

How is halva made?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Halva, also spelled halvah, halwa or halua, is a sweet found across North and East Africa, Eastern Europe, the Balkans and much of Asia. The name covers a broad family of recipes, generally a thick, dense paste sweetened with sugar or honey. The two big branches are grain halva and sesame halva.

Sesame halva

Sesame halva is popular in the Balkans, Poland, the Middle East and around the Mediterranean. Its main ingredients are tahini, which is sesame paste, and sugar, glucose or honey. A 2015 study of industrial halva making at a Sarajevo confectioner sets out the steps:

1. **Make the tahini.** Sesame seeds are cleaned, soaked in salty water for four to five hours, washed, roasted at 115 to 120°C and ground, then finely ground again. Tahini is more than 50 per cent sesame oil.
2. **Make the soapwort extract.** Soapwort root is ground and cooked in closed tanks at 115°C until it becomes a thick liquid, then filtered.
3. **Foam the syrup.** Sugar and water, one to one, are cooked into a syrup, with a little citric acid, and the soapwort extract is whipped in. The result is a white, light foam.
4. **Combine.** The foamed sugar and the tahini are mixed, about one to one, and worked until fine, needle like particles form. These give sesame halva its fibrous, flaky texture.
5. **Finish.** Flavourings such as vanilla, cocoa or pistachios go in, and the halva is cooled, weighed and packed.

Soapwort does two jobs. Its saponins make the syrup foam, and they act as an emulsifier, stopping the sesame oil seeping out over time. Some recipes use egg white instead. Turkey's national standard for tahini halva allows no more than 0.1 per cent total saponin. In the study, a black halva made with wheat grits, cocoa and nuts used no soapwort at all.

Grain halva

Grain halva is made by toasting flour or semolina in oil or butter, mixing it into a roux, then cooking it with a sugary syrup, water or milk. Its texture can run from moist and clumpy to smooth and almost jelly like. Suji ka halwa in India and Pakistan and irmik helvas? in Turkey are made from semolina, and in Iran halva usually means a wheat flour and butter paste flavoured with saffron and rose water.

More kinds

- **Sunflower halva**, from roasted ground sunflower seeds, is popular in the former Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Romania.
- **Mantecol**, a peanut halva, was created in Argentina by Greek immigrants in the early 20th century.
- **Gajar ka halwa** is grated carrot slow cooked with milk, sugar and ghee.
- **Pi?maniye**, floss halva from Kocaeli in Turkey, is pulled into thin strands of flour and sugar, a little like candy floss.

An old sweet

Halva originated in Persia. In 7th century Arabia the word meant a paste of dates kneaded with milk, and the first full recipes appear in 13th century cookbooks. Tahini halva reached Bosnia in the 16th century under Ottoman rule, and Sarajevo had a street of halva sellers until 1908. In Israel, tahini halva is parve, which means it contains neither meat nor dairy: see [kosher sweets explained](#)

Allergens

Sesame halva is made from sesame, one of the 14 allergens that must be declared, and nuts such as pistachios are often added: see [the 14 allergens explained for sweets](#)

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