



Halva

Puja is a ritual sacrifice that observant Hindi usually perform daily, either in a temple or at their own house. At a puja, they invite and wait upon a deity to show respect and honor. Central to the ritual is an image or another divine symbol into which the deity enters for the time of the ceremony.

It is part of the puja to offer the deity cooked and uncooked foods, all of which must be strictly vegetarian and contain neither onions, garlic nor eggs. When the god has accepted the food, it becomes prasad (Sanskrit for charity and mercy). As such it is a holy food that the faithful eat to receive divine blessing. This sweet and tasty halva is a popular sacrificial dish for the puja ritual.

For 6 servings:

- 2 cups (300 g) fine semolina
- ¼ cup (25 g) slivered almonds
- 2 tablespoons sultanas
- ¼ teaspoon cardamom pods, crushed in a mortar
- 5 tablespoons ghee
- ¾ cup (150 g) sugar
- just over 2 cups (½ l) water

Instructions:

Heat the ghee in a big frying pan. Place the slivered almonds in the hot fat and stir until they have taken on a golden-brown hue. Remove them with a spatula and place them on a plate covered with paper kitchen towels to soak up any excess grease.

Bring the water to a boil in a saucepan. As soon as it boils rapidly, reduce the heat.

Add the semolina to the fat in the frying pan, turn down the heat, and roast it for 8–10 minutes, stirring constantly, until it acquires a golden-brown color, but don't let it turn too brown. Add the sugar and stir it in.

Very slowly, add the boiling water, stirring constantly, to the ingredients in the frying pan. The whole process should take at least 2 minutes. As soon as all the water has been stirred in, reduce the heat even further and cook the halva for 5 more minutes, never ceasing to stir. Add the sultanas, the almonds and the cardamom and stir for another 5 minutes. Serve hot, warm, or at room temperature!

Note: You can replace the slivered almonds with pistachios or cashew nuts.

