

Sweet temptation

Naughty but nice, Arabian sweets are definitely one of the perks of living in the Middle East. If you haven't yet tasted these delicacies, prepare to indulge in some of the most popular ones at Al Reef Lebanese Bakery. Nicole Fleming and Carolyn Robb find out more

Mamool

Date slice

Shelf life: 3 days

100g ghee, softened
100g semolina
100g fine semolina
15ml full-cream milk
40g sugar
1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp dried yeast (dissolved in a little tepid water)
100g date paste

Blend the ghee, semolina and fine semolina thoroughly in a food mixer. Add milk and blend for a further 10 minutes.

Add sugar, baking powder and yeast, blend for five minutes.

Roll half of the dough and press into a baking tray.

Spread the dough with the date paste.

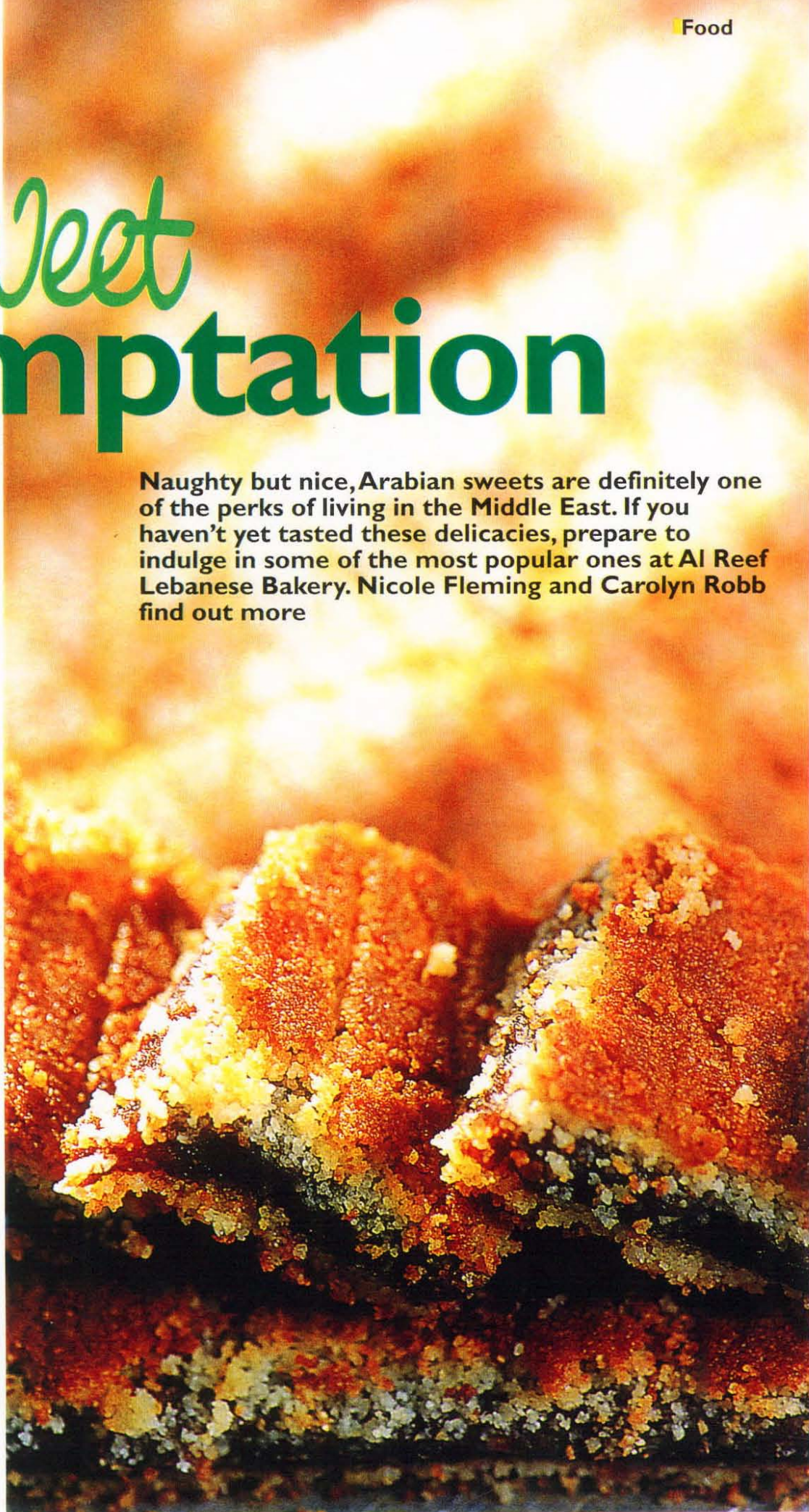
Top with the remaining dough.

Leave to rest for 15 minutes in tray.

Bake at 200°C for approximately 15 minutes. Cut into small squares and serve. ▶

Chef's note:

You can substitute the date paste with chopped walnuts mixed with some honey.



Ush al Asfour

Pistachio 'bird's nests'

Shelf life: 2 days

200g borma dough (shredded dough)

200g pistachios

400ml glucose syrup

ghee, for frying

Shape the dough into little 'nests', with a diameter of approximately six centimetres.

Deep-fry the nests in ghee, then drain them well on absorbent kitchen paper.

Fill the centre of each nest with pistachios.

Place the nests on a tray and pour glucose syrup over them. Leave for 10 minutes.

Place the nests on a wire rack to allow excess glucose syrup to drip out.

Sfouf

Semolina cake

Shelf life: 3 days

120g fine semolina

120g flour

20ml milk

1/2 tsp yellow food colouring

100g ghee

160ml water

200g sugar

1/2 tsp baking powder

1 small egg

a little tahini (sesame paste)

sugar syrup (see recipe)





Sweet temptation

Pistachio and chocolate moons

Shelf life: 5 days

50g butter
25g sugar
2½ tsp beaten egg
75g flour
a little jam
100g melted chocolate
50g powdered pistachios

Cream the butter, sugar and egg in an electric mixer for two to three minutes, or until light and creamy. Add the flour and blend for a further two to three minutes.

Roll the dough out to a thickness of 5mm and, using a moon-shaped pastry cutter, cut out the biscuits.

Place biscuits on a greased baking tray and bake at 160°C for 10 to 12 minutes. Allow biscuits to cool.

When cool, sandwich two biscuits together with jam. Repeat process for all biscuits.

Dip the tops of each biscuit into the melted chocolate and sprinkle with powdered pistachios.

Caraway crescents

Shelf life: 5 days

50g butter
25g sugar
2½ tsp beaten egg
75g flour
20g caraway seeds

Cream the butter, sugar and egg together in an electric mixer for two to three minutes, or until light and creamy.

Add the flour and caraway seeds, and blend thoroughly for a further two to three minutes.

Take spoonfuls of the dough and shape into small crescents and place on a greased baking tray.

Bake at 160°C for 10 to 12 minutes.



Bakery basics

Al Reef has expanded well beyond its Arabic meaning of 'village'. Opened in 1986, Al Reef now has five bakeries and two restaurants in Dubai, open 24 hours a day. The main branch is in Karama, which employs 80 full-time staff, 62 of whom work in the kitchen. Al Reef bakery also offers a home-delivery service. ■