



Baklava

Makes 40 triangular pieces, about 3 inches each

- 2 cups coarse-ground walnuts
- 2 cups ground almonds
- 2 cups fine breadcrumbs
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 pound unsalted butter
- 1½ pounds phyllo dough (see note)

For the syrup:

- 2 cups honey
- 2 cups sugar
- 1½ cups water
- 1 orange or lemon zest
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 2 allspice berries
- 2 whole cloves

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over low heat. Clarify it by removing white milk solids from butter, using a spoon. Discard the solids.

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Mix the walnuts, almonds, ground spices, breadcrumbs and sugar together in a medium bowl.

Brush the bottom of an 11-by-17-by-2-inch baking pan with the clarified butter. Keep the stack of phyllo dough covered with a clean, damp (not wet) kitchen towel.

The phyllo might hang over the edges of the pan as you assemble; the edges can be folded over, buttering as you go. Lay one layer of phyllo dough onto the buttered baking sheet and brush with butter. Repeat until there are five layers of phyllo dough, drizzling and brushing butter over each layer of phyllo as you go.

Sprinkle a thin layer of the nut-spice mixture evenly over the top of the buttered phyllo. Cover it with a single phyllo sheet, butter it, and sprinkle a thin layer of nut-spice mixture, and continue in this fashion, alternating between the nut-spice mixture and phyllo sheets until you have used all of the mixture, reserving five sheets of phyllo for the top.

Using the last five sheets of phyllo, alternate the buttering and layering of each sheet until all five sheets have been used.

Using a very sharp knife, carefully cut to the bottom of the pan with a sawing motion to make diamond shapes. To do this, use a ruler to evenly space four cuts the long way and five short cuts across to form squares, and then cut the squares diagonally in half for the diamond shape. Pour the remaining butter over the scored baklava.

Bake until the top layer of the baklava is puffed and golden, about 50 minutes to 1 hour. It can take up to 1½ hours.

Remove from oven to cooling rack. Allow baklava to cool completely before adding hot syrup (it can stand overnight). Never add hot syrup to hot baklava, or cold syrup to cold baklava.

When baklava is cool, make the syrup. Cut the zest from the orange or lemon with a vegetable peeler and combine it with the honey, sugar water and whole spices in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil and then reduce to steady simmer until slightly thickened, about 20 minutes. Syrup should coat back of a spoon.

Spoon the syrup evenly over the baklava. The baklava should stand at least 24 hours and, optimally, several days before serving.

Baklava can be stored in the baking pan at room temperature about a week. To store longer, cover tightly with foil or plastic wrap and refrigerate. Baklava can be frozen.

Notes: Most supermarkets sell phyllo dough that is smaller than this recipe requires. The larger phyllo sheets, about 14 by 18 inches, can be found fresh, not frozen, in the refrigerator case at Parthenon Foods, 8415 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis, and Middle Eastern grocers such as Holyland, 2755 W. Ramsey Ave., Greenfield. The larger phyllo sheets also are available at Woodman's, with locations including Menomonee Falls, Waukesha and Oak Creek.

Phyllo dough is forgiving, the recipe's submitter notes. Any tears or wrinkles will virtually disappear during baking. But do not let phyllo dough dry out, or it will turn brittle; use a damp (not wet) kitchen towel to cover the unused phyllo while assembling.

Nordic Ware makes sheet-cake pans that are about 17 by 14 inches and 2 inches high; it's sold at retailers including Target.