



If you're cooking with Moroccan ground almonds, savoring Turkish delight, or celebrating spring with Greek Easter treats, chances are, you're using the earliest known natural chewing gum: *mastiha*. *Mastiha*, or mastic, oozes from a particular type of tree as a clear, sticky sap when the trees are damaged. On the Greek island of Chios, mastic is still cultivated traditionally, by making vertical incisions in the plants' stems; within a few weeks, the sap solidifies. Eaten on its own, mastic is initially bitter but then fruity, sweet and aromatic, with a licorice-like flavor. The resin gives a northern Greek ice cream called *kaimaki* its signature chewy, stringy texture. *Mastiha* oil, extracted through steam distillation, is used to flavor baked goods, ice creams and beverages. *Mastiha* is also added to alcohol to make a liquor and *mastiha ouzo*, and can be chewed on its own to freshen breath and whiten teeth. — Dani Friedland

### DID YOU KNOW?

**IN THE MIDDLE AGES, MONASTIC BROTHERS WHO PREPARED FOOD IN THE GREEK ORTHODOX MONASTERIES WORE TALL WHITE HATS TO DISTINGUISH THEM FROM THE REGULAR MONKS, WHO WORE LARGE BLACK HATS. THESE ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE INSPIRED CHEF'S TOQUES.**

## PHYLLO ON A ROLL

It was for baklava that David Schneider's Greek mother first showed him how to roll phyllo. "She taught me the dry way; she'd roll the dough with flour and stretch it with the back of her hands. She'd tack it on the edge of the table and let it stretch before drying and brushing it with oil," says the chef-owner of Chicago's Taxim, who's since found a faster way to make a thicker phyllo for his savory pies (*hortopitas*). "I roll the dough out with the fat and so my phyllo is moist, yet flaky." While he prefers his mom's method for his baklava, he uses this method for phyllo that has "more tooth and less crunch," he says, adding, "You may need to bake it longer to remove the moisture." Here Schneider demonstrates his process for rolling housemade phyllo. — L.G.



1. Separate dough into three-ounce ball portions. Brush with butter and oil.



2. Use hands to gently "open the leaf," or spread the dough on a flat, oiled surface.



3. Spread a line of filling on one edge of open dough.



4. Carefully twist dough into a rope-like shape, called "strifti."



5. Twist rope into coil shape and bake at 375 degrees F for 40 minutes.



6. The finished, baked *hortopita*, or greens pie.