



sharing our Greek culinary heritage

Vasiliki's Baklava

For the baklava

600g walnuts, coarsely ground or chopped
100g almonds, finely ground or chopped
2 level tablespoons sesame seeds
2 heaped tablespoons white sugar
1 level teaspoon ground cinnamon
250g unsalted butter
3/4 cup olive oil
375g chilled fillo pastry

For the syrup

2 cups water
2 cups white sugar
1 cinnamon stick
10 whole cloves
1 tablespoon honey
Few drops fresh lemon juice
1 thick slice lemon

Making the baklava

Preheat the oven to 170°C.

Combine the walnuts, almonds, sesame seeds, sugar and cinnamon in a large bowl. Mix together with a spoon. Set the nut mixture aside.

Melt the butter on a medium flame. Remove from the flame and add the oil. Mix together with a spoon. Set the basting mixture aside.

Remove the fillo pastry from its packaging and lay it flat between two moistened tea towels.

Place one sheet of fillo pastry on your work surface in a landscape orientation. Use a basting brush to baste the fillo sheet with the basting mixture. Place a second sheet of fillo pastry directly on top of the first one and baste that sheet. Place a third sheet of fillo pastry on top of the first two and baste that sheet. Spread a thin, even layer of the nut mixture across the bottom half of the fillo pastry sheet. Place a fourth and final sheet of fillo pastry on top of the other three and baste that sheet. Spread another thin, even layer of the nut mixture across the bottom half of that fillo pastry sheet as well.

Roll over the nut-covered end of the fillo pastry by around 2cm and baste the rolled edge with some of the basting mixture. Continue to roll the fillo pastry tightly to form a long roll. Place the open edge of the roll at the bottom to avoid the roll unravelling. Set the baklava roll aside without over-handling it.

Repeat basting, filling and rolling the remaining sheets.

Cutting the baklava

Place one roll of baklava on a chopping board. Use a sharp, serrated knife to slice the baklava into evenly sized parallelograms of around 3cm in length. Use the blade of the knife or a long, thin spatula to pick up 3 pieces of baklava and place in line onto a greased, shallow baking tray (avoid over-handling the baklava to ensure the nut mixture does not fall out).

Repeat for the remaining rolls of baklava.

Baking the baklava

Brush some of the remaining basting mixture on top of all of the pieces of baklava and pour the remaining basting mixture onto the baking tray between the rolls of baklava.

Place the baking tray on the middle shelf of the oven (preheated to 170°C) and bake for approximately 45 minutes or until golden brown.

Making the syrup

The syrup needs to be warm when the baklava comes out of the oven so start preparing the syrup about 20 minutes after the baklava has been placed into the oven.

Place the water into a deep pot over a medium flame and add the sugar. Stir the mixture until the sugar dissolves. Add the cinnamon and cloves. Stir the mixture again. Once the syrup reaches boiling point (is bubbling), boil it for exactly 6 minutes. Add the honey, lemon juice and lemon slice. Boil for another 2 minutes exactly.

Remove the syrup from the flame and place it on your work surface.

Allow the syrup to cool for around 5 minutes before you drench the baklava.

Drenching the baklava

Remove the lemon slice and cinnamon stick from the syrup.

Remove the baklava from the oven and place it on your work surface.

Use tongs to pick up a piece of baklava and place it into the syrup. Turn the piece of baklava over a few times in the syrup to ensure that the syrup penetrates completely through the piece of baklava. Remove the piece from the syrup and place it onto a clean tray. Repeat for all of the pieces of baklava.

Completing the baklava

Allow the baklava to cool for a couple of hours before eating so the syrup thickens.

Baklava can keep for up to a week, but good luck resisting the temptation to eat it all before then!

Recipe makes 50 pieces.