

## Rabbi Phyllis Berman's Hamantaschen Recipes and Kavannot



### How to prepare for making your Hamantaschen

The first step in making hamantaschen is preparation: preparation in the physical world (*assiya*), preparation in the emotional world (*yetzira*), preparation in the world of ideas and creativity (*bria*), and preparation in the world of soul integration (*atzilut*). What does all that mean to a baker or cook?

- First, I need to look at the recipe and check to see what **ingredients** I'll need and what **baking equipment** I'll need (rolling pin, electric mixer for dough, small bowls for filling, measuring cups and spoons, small glass to cut the circles that become triangles, baking pans that fit into my oven, parchment paper for the baking pans so I don't need to clean the pans between each batch that goes into the oven, and small boxes to use as mailers for out-of-town beloveds and recyclable small bags to give/send the hamantaschen).
- Second, I need to make or find the list of beloveds to whom I want to gift the *shalach manot*. My heart then engages as I think about these beloveds – which of them needs gluten-free, which of them prefers what kind of filling – and I begin to feel anticipatory pleasure about those who will be recipients of this *mitzva*.
- Third, when I know to whom I want to gift the home-made hamantaschen, then I can approximate how many hamantaschen I'm likely to need to make. If I can expect 24 hamantaschen per batch, I can anticipate how many batches I'm going to need, and how much of each ingredient I need to have on hand.
- Fourth, I allow myself to feel the fullness of the undertaking: an intense concentration exercise, focusing on the details undistracted, the sense of joy and satisfaction of giving sweetness to others as an offering of nourishment and love. Then I put on radio station WRTI (classical in the daytime, jazz at night) and I feel awake in the timelessness of music and the delicious smells of a kitchen, lost in the ecstasy of work leavened with love.

I usually make a double batch at a time, and, in making enough hamantaschen to send to the friends and relatives around the country and to deliver to friends nearby, I usually make six+ double-recipes resulting in about 300 hamantaschen.

## *Now let's make Hamantaschen*

**I. FILLING** (I usually make all the fillings I expect to use before I make the dough, so that the filling is ready when I begin to work with the dough; I don't want the dough to dry out whereas the filling can be refrigerated for use another day)

(I bought it at Acme; the Coop doesn't carry it) along with other Solo brand cake and pastry filling flavors such as prune, apricot, raspberry, cherry. I bought agave (healthier sugar substitute) in the Coop

12 oz. prune and/or poppy seed cake and pastry filling (mohn) for baking (*Solo brand from most supermarkets is easy to work with; I often use sugar-free jams for other flavors -- apricot, blueberry, etc. -- but the consistency is different, so you need to add more walnuts and raisins than the recipe below calls for to thicken the filling*)

2 1/2 tbsp. brown sugar

1/2 cup chopped walnuts

1/2 cup raisins

1/2 tsp. allspice

1 tbsp. lemon juice

rind of 1 lemon (*I use a tbsp. of lemon or lime zest*)

Combine all ingredients together and use a half tsp. to measure filling for the dough circle.

**II. GLUTEN-FREE HAMANTASCHEN DOUGH** (recipe from Elana's Pantry for friends & relatives who are gluten-free: *make these before the regular ones so that you don't "contaminate" the gluten-free crust with flour for those who get sick from gluten; this is a really easy recipe and quite delicious*)

3 cups blanched almond flour (*I use Bob's Red Mill brand, the best almond flour for gluten-free recipes*)

1/2 teaspoon (tsp.) celtic sea salt

1/2 cup grapeseed oil

1 egg

2 tablespoons (tbsps.) agave nectar natural sweetener (can be found at Coop)

1 tbsp. vanilla extract

In a large bowl, combine almond flour and salt. In a smaller bowl, mix together oil, egg, agave, and vanilla. Mix wet ingredients into dry. Roll dough into one inch balls; place them on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, then press flat into small circles. Scoop one teaspoon of filling into each circle of dough. Fold the dough in from three sides and pinch the corners to form a triangle. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes until dough is golden brown.

III. **COOKIE CRUST HAMANTASCHEN** (recipe thanks to Anne Greenblatt from the Teaneck Jewish Center's cookbook; she was a great baker! My dear friend Esther Greenberg z"l used to talk with me about what to do to prepare for Shabbat each week: she cleaned the house; I baked challah or a special dessert!)

The hardest part of this recipe is getting the perfect balance between flour and the rest of the ingredients; you can always add a little more flour if the dough isn't easy to work with, but start with carefully measuring 2 1/3 cups. "Easy to work with" means that it's neither too dry nor too sticky. As my mother used to say about all cooking (she didn't bake), you know when it "feels right". In this case, it has a silky feel; when you pinch the three corners to make the shape, it "feels right" if it holds the shape

1/2 cup butter or margarine (*I use canola or safflower oil so it's pareve/non-dairy*)

1 cup sugar (*2/3 cup; I almost always use less sugar than a recipe calls for*)

1 egg

1/4 cup orange juice

2 teaspoon (tsp). baking powder

1 tsp. vanilla

\*2 1/3 cups sifted white/all-purpose flour (*I use King Arthur flour, not because I'm married to him but because that's what they sell in the bulk section of the Coop*)

Cream butter/margarine or oil with sugar in a mixer on medium-speed until fluffy. Add on low-speed egg (always break egg into a small bowl so you don't get shells into the mixture), orange juice, vanilla, flour, baking powder, salt. Roll out (*with a rolling pin coated lightly with flour*) on floured surface to 1/4" thick (*I've never measured the thickness, but you want to get at least 24 circles from one recipe's worth, so it shouldn't be too thick or too thin*), and cut circles with a small glass (*about 2 1/2" in diameter*). Put desired filling in center of circle (*not so much that it spills out of the center when you pinch it into a triangular shape*). Form the triangle by pinching three corners of the circle together with the filling in the middle.

