

GUASTELLO'S VILLAGE MARKET

Baklava

Yield: 24 pieces

Ingredients

6 oz shelled pistachios, coarsely chopped
6 oz walnuts, coarsely chopped
6 oz hazelnuts, coarsely chopped
1/4 cup sugar
1 to 2 tbsp ground cinnamon (start with less if you're not sure)
large pinch of ground cloves
16-oz package phyllo dough, thawed
1 1/2 to 2 sticks of unsalted butter (up to 16 tbsp), melted

For the honey syrup:

3/4 cup sugar
1 cup cold water
1 cup honey
1 tbsp orange extract (optional)
5 whole cloves
1 lemon, juice of

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Make the Honey Syrup: Place the sugar and water in a saucepan and heat stove-top, stirring occasionally, until sugar dissolves. Add the honey, orange extract if using, and whole cloves; stir to mix. Bring to a boil, then lower heat and let simmer for about 25 minutes. Remove syrup from heat and let cool to lukewarm. Add lemon juice. Remove the whole cloves.

Make the Nut Mixture: In the bowl of a food processor fitted with a blade, add the pistachios, walnut, and hazelnuts. Pulse a few times to chop. Transfer to a large mixing bowl and add sugar, cinnamon, and ground cloves. Mix well to combine.

Prepare the Phyllo Pastry: Unroll the thawed phyllo pastry and place the sheets in between two clean kitchen towels. This will help keep the phyllo from breaking while you work.

Assemble the Baklava: Prepare a 9"x 13"x 2" baking pan. Brush the interior of the baking pan with some of the melted butter. To assemble the baklava, take one sheet of phyllo and place it in the pan (for this size pan, I typically fold my phyllo sheet in half, and it fits perfectly. You can also do a bit of trimming using a pair of kitchen shears). Brush the top of the phyllo sheet with the melted butter.

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Repeat this process a few more times until you have used up about 1/3 of the phyllo pastry