

Recipe: Camp Bolani

Ask any Afghan or friend of an Afghan what an iconic staple food is in their diet and undoubtedly, bolani will be in the top three. In my experiences traveling to 29 countries, almost every culture on earth has some sort of delicacy that consists of fried dough stuffed with vegetables or potatoes, but the Afghan version is by far my favorite. I make bolani a few times a month and love to have it as a snack or side dish.

The first time I ever had bolani was outside Vial refugee camp where the Afghan camp moms were making it on the side of the road. Having gained a reputation for looking like the Afghan people and thus being warmly welcomed into their culture, these lovely women decided that I, as an honorary Afghan, must know how to make bolani. Over the next few weeks I worked in Vial they showed me a few different strategies which included making their own dough, or repurposing some of the flat bread they got from local markets. The filling for the bolani would vary, but it consistently had potatoes, green onions, and some sort of leafy green like cilantro or spinach.



Refugee camp food is usually a variation of the original food since all of the ingredients might not be available. My personal preference for bolani, and the preference of

our Afghan brothers all over the world, is for flavorful ingredients to be used if they are available.

Ingredients

Dough:

2 cups Flour
1 teaspoon Salt
1 tablespoon Olive oil
Cold water

Filling:

1 medium to large potato
1 batch of green onions
1 batch of cilantro
Salt
Optional - leeks, hot peppers

Vegetable oil for frying
Flour for rolling out the dough

This will make roughly four pieces of bolani, depending on how liberal you are with stuffing and how thin you roll the dough. For my family of 4-5, I usually double the recipe.

Peel the potato, cut into chunks, and boil in plain water until it can easily be poked with a fork and will mash

While the potato is boiling, prepare the dough

- 1) In a food processor or with a whisk, mix the salt and flour in a bowl
- 2) Add in the oil, and mix in cold water with a wooden spoon until the dough is moist enough to stick together and knead into a ball, but not so sticky that it sticks onto other surfaces like your fingers.

This dough does not use yeast so you don't need to wait for it to rise. If you prepare it ahead of time, you can let it sit on the counter with a damp towel over it to keep it from drying out.



To finish preparing the filling,

- 1) Chop the green onions and cilantro into small pieces and mash the potatoes (sometimes I add a little oil if they are dry).
- 2) If you choose to include leeks as well, sautee those in olive oil over medium heat first until they are soft, then add the green onions and cilantro. Stir these over low heat, adding about a teaspoon of salt. I also add a half teaspoon of red pepper flakes to add some kick.
- 3) Over low heat, mix in the mashed potatoes to finish making the filling.

To prepare the bolani, roll the dough into a log and cut it into 2-inch segments



Roll the dough out flat on a floured surface and fold a spoonful of filling into the dough. Close the bolani with a fork and light fry it in pre-heated vegetable oil until golden brown.



Stack the fried bolani onto a plate and layer paper towels between them to soak up extra oil.

The bolani is best eaten fresh and can be an appetizer or snack or as the main course of a meal! We hope you enjoy this taste of Afghanistan!

