

## St Lucia or Lussekatter Buns

St. Lucia Day is a Swedish Christmas feast day celebrated on Dec. 13, also known as the Festival of Light. It honors St. Lucia, a 3<sup>rd</sup> century martyr who is said to have brought food and aid to Christians hiding in the catacombs, using a candle-lit wreath to light her way. This day was linked with the winter solstice to observe the rebirth of the sun. To celebrate, young girls dress in white robes and a red sash. One of the oldest is selected as “Lucia” to lead the procession wearing a crown of lit candles.

### Ingredients (for 12-15 buns):

¾ cup milk                      3 ½-4 cups white flour  
½ tsp saffron threads  
1 ½ tsp and ¼ cup sugar  
1 ¼ –ounce packet of active dry yeast  
½ tsp salt                      ¼ tsp ground cardamom  
¼ cup softened butter      ¼ cup plain Greek yogurt  
2 large beaten eggs (and 1 beaten egg for glaze)  
¼ cup raisins

Heat milk, saffron and 1 ½ tsp sugar in a small pan until steaming and saffron begins to release its color. Remove from heat to cool until luke warm (~115 °F). Sprinkle yeast on the surface of the milk and let it stand until it is foamy.

Mix together flour, ¼ cup sugar, salt and cardamom.

Make well in the flour mixture and add the yeast/milk mixture, eggs, soft butter and yogurt; mix well.

Knead dough, adding small amounts of flour as needed until it is smooth and only slightly sticky.

Shape the dough into a large ball, cover with plastic wrap and place in a warm place for 1-2 hours until the ball has doubled in size. You can refrigerate the dough overnight if you prefer.

Punch down dough and knead a few times. Tear off a golf ball size piece of dough and roll into 12-in snake. Shape it into a closely curled “S” and place on parchment paper on a baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough. Place a raisin within each curl. Cover with plastic wrap, place in a warm place and let them rise until doubled in size (30-60 min).

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Brush each bun with the beaten egg.

Bake at 400 °F for 10-15 minutes until brown. Turn baking sheet after 5 minutes so they brown evenly.

Let cool on a rack. They freeze well in a ziplock bag.

Recipe adapted from E. Bauer:

[www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/st\\_lucia\\_saffron\\_buns/](http://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/st_lucia_saffron_buns/)



St. Lucia buns



Cake Sharbati

### *Saffron Syrup Cake (Cake Sharbati)*

This is a special sweet dessert originally from Qazvin Province located northwest of Tehran, Iran.

### Ingredients

*For the cake:* Use a yellow cake mix or your favorite sponge cake recipe.

*For the syrup*

1 cup water                      1 cup sugar  
¼ cups rosewater              1 tsp ground saffron  
¼ tsp ground cardamom

*For decoration*

Grated coconut and ground pistachios

Bake the sponge cake, let cool and cut into individual pieces.

To prepare the syrup, add sugar, water and saffron to a pot and allow them to boil for 10 minutes. Add cardamom and rosewater and set aside. It is important that both the cake and syrup are cool before moving to the next step. Pour the cooled syrup over the top of the cake pieces and refrigerate for at least 2 hrs. Decorate the cake with grated coconut and ground pistachios and serve.



## Cooking with Saffron Around the World

Agrin Davari and Margaret Skinner

### *North American Center for Saffron Research & Development*

The University of Vermont  
661 Spear St., Burlington, Vermont USA 05405

<https://www.uvm.edu/~saffron/>

Saffron is an ancient culinary spice, derived from the flower of a fall blooming crocus (*Crocus sativus*). It ranks as the most expensive spice in the world, often selling for \$20-100/gram. It is commonly grown in West Asia, including Iran, Spain, and Italy. It was brought to North America by the Pennsylvania Dutch in the 1600s, where limited production continues today. Saffron is the orange filamentous stigmas of the flowers, which are carefully separated from the petals and stamens by hand.

Saffron has a unique aroma, which imparts food with a special bitter taste. It also gives food a distinctive yellow color. It is widely used in Persian, Indian, European, Arab, and Turkish cuisines. Candy and liquors are also infused with saffron.



