



The recipe and custom for the bread of the seven heavens traveled from Spain to Salonika with the exiled Sephardic community. (Ronit Treatman/Times of Israel)

## Pan de Siete Cielos

*Adapted from "Cookbook of the Jews of Greece" by Nicholas Starvroulakis*



Milk, eggs, butter, and a hint of anise make this traditional bread rewardingly rich and a festive addition to the Shavuot holiday. (Ronit Treatman/Times of Israel)

### Ingredients

7-8 cups flour

2 cups sugar

2 oz. fresh yeast

5 eggs

1/3 cup warm water

5 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted

1 tsp. anise extract or Arak

½ cup milk

**Directions:**

Dissolve ½ teaspoon of sugar in the warm water.

Mix in the yeast, and allow to rest for 15 minutes.

Add the flour and mix well.

Cover the bowl with a clean towel and allow the dough to rise for 30 minutes.

Beat the eggs with the sugar and anise extract.

Pour them into the dough.

Add the butter and milk.

Knead the dough.

Cover the bowl with a towel, and allow the dough to rise until it doubles in size.

**To sculpt the bread:**

1. Begin with a ball of dough in the center. Some people like to braid it like a round *challah*. This is Mount Sinai.
2. Roll out 7 ropes of dough. These are the 7 heavens. Wrap them around Mount Sinai.
3. Make a Torah shape out of dough. Place it on top of the 7 heavens.
4. Shape Miriam's well. Attach it to the ring of "clouds."
5. Mold a snake and adhere it to the "clouds."
6. Build Jacob's ladder. Make it connect Mount Sinai to the seventh "cloud."

**To bake:**

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit (200 degrees Celsius).

Brush the bread with an egg wash (whip one egg yolk with 1 tbsp. of water).

Bake the bread at 400 degrees for 10 minutes.

Lower the temperature to 350 degrees Fahrenheit (175 degrees Celsius).

Bake for approximately 20 minutes, or until the bread is golden-brown in color.



One of the decorative symbols added atop the seven rings of 'clouds' around Mount Sinai is Jacob's ladder. (Ronit Treatman/Times of Israel)



The Torah scroll celebrates the Jewish reception of the Laws of Moses on the Shavuot holiday (Ronit Treatman/Times of Israel)