

Chef Helen's Homemade Mooncakes

INGREDIENTS:

- 150g low-gluten flour (低筋面粉, dī jīn miànfěn)
- 50g grams corn or sunflower oil (玉米油/葵花籽油, Yùmǐ yóu/ Kuíhuā zǐ yóu)
- 75g Lyle's golden syrup (糖浆, tángjiāng...check the wet market or get it from the [Avocado Lady](http://www.smartshanghai.com/venue/6005/Avocado_Lady))
- 1.25 grams alkaline water (碱性水, jiǎn xìng shuǐ)
- 1 Plastic bag
- One egg (鸡蛋, Jīdàn)
- Filling. Your choice. Harder fillings work better, e.g. chocolate bar will work better than Nutella. Sky is the limit here – we used bacon and cheddar, peanut butter and Nutella with almond, and dried strawberry with nutella and almonds)
- Mooncake molds (月饼模子, Yuèbǐng mózi) – either the old school wooden kind, or a plastic mooncake press. If you can't find these, a cookie cutter/mould will work fine.
- One oven. A small

PRACTICALITIES:

You should be able to find all of these ingredients at your neighborhood wet market. However, most modern-era Chinese people do not make mooncakes at home, so you may have to special order the syrup and the mooncake molds, which may take a day or so. Taobao is the obvious choice.

Using a scale is the most accurate way to measure these materials, but you can just convert grams to whatever you use.

Here's [a decent link for that](http://en.christinesrecipes.com/2011/03/converting-grams-to-cups.html).

THE RATATOUILLE & THE VEGETABLES:

- In a mixing bowl, add the oil into the flour then stir. Then add the syrup and continue stirring. Finally, add the alkaline and keep stirring until it's a uniform dough.
- Put the dough in a plastic bag and knead it until it becomes smooth. Then let the dough sit for 1-3 hours. The longer you wait, the easier the next steps will be. If you need to prepare other ingredients, like frying bacon or something, now is a good time.
- Now it's time to make the mooncake skin. The method will differ depending on if you use the old school wooden mold or the newer mooncake press.
- Mooncake press method: Weigh out 12 grams of dough, roll it into a ball, then press it flat in the palm of your hand. Do this slowly and delicately until the dough is completely flat and even. Add your filling to the middle of the cake —2 to 5 grams should be enough—then carefully work the dough around the filling until it's completely covered. You should have a completely smooth ball. Now sprinkle some flour into the press, put the ball in the press, and push down.
- Old school method: First, brush the inside of the wooden mould with oil and sprinkle some flour. Then weigh out 15g of dough, flatten it, then cover the bottom and sides of the wooden mold. Use a knife to cut of any dough that hangs over the edges. Then add the filling, and place another layer of flat dough over the top. Knead the edges together, then beat the mold against the table until the mooncake falls out.
- Pre-heat your oven to 150 °C, then grease a baking sheet with cooking oil and put your mooncakes on top. Bake for ten minutes.
- While you're waiting, separate an egg yolk and thoroughly beat it.
- Open the oven and use a brush to coat the mooncakes with the egg yolk. This will give them that beautiful glazed look. Then continue baking for ten more minutes
- Serve and enjoy.