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### ***Pastilla (pronounced Bastila)***

This is a famous traditional Moroccan dish often served as an appetizer that combines savory and sweet flavors. The name comes from the Spanish word for pie or small pastry. It is usually prepared with a cornish hen, but chicken is a suitable substitute.

Prep Time 2 hrs, Cook Time 1 hr,

#### **Ingredients**

##### For the dough envelope

10 filo dough sheets  
10 tbsp unsalted butter, melted  
1 egg white beaten      2 tbsp icing sugar  
Ground cinnamon to taste

##### For the chicken and egg filling

2-3 chicken breasts without skin  
5 tbsp unsalted butter  
1 bunch flat parsley, chopped  
4 onions, thinly sliced  
Several saffron threads  
1 cinnamon stick      4 tbsp sugar  
6 eggs, beaten      Salt & pepper  
1 tbsp ginger      1 tsp turmeric  
½ cup cold water

##### For the almond filling

¾ cup oil  
8 oz. whole almonds, blanched and skinned,  
2 tbsp icing sugar      1 tsp ground cinnamon

#### **Instructions**

Melt butter in a large pot, add chicken breasts, and brown all sides.

Add the onions, parsley, ginger, turmeric, saffron, salt and pepper. Pour ½ cup of cold water, cook over medium heat for 35 minutes.

Remove chicken and shred into bite size pieces.

#### **Egg mixture**

Put the remaining sauce back on medium/high heat to reduce the liquid, stirring constantly. Add the cinnamon stick and sugar to caramelize the onions. Add beaten eggs to the caramelized onions, stirring constantly, until the mixture has the texture of thick cream.

#### **Almond filling**

Add oil to a large non-stick pan over medium/high heat. Add almonds and fry them until golden. (Don't burn them!)

Drain almonds and crush in a food processor with ground cinnamon and icing sugar.

Preheat oven to 350 °F.

#### **Assembly**

Grease a round pan with butter. Thoroughly brush each filo sheet with melted butter. Important: The buttered side should always be faced up.

At the bottom of the dish, lay down 4 filo sheets, overlapping them one on top of the other, allowing half of each sheet to hang outside the pan. Add a sheet to the center of the pan to make the bottom of the pastilla. Place a layer of the egg mixture on the sheets, spreading it evenly over the surface. Cover with a filo sheet. Spread the chicken over that surface and cover with another filo sheet. Finally, add the crushed almonds on top of that.

Fold the edges of the filo sheets toward the center and press lightly to seal the layer of almonds. Brush with egg white to seal the contents under the sheets. Cover with 2 more filo sheets to close the pastilla, and tuck the edges inside of the pan.

Brush the edges of the last sheet with egg white so it adheres well and does not peel off during baking. Brush the surface of the pastilla with melted butter. Bake for 30 minutes or until golden brown.

Place the pastilla on a serving dish. Dust with icing sugar and cinnamon in a crisscross diamond pattern.

Serve hot.

Adapted from V. Abitbol:

<https://www.196flavors.com/morocco-pastilla/>

### ***Saffron Tea***

This beverage is popular around the central Moroccan town of Taliouine, considered the African "Center of P'or rouge (red gold), the heart of North Africa's saffron growing region. Saffron tea is less common in other areas of the country, perhaps because of the high cost of the spice. The tea is made by adding a pinch of saffron threads to green tea. The resulting tea is lightly fragrant with saffron's distinctive essence.

#### **Ingredients:**

1 tbsp green tea leaves, preferably gunpowder  
½ teaspoon saffron threads  
2 ½ cups boiling water  
¼ cup sugar

#### **Steps to make it**

Boil the water, and add ¼ cup to a small teapot to rinse it out and warm up the pot. Discard the water.

Put the tea leaves in the pot and add another ¼ cup boiling water. Swirl the pot to wash and rinse the leaves, and discard the water, retaining the tea leaves in the pot.

Add a pinch of saffron and the sugar, and fill the pot with 2 cups of boiling water. Let tea steep for 5 min. or more, depending on how strong you want it.

Gently stir the tea, pour into small tea glasses and serve.

Adapted from:

<https://www.thespruceeats.com/moroccan-tea-with-saffron-2394959>



Saffron tea served in traditional Moroccan hand-painted tea glasses.