

## Baklava

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*Baklava is a rich, sweet pastry made of layers of phyllo dough filled with chopped nuts and sweetened with syrup or honey. It is characteristic of the cuisines of the former Ottoman Empire and much of central and southwest Asia.*

*The history of baklava is not well-documented. It has been claimed by many ethnic groups, but there is strong evidence that it is of Central Asian Turkic origin, with its current form being developed in the imperial kitchens of the Topkapı Palace.*

*One of the oldest known recipes for a sort of proto-baklava is found in a Chinese cookbook written in 1330 under the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty under the name güllach. "Güllaç" is found in Turkish cuisine. Layers of phyllo dough are put one by one in warmed up milk with sugar. It is served with walnut and fresh pomegranate and generally eaten during Ramadan.*

*In Turkey, Gaziantep is famous for its baklava and regarded there as its native city, though it only appears to have been introduced to Gaziantep from Damascus in 1871. In 2008, the Turkish patent office registered a geographical indication certificate for Antep Baklava.*

*In Bosnia-Herzegovina baklava is generally rich in nuts and filling and is only eaten on special occasions, mostly during in the holy months of Ramadan and Eid.*

*In Iran, a drier version of baklava is cooked and presented in smaller diamond-shaped cuts flavored with rose water.*

*In Afghanistan and Cyprus, baklava is prepared into triangle-shaped pieces and is lightly covered in crushed pistachio nuts.*

Baklava



# Baklava

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- 1 lb shelled walnuts, toasted
- ½ lb blanched almonds, toasted
- ½ lb shelled pistachios, toasted
- ⅔ cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground cloves
- 1 lb unsalted butter, melted
- 1 lb phyllo pastry sheets

## ORANGE SCENTED SIMPLE SYRUP

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups water
- ½ cup orange blossom honey
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 2 large strips orange peel
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 whole cloves

- 1 Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- 2 Finely chop the nuts in a food processor or coffee grinder. Transfer nuts to a bowl and mix in brown sugar, ground cinnamon, and cloves.
- 3 Brush a 13- by 9-inch baking pan with melted butter and set aside. Cut a piece of cardboard into a 13- by 9-inch rectangle. Unroll the phyllo dough and lay the sheets flat on a work surface. Set the cardboard template on the stack of phyllo and trim the excess so they fit the pan. Keep the pastry covered with a damp, not wet, towel as you work to prevent drying out.
- 4 To build the baklava, you will alternate 3 layers of dough with 2 layers of nuts. Start with a stable base of 8 sheets on the bottom, brushing each with melted butter. Spread ½ the nut mixture evenly over the stacked sheets. Cover with 4 sheets of phyllo, painting each with melted butter, then sprinkle again with remaining nut mixture. Top the last layer of nuts with 8 layers of phyllo as you did for the bottom. Drizzle any remaining butter over top.
- 5 If you have time, cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes so the butter will set and make the baklava easier to cut. Using a sharp knife, make 5 cuts across lengthwise, then cut diagonally to form diamonds. Baklava is more difficult to cut after it is cooked because the pastry becomes so flaky. Bake for about 40 minutes until golden and flaky. If the top browns too quickly during baking, tent with foil.
- 6 To make the Orange Scented Simple Syrup: Combine the ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and let simmer for 10 minutes until thickened. Remove the orange peel, cinnamon stick, and whole clove; set aside to cool.
- 7 Remove an end piece of the baklava and tilt the pan to allow the butter to collect in the corner. Spoon out the excess and discard. With the pan flat, pour the syrup evenly over the hot baklava. Allow to stand for several hours before serving.

Servings: 25

Yield: 50 pieces

Recipe Type: Desserts

## Source

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Source: FOOD 911 with Tyler Florence - (Show # FO-1C13) - from the TV FOOD NETWORK