

Dough-based dishes

The most complex and biggest part of the Tajik cuisine consists of the dough-based dishes. Below are the description and preparation recipes of some of the wide-spread and common dough-based dishes of Tajikistan.

Oshi burida- is a dough-based dish common to all regions of Tajikistan in some areas also called *oshu tuppa*. It is in essence a noodle soup with its own specific local features. The noodles for the *oshi burida* are prepared 20 minutes before the dish is prepared. Noodles are plain: flour, water and some salt. To make noodle soft dough is prepared and left to rest for sometime and then it is rolled into thin sheet and accordion folded. Then on a long chopping board called *takhtai zuvola* it is laid and cut finely. After finishing the cutting it is then taken and some flour is poured on it so in process of stretching the noodles do not break. After the noodles are stretched to the desired length and they are put into sift to remove the flour remainders on them. While the noodles are prepared in cauldron the soup in-

gredients vegetables and grain products such as beans, peas etc. would be cooked. Sometime to give the *oshi burida* extra flavor some onions are fried before adding water and the grain products. Once the grain products are cooked the noodles are added and stirred so they do not stick together. It is boiled for 10 minutes and is removed from the fire. The ready dish is served in large plates seasoned and with salads. *Oshi burida* is eaten also in bowls and yogurt is added into the soup. The other variation of the *oshi burida* is when the noodles are cut into square resembling lasagna pasta. *Oshi burida* also can be prepared with meatballs.

Umoch- is another dough-based dish prepared for people who are on special diet. The cooking method for *umoch* is similar to *oshi burida*. The main ingredient for *umoch* is a dough-crumbed mixed by hand with little water and some salt. Depending on the taste and appetite of the person various grain products and vegetable can be added into the broth in which *umoch* is cooked. It is served hot with yogurt.

Mantu is another dough-based dish which is most common and popular in Tajik cuisine. *Mantu* in Tajik cuisine and Central Asia are usually larger in size. They are steamed in a multi-level metal steamer called *mantupazak*. It consists of layered pots with holes, which are placed over a boiling stock and water.

In Tajik cuisine, *mantu* are usually made of one (or a combination) of the following ingredients: lamb, beef, herbs, on-





ion, potato or pumpkin, with fat often added to meat *mantu*. Steaming, frying and boiling are all common.

Mantu is prepared from water based dough, which is unrolled in layers 4-5 mm thick and cut in squares of 12×12 cm. Meat, vegetables or spices can make up the stuffing. *Mantu* is steamed for 35-45 minutes in a special pot. *Mantu* is served with sour milk or sour cream.

Depending on the season *mantu* can be prepared also with herbs only or vegetables only.

Tushbera- is similar to *mantu* only different in cooking mode. If *mantu* is steamed *tush-*

bera is boiled and also *tushbera* is much smaller in size than *mantu*. In other Central Asian cuisines it is also known as *chuchpara*, *chuchvara*, *tushpara* or *barak*, which is a small dumpling typical. It is made of unleavened dough squares filled with meat and it is similar to the Russian *pelmeni*, but in observance of the Islamic dietary rules, the meat filling is strictly halal. The dough for *tushbera* is made with flour, eggs, water and salt, unrolled in a layer 1-1.5 mm thick, and cut into squares. A dollop of meat filling, seasoned with chopped onions, pepper, salt and thyme, is placed at the center of each square, and the corners are pinched and folded. *Tushbera* is boiled



in meat broth until the dumplings rise to the surface. It can be served in a clear soup or on their own, with vinegar or sauce based on finely chopped greens, tomatoes and hot peppers. Another popular way of serving *tushbera* is topped with *chakka* (strained yogurt) or with *jurghot* (sour cream).

Sambusa- is another Tajik dough-based dish or snack consisting of flaky or plain pasties with various fillings, both served at ceremonies and eaten in an everyday life. *Sambusa* may have different shapes (square, round or triangle) and forms and be cooked in a multiplicity of ways, such as in firewood *tanur* or electric oven.

Today's *sambusa* is usually filled with meat (mutton, chicken or beef) either chopped into small pieces or minced, vegetables (pumpkin,

potato or onion), eggs, peas, herbs. However, as in most of the Tajik dishes, it is the spices, such as *zira* (cumin), black and red hot pepper, and sesame (covering *sambusa* on the top), that make the taste of the pasties really unique.

In the former times *sambusa* was cooked only in a *tanur* oven. *Sambusa* baked in a *tanur* has specific taste and flavor and is filled with small pieces of meat, onion and some amount of fat from a sheep's tail. Nowadays, some sorts of *sambusa* are cooked in gas or electric ovens, which is faster and more convenient and, at the same time, makes *sambusa* retain its original qualities.

In Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries, *sambusas* are often sold on the streets as a hot snack. They are sold at special kitchens, where only *sambusas* are made, or alternative-



ly, at places where other fast foods are sold.

Bichak- is another *sambusa*-like pastry, which can have potatoes, meat or herb fillings. The only difference between *bichak* and *sambusa* is that *bichak* is deep-fried in oil whereas *sambusa* is baked in the oven.



Chagaldak- is a dough-based savory snack food served hot or cold. The dough for *chagaldak* is very soft and onion, paper and green herbs (spring onion, coriander, parsley, dill and basil) are added. *Chagaldak* is deep fried in hot oil and since the dough is very soft like doughnut it can have irregular shapes. It





is fried until turning dark red.

Orzuk is savory and sweet snack cooked by deep-frying. The dough for *orzuk* is unleavened and is prepared in similar way as *fatir* dough with milk and oil. Once the bread is prepared it is pierced through with fork or other sharp ob-

ject, than it is cut into rectangular or square pieces and deep-fried. If the dough does not contain sugar after taking it from fryer sugar powder is sprinkled on top. It is usually prepared for festivals and ceremonial occasions.

