

## Recipe: Sfijas (Esfijas) – Middle Eastern Meat Pies

Makes: 30 to 34 esfijas

### Ingredients:

- 1 ½ pounds (750 grams) ground beef (*or lamb for a more traditional flavor*)
- 1 medium white or brown onion, finely chopped
- Salt & freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- A pinch of ground cumin
- Up to 1 cup of Greek yogurt, labneh, or kefir cheese
- 1 cup of chopped fresh mint leaves
- Empanada dough or puff pastry dough
- 1 lightly beaten egg with a splash of cream or milk (*for egg wash*)

### Instructions:

#### 1. Preheat & Prepare:

- Heat your oven to **375°F (190°C)**.

#### 2. Cook the Meat Mixture:

- Season the ground meat with salt and pepper.
- Heat a skillet with a little oil and brown the meat, stirring occasionally to break up any large clusters.
- Drain the browned meat using a colander over a bowl. (*Tip: Discard the fat in the trash, not down your drain!*)

#### 3. Sauté the Onion & Combine:

- Add a little more oil to the skillet and cook the chopped onion over medium heat for **5 to 6 minutes** until softened and translucent.
- Return the drained beef to the skillet, mix well, and cook for another **2 to 3 minutes**.

#### 4. Season & Moisten:

- Stir in the **cumin** and mix well.
- Add **½ cup of yogurt (or labneh or kefir cheese)** and stir to combine. If the mixture seems dry, add more yogurt **¼ cup at a time**. **The filling should be very moist, not dry.**
- Stir in the **chopped mint**, mix well, and turn off the heat.

#### 5. Shape the Sfijas:

- Roll out the **empanada or puff pastry dough** and cut into **circles** using a glass or cutter.
- Stretch each dough circle slightly to make it thinner and a bit larger.
- Place **1 teaspoon of filling** in the center of each piece.

**6. Fold & Shape:**

- Bring **two opposite sides** of the dough together and pinch to seal.
- Bring the **remaining two sides** together and pinch to form a triangular shape, leaving a small "window" in the middle.

**7. Bake to Perfection:**

- Brush the pastries with **egg wash**.
- Bake for **20 to 25 minutes** or until the bottoms are golden brown.

**8. Serve & Enjoy:**

- Serve warm with **a dollop of Greek yogurt or kefir cheese** on the side.