10 minutes.

Let the dough rise until it doubles in volume. Knead out the air and let rise again. Knead out the air and separate dough into three balls. Then separate each ball into four sections.

Roll out each section and spread some with pesto, antipasti vegetables and cheese. Others you can cover with olive oil, zaatar and white cheese. Roll up into strands and then use them to braid four-strand hallot. Brush with egg wash and let rise. Brush again with egg wash and then bake.

Translated by Hannah Hochner.



10% Discount with this ad

ONE STOP SHOP FOR ALL YOUR CURTAIN NEEDS

- Vertical Blinds
- Roller Blinds - ready in 1/2 hour
- Venetian Blinds
- Woven Wood Blinds

- Blackout Shades
- Roman Shades
- Pleated Shades
- Ready to hang drapes
- Quilted Bedspreads

FACTORY OUTLET

www.glomar.co.il

FREE QUOTE AT YOUR HOME

NEW!! HUGE BEAUTIFUL SHOWROOM!! 14 Hayetzira St., New Industrial Area, Or Yehuda
Tel: 03-538-6000 Fax: 03-533-2585

