

Guidelines for Making *Maṣṣa* (מצה)

According to Rambam...and common sense

- 1) **Key Ingredients for Dough:** flour, water, (salt?)
 - **Water:** Don't use warm water, and only use water that has "rested" overnight (מים שלנו) eg. not from directly from the tap. Bottled mineral water is considered fine.
 - **Salt:** Permitted according to Rambam; discouraged by Shulhan Arukh; forbidden by Mishnah Berura. "Work around": sprinkle on top of loaf, right before baking.
- 2) **Preparing and Handling dough:**
 - Don't prepare and knead the dough in a particularly warm place, or outside under the sky (even if it's not sunny)
 - Make sure your hands stay cool when kneading the dough. Use water to cool them down if they get warm.
 - If the dough sits more than 18-24 minutes it is presumed to have become חמץ and should be thrown away (or destroyed if during Pesah itself.)
 - *Technically*, as long as the dough is being kneaded (even the whole day) it can never become חמץ. The dominant custom is not to rely on this, but either way, having one person knead the dough constantly can be a useful "backup" in case you go over.
 - Working alone (kneading, shaping loaf, baking) is allowed, but don't let the dough sit idle at any given time *more than necessary*.
- 3) **Dough Size:**
 - The maximum size dough should be the amount that would require חלה being taken ie. around 8 cups of flour.
 - Advice for solo bakers: experiment and discover the size of dough you're capable of preparing and baking without letting the dough rest too long.
- 4) **Baking:**
 - *Maṣṣa* can be baked in the oven or on the stove top in a pan
 - There is no minimum temperature for cooking it (as long as it cooks!)
 - The loaf can be moist and only needs to cook to the point that there are *no strands* when pulled apart
 - There is no need for making holes, and the loaf may puff up during the cooking process.
- 5) **Advice for work space, supplies, and clean up**
 - Keep your main flour supply far away from any liquid, and measure out into a separate bowl/container a little bit more than you plan on using in each batch.
 - Remove any unneeded item from your work area that flour and dough can get on. Minimize the use of utensils to make each batch quicker and easier to clean up, and to minimize the risk of חמץ.
 - Work next to the sink so you can wash your hands and utensils easily, and drain (and "destroy") any pieces/crums of dough that could become חמץ
 - As soon as you're finished with a utensil, put it in the sink and put a cleanser (liquid soap or spray with bleach) to render any potential חמץ inedible. You can do the same with any left over chunks/crums of dough. ***This is especially important if you are baking during the time when it's forbidden to have חמץ in your possession.
 - If you are handling the dough AND baking, wash your hands with soap frequently ie. after you touch the dough, before you touch anything else (eg. the oven, the flour bowl, a freshly baked *maṣṣa* !!)

Basic Recipe and Instructions for Oven-Baked Maṣṣa (מצה)

Makes 3 loaves

Equipment:

- oven
- cast iron skillet/baking sheet/pan (the heavier the better)
- mixing bowl (large enough to knead in)
- stirring utensil (a large metal spoon works well)
- rolling pin (without holes/"pores"; metal is the easiest to clean)
- a smooth kneading surface (counter/glass cutting board)

- 1) Preheat the oven to the max. temp. Keep your baking pan in the oven while preheating. (Up to an hour)
- 2) Put the mixing bowl in your workspace, and the stirring utensil and rolling pin next to it.
- 3) Measure **1 cup of water** (מים שלנו) into the mixing bowl
- 4) With dry hands, measure about 3 ½ -4 cups of flour into a dry bowl, leaving the measuring cup inside it
- 5) Gently add about 3 cups of flour to the water (careful not to splash) and put the flour bowl off to the side.
- 6) First, using the stirring utensil (and then your hands), mix the flour into the water until a unified dough is formed.

*If the dough is sticky add more flour from the flour bowl (make sure hands are clean and dry)

*Once a dough is formed, if some crumbs or dry chunks remain in the bowl are hard to work in, discard them (ie. into the sink and down the drain)
- 7) Put your stirring utensil in the sink; briskly knead the dough for 1 minute; and then divide into 3 equal balls, smoothing the surface of each dough ball with your hands.
- 8) With clean dry hands, put about **3 tablespoons of flour** on the side your kneading surface; Spread about 1/3 of that flour (1 tbl. of flour) on the surface;
- 9) Place one of the balls of dough on the kneading surface and "flour" both sides (with the tablespoon of flour) and flatten the ball out with the palm of your hand. Knead it to thin circle with the rolling pin.
- 10) Wash and dry your hands; Place the (preheated) baking pan on a surface (counter/top of oven) and quickly put the rolled out loaf on it.
- 11) With clean hands, put the pan back into the oven. (Remove the cooked matzah after about 2 minutes.)
- 12) Repeat 9-11 for the rest of the loaves.