



Armenian Baklava

As Maggie Saab, whose family was from Kilis, Armenia (now part of Turkey), taught Lindsay Sterling in Falmouth, MA.

Cooking time: 1 hr (plus the phyllo needs at least 3 hours to thaw beforehand)

Serves: about 40 pieces

Note: you may have to order the asterisk-ed ingredients online or find them at a Middle Eastern market near you. Phyllo dough is in the freezer in a rectangular box.

Ingredient

- 1 box phyllo dough
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp rose water* (optional)
- 4 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted
- 12 oz. walnuts
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- unsalted pistachios, chopped finely (optional)*

Equipment

- Pastry brush
- parchment paper
- sheet pan or cookie sheet
- small bowl
- food processor
- large mixing bowl
- small pot
- mixing spoon

Instructions

Ahead of time:



1. Thaw the phyllo dough one of two ways. You can either put the box of phyllo in the fridge one or two days before cooking and then put it on the counter an hour before you want to work with it (so that it becomes room temp.) Or you can take the frozen phyllo out of the freezer 3 hours before you want to work with it, take it out of the box (leaving the phyllo sealed in plastic), and thaw it on the counter for 3 hours.

2. Make the syrup. In a small sauce pan, bring sugar and water to a boil, stirring a little bit so that the sugar melts into the water. Let boil, add lemon juice, and turn heat down to medium-low for about ten minutes. Turn off heat. Once cooled, add rose water, and cool further in the fridge.

When you want to cook:

3. Preheat the oven to 375.

4. Make the filling. Pulse walnuts in a food processor so that you have a crumbly mixture of nuts, with most pieces about 1/4 inch or less. Put into a medium sized bowl. Stir in cinnamon and just enough of the syrup so that the mixture kind of holds together but not all the way. You may also choose to use honey for this part.

5. Prepare and layer the phyllo dough. Melt the butter in the microwave or on the stove. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Open the phyllo dough and unroll it so that the stack of rectangular sheets lays flat. Clear a workspace in front of you. Have the butter, phyllo and cookie sheet handy. Take two sheets of the phyllo dough off the stack and lay them in front of you on the counter with the the longest edge facing you. (Cover the stack of phyllo dough with a clean towel so the rest of the phyllo doesn't dry out and break while you're working). Brush a thin layer of butter on the top sheets that you just placed in front of you. Take another two pieces of phyllo dough from the stack and lay them right on top of the ones in front of you. Brush the top layer with butter.

6. Make an inch-thick row of the nut mixture on the phyllo along the edge closest to you. Roll the phyllo layers over the filling as tightly as you can, squeezing the nuts once they're enclosed, to get them into the cylinder shape. Continue rolling away from you through the rest of the phyllo dough so that you end up with a long cylinder that's about an inch in diameter. Transfer to a sheet pan lined with parchment paper.

7. Brush the top of the roll with butter, and use a paring knife to cut across the roll at a diagonal making pieces that are about an inch wide. Make more rolls just like



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the first until you run out of filling. Bake the baklava until golden, 15-20 minutes. Remove from the oven and immediately spoon the cool syrup slowly over each roll. Listen to it sizzle. The syrup will pool a little below each row by about a half of an inch, but don't worry. Over time the hot pastry will suck up most if not all of the syrup. Sprinkle the tops of the pastry with chopped unsalted pistachios if you like. Present the pieces in a pretty shape like a spiral or concentric circles on a platter.