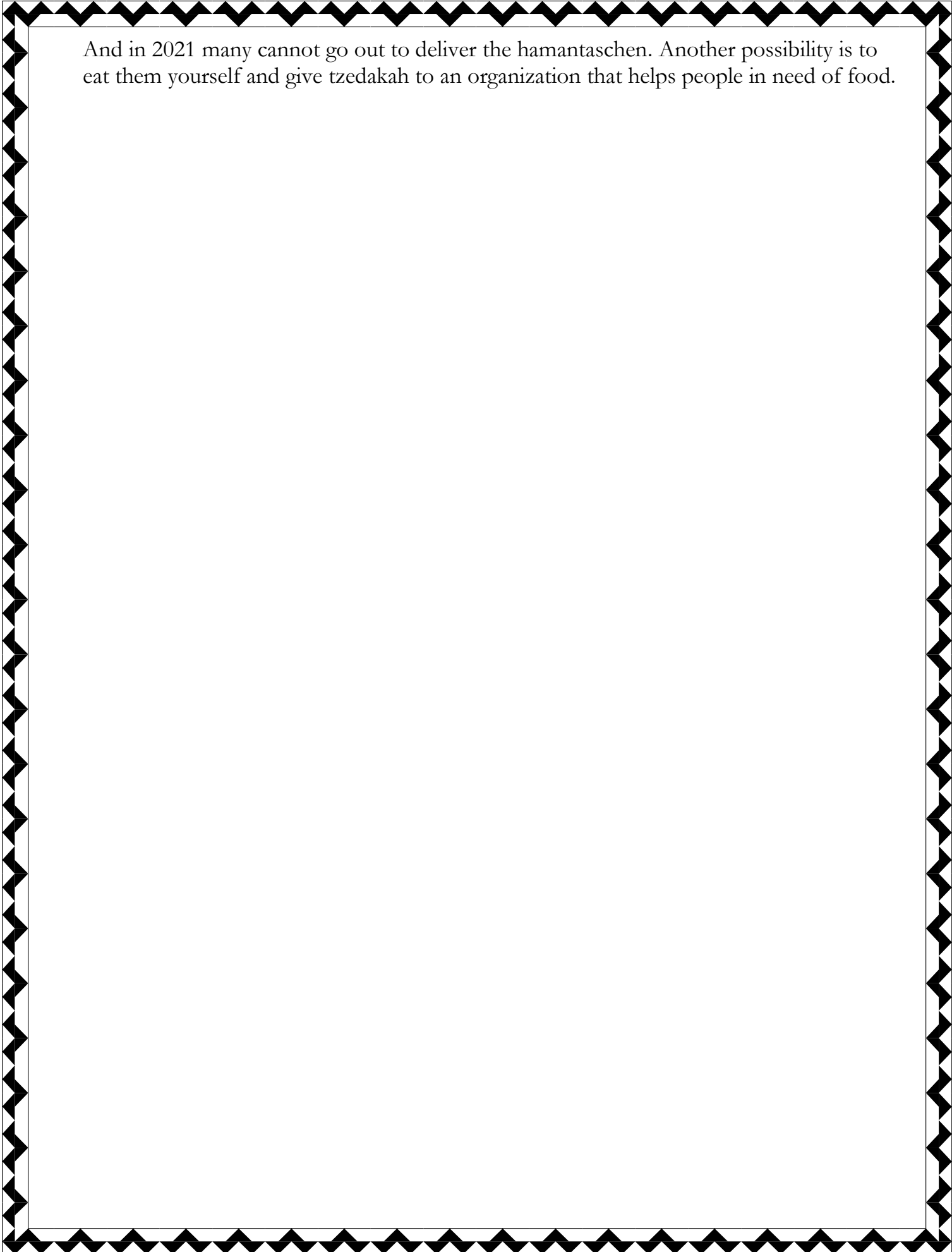
Bake on greased cookie sheet at 375 degrees for 20 minutes or until golden.

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Another word about *Shalach Manot* the tradition of gift giving for Purim-

Some people add other things to the bags of *shalach-manot* though I usually don't. The love is in the baking; nothing more is needed. I pack up bags to send around the country to beloveds and take them to the post office to send via priority mail at least a week before Purim.

I once sent my dear friends/teachers Rabbi David and Shoshana Cooper a small box: it traveled around the country as they moved from place to place. Nine months later, they and the hamantaschen finally came together in the same place: believe or not, the Coopers reported that they still tasted great!



And in 2021 many cannot go out to deliver the hamantaschen. Another possibility is to eat them yourself and give tzedakah to an organization that helps people in need of food.