

# Loukoumades

## Ingredients

2 teaspoons instant dried yeast  
300g plain flour  
½ teaspoon sea salt  
canola oil, for deep-frying  
vegan honey, for drizzling  
(recipe below, or use  
store-bought vegan honey)  
unsalted shelled pistachios,  
crushed, for sprinkling

### Vegan Honey

2 litres fresh, cloudy or  
long-life apple juice  
880g sugar  
4 teaspoons carob syrup

## Method

Combine the yeast and 125ml warm water in a small jug and set aside for 10 minutes or until the mixture becomes frothy. You don't need to add sugar for the yeast to work but adding a pinch of flour after a few minutes will give the yeast plenty of sugars to begin blooming.

Place the flour and salt in a large bowl and stir to combine. Make a well in the centre and add the yeast mixture and 185ml water. Using a wooden spoon, bring the mixture together until you have a sticky, runny dough. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside in a warm spot for at least an hour, until doubled in size.

To make the loukoumades, heat the canola oil in a large heavy-based saucepan over medium-high heat. Test if the oil is ready by inserting a wooden skewer or the handle of a wooden spoon; if the oil begins to bubble quickly then you're ready to go.

Here's where it can get messy. Pour a little extra oil into a cup. Dip a metal dessertspoon into the oil, then use it to scoop out a spoonful of the dough mixture (the oil will make it easier for the dough to slide off). Use your finger to quickly slide the dough from the spoon into the hot oil. Aim for the most fluid motion you can, while also not dropping the loukoumades batter from too high into the oil. These factors will determine how round your doughnuts will be.

Working in small batches, fry the loukoumades for 1-2 minutes, using a

slotted spoon to turn them in the oil. They will cook very fast so keep a keen eye on them. Once the loukoumades have an even golden coating, scoop them out and drain on a plate lined with paper towel.

Place the warm loukoumades on a serving plate, drizzle over an unhealthy amount of honey and sprinkle with pistachios. Serve immediately.

If you opt to make your own vegan honey, place the apple juice in a saucepan and bring to boil over medium heat. Simmer, maintaining a low boil, for about 45 minutes or until the juice has reduced by half. If using fresh or cloudy apple juice, frequently skim the surface to remove sediment. Smells good, right?

In a separate saucepan, bring 1 litre of water to the boil over medium heat. Stir in the sugar and stir for 3 minutes or until the sugar has dissolved. Pour the sugar syrup into the reduced apple juice.

Keep the sweetened apple juice bubbling for 1-1½ hours, until the liquid has reduced to about 750ml and resembles a honey-like thickness. Use a candy thermometer to keep an eye on the temperature; if it goes over 112°C the final product will be firmer than a syrup and it won't work as a pourable honey.

Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the carob syrup. Allow to cool before pouring into sterilised jars for storage. The honey will keep in the pantry for several months.





PHOTOS BY PETE DILLON

Tastes Like Home edited by **Anastasia Saffoleas**



## Zacchary says...

**M**y first experience with loukoumades as a kid was in a fairly unorthodox setting – Brisbane International Airport. We had only a few hours during a flight changeover, so what better time to catch up with the local extended family? I'm talking about the sort of aunties who begin cooking before you've even decided you're coming, and the type to send you off with a few extra kilograms under your belt plus a jar of homemade mango chutney for later. We had no hope of merely passing through without being fed first.

Into the departure lounge they marched: an army of five-foot tall Greek women, laden with Tupperware, and blinding bystanders with aluminium-foil-wrapped treats. Nestled among the smorgasbord were little fried balls of dough, still slightly warm. Loukoumades! Some wonderfully round, some with their own tails, all perfect. Next to them was an old jam jar filled with honey for dipping and making sure cleaning up was as difficult as possible. What a delight!

My grandmother always says loukoumades are best enjoyed on a cold, rainy day. Given her hometown holds the annual rainfall record for Australia, I've taken this to mean these Greek-style doughnuts are an everyday treat. She and her sisters, as with so many of our family favourites, each have their own little tweaks to the original recipe and a wealth of opinions as to why theirs is better. Sometimes you'll get something closer to the shape of a pufaloon or the honey might be omitted altogether, while a sprinkling of nutmeg instead of cinnamon seems to attract the most criticism.

Whichever version, the basics stay the same and as simple as ever: flour, yeast, sugar and salt combined and left to rise before being fried and drenched in something syrupy. Over the years, crushed pistachios or walnuts have become a must-have topping for me. The extra crunch and nutty flavour feels a little more sophisticated and helps cut through the sweetness of the syrup.

Whether it's rainy or not, today seems like a great day to try making vegan junk food and treating yourself to a big batch of loukoumades.

VEGAN JUNK FOOD BY ZACCHARY BIRD IS OUT NOW.