

Bread and its varieties

Nān (bread) is one of the essential staple foods in Tajik food culture consumed on daily basis. It is hard to imagine life among Tajiks without bread, thus in popular culture bread is highly valued as a 'holy food' and revered.

In traditional gatherings foremost the *nān* is put on the table. Ladies who come to different functions, such as wedding, mortuary ceremonies bring bread with them. Whenever a guest comes to a Tajik home he is given bread first.

In Tajik traditions there are many ceremonial gatherings that are closely attached to the bread. The *ordbēzān* (sifting a flour), *ravghānrēzān* (pouring of oil), *kulchāpazān* (baking kulcha),

nānshikanān (breaking the bread), *nānbandān* (bread baking) ceremonies are some of such cultural events to name.

During their long history Tajik people have invented various types of bread and there are multiple regional variations of bread present today as well. Different types of bread are given names based on their content and form, such as *nōni čapāti* or *tunuk*, *girdačā*, *fatīrxāmir*, *fatīr*, *fatīri kurak*, *fatīri varakī* or *kad-žad*, *qalamā*, *kumāč*, *kulča*, *nāni kordī*, *kulčāi kalān* and so on.

Čapāti or *tunuk* is type of bread made from the leavened dough. It contains yeast thus it





requires resting three to four hours prior being baked. The dough for *čapāti* compare to other types of bread is kneaded softer. It is than stretched flat into thin sheet and baked in one or two minutes. Due to its texture and substance *čapāti* is baked very quickly in high heat and among other types of breads known among Tajiks is the only one, which is not baked till it is red and it keeps white, flour-like color after being baked.

Čapāti is a sort of ceremonial bread, which is baked in large quantities during various cultural traditional events. Usually it is prepared and consumed in weddings, festival parties and mourning ceremonies as well.

Girdača is a type of widespread bread in Khatlon province, Hisar and Rasht valley. It's dough is made with yeast and when put in oven

few holes are made so the hot air get through and while baking it does not burn. The *girdača* is thicker than *čapāti* and before taken out of the oven small amount of water is splashed on it to help it get a glossy texture.

Fatīr is perhaps an oldest bread type across Tajikistan. The main differentiating feature of *fatīr* from the leavened breads is that it contains milk and oil and it is much thicker compare to the regular breads from three to five centimeter. *Fatīr* is decorated by the needle bread stamp throughout making cross-through fine holes. Main local dishes such as *ķurutob*, *šakarob*, *fatīr šurbō* is all consumed and made with the *fatīr*. During the fieldworks people carry *fatīr* to be eaten as it is considered to have more calories and being healthy. It has different types such as *ķad-ķad*, *ķazzadār* (with the tail fat), *gardmāl*,



kurāk and *piyāzdār* (with onion).

Qalamā its preparation is similar to *fatīr*. In olden days it was baked over the coals or heated pans, but now it is deep-fried in cooking oil. *Qalamā* is ceremonial form of bread and is made in weddings or other cultural events. For example, six to eight *qalamā* is exchanged between the bride and groom's family during the wedding ceremonies.

Tahmāl is similar to *qalamā* the only difference being that in tahmol dough sugar is added and it is also deep-fried. The dough for tahmol is made with the cream. It has round shape and can vary in size. It is also used as a gift offering in ceremonies.

Kulča is prepared for both festive and mourning ceremonies. Usually close relatives





during the weddings bake *kulča* and bring it to the wedding as a gift. On basis of its size *kulča* is differentiated as *kalān* (big) and *māida* (small). The small *kulča* can be round and large as a regular bowl mouth with the thickness varies from two to three cm. To ensure it is baked through the middle part of *kulča* is stamped with the needle stamp. The dough for *kulčai kalān* also referred as *nōni kalon* is made with milk and oil only. It has 60-80 cm diameter with the thickness up to seven centimeters. Among population another name for it is *kulčai tuyāna* (wedding *kulča*) as it is made and used from the proposal offering ceremony to the wedding day in both bride and groom's families. The bakers decorate *kulčai kalān* by using appliqué patterns from the dough or using knife making floral designs.

