

Halim, a popular dish in Iran throughout history



Iranica Desk

According to historical books, *halim* has been a popular dish in Persia since ancient times, said a tourism expert. Mohammad Rahimi Khosh told

ISNA that *halim* is a stew-like dish, which has been common in the Middle East, especially Iran. He added, "There are various types of *halim*, with various ingredients, but the same cooking method is used for preparing all of them."

"For example, wheat *halim* is made with peeled and pounded wheat, onions, beef or lamb and oil. *Halim*'s color can be changed by adding spices such as cinnamon and sugar."

The expert continued that the cooking time of this dish is very long in such a way that people usually put the pot containing *halim* on a stove at night, and add water to it several times until early morning. Then they stir the *halim* with a large paddle to make it soft, consistent and elastic.

Rahimi Khosh noted that al-

though *halim* is eaten sweet in most parts of Iran, in some cities, including Zanjan, it is consumed with salt. *Halim* is a special food for the cold months of the year, and it has been customary to cook and consume it in the winter.

He noted that anthropologists and archaeologists examine the evolution of foods to find their roots and reasons for their emergence.

"Although foods like *halim* are cooked in many parts of the world, their main ingredients are wheat, barley and bran."



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He added that the first grains that were consumed by humans were wild wheat and barley, on which most herbivorous quadrupeds feed.

Rahimi Khosh pointed out that in the beginning, humans ate barley and wheat raw, not ground, but this caused their molar teeth to deteriorate. Therefore, over thousands of years, they realized that these grains should be cooked in boiling water before consumption.

He said after the discovery of fire, humans learned to add other plants and meat to soups made from grains. In order to make them easier to digest, they started to stir them while cooking.

Halim literally means sticky, stretchy, a wheat soup prepared from wheat and chicken or beef. Persians maintained the sacred aspect of cooking *halim* but introduced a new dimension to it. Served warm, *halim* became a breakfast staple in Persian cuisine.

Today, *halim* shops can be found all over Iran. Those who crave this Persian food for breakfast often purchase it from these establishments. *Halim* is now

available year-round and in various forms.

Halim is a nutrient-dense dish in Persian cuisine, providing a good balance of proteins, carbohydrates, and healthy fats. The grains and meat offer a substantial amount of protein, while the slow cooking process helps break down the grains, making them easier to digest.

Persian *halim* is usually served in a bowl and traditionally eaten with a spoon. The dish can be consumed as a hearty breakfast, a warming lunch, or even a satisfying dinner.

Halim is often associated with religious or cultural events and gatherings, such as Ramadan or Muharram, where it is prepared and served to the community. This act of sharing Persian food strengthens social bonds and carries on the historical tradition of "giving out nazri (a Persian tradition in which people cook food and give it to others, including the poor, friends and family)."

Halim is eaten in many other countries, including India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Turkey. Additionally, the dish has evolved over time with different versions and variations.

Ancient bridges in Khuzestan

Shushtar Bridge in Khuzestan Province, dating back to Sassanid era, had been constructed with bricks and it had various arches laid on different piles. When the bridge was visited by G.V. Roggen, a German orientalist, it didn't have five gates. Some of the piles of its bridge had been ruined and new piles were reconstructed. At present, except for some original parts, the rest have been destroyed.

Shushtar Bridge was made of carved cubic sandstones and the main road with the same materials with the thickness of about one meter. Roggen saw a part of piles, made of rubble stones, bricks and concrete. The width of weir of the bridge with a height of three to four meters above water level in dry season was a little more than the width of piles. The weir, which extended throughout the cross section of the river besides raising water level, fastening the piles together.

There were different arches over the bridge in order to increase the capacity of the river cross-section during overflowing.

The materials used had high quality and the places they had extracted the sandstone is still visible and can be seen the marks of peck stroke.

Shape of piles and their dimensions

All the piles of old bridges had rectangular cross section with a sharp edge opposite to the river water current. At first it looks like the dimensions of piles, are over design, but if we realize the pressure and water strokes during overflowing, we can understand the importance of this kind of design. The thickness of piles is between five to 6.40 meters and the length is a little more than the width of the road and some how less than the width of the weir bridge.

There were some small arches on the spaces between piles and the main arches (as mentioned before) in order to increase the capacity of river cross section during overflowing.

The distance between center to center of two piles were about

13 to 14 meters so the internal diameter of large arches were two times the width of their piles.

The width of the weir bridge was one or two meters longer than the length of the piles and it was eight to 12 meters. The advantage of Shushtar Bridge respect to two other important bridges in Khuzestan was its longitudinal axis, which was not in a straight line. Roggen guessed the builder tried to put the piles of the bridge on natural rocks, so the axes of bridge got out of line. The original Shushtar Weir Bridge had 40 gates and it was about 500 meters long.

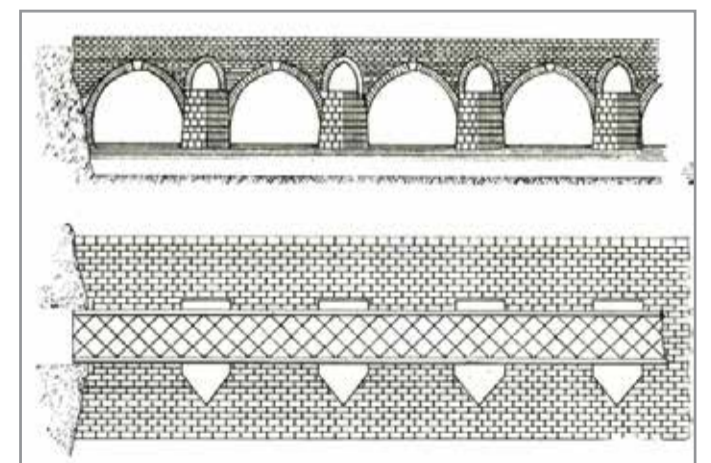
The Karun River was divided into two branches at the north of Shushtar. The eastern branch called, Gargar River and the Western one Shatit. These two branches joined together in Gheer Dam site again. That is why Shushtar and the land between these two rivers became as a peninsula.

There were two tunnels under Salasel Castle about 300 meters

upstream of Shushtar Bridge which joined together, 100 meters downstream and formed Darian Canal.

The other name of this canal was Mino-Ab or Darabian. It was said, this canal had been excavated by the order of Darius the Great. The width of both tunnels was three to 405 meters and on one side there was a passageway. They are all destroyed by now. By the way, the water intake bed of the tunnels was constructed as a weir. The height of the crest was about water level during dry season.

Darian Canal was divided into two branches in Band-e-Khak. The main branch went towards south, after 33km, it joined to Shatit River in Arab Hassan Weir. The topography between Shatit and Gargar Rivers were somehow that Darian Canal passed through ridges of the hills. So it was very easy to irrigate the land between these two rivers. There were many other irrigation canals passed through high lands. The second branch of Darian Canal after passing through Lash-



gar Bridge poured into Gargar River.

There was a dam in Band-e-Khak which store main portion of Darian Canal water discharge in original branch, because the eastern branch of Darian had 15 meters head.

Apparently they had constructed three more weirs to reduce the velocity of water. Roggen emphasized that Darian Canal had been older

than the other water structures which were constructed during Shapur the First (240-270 CE), because the max. height of weir in Darian was the same as water level during dry season. Roggen concluded that there must have been a dam for taking water before constructing the Shapur Bridge and perhaps Shapur the First repaired the weir or he had completely changed it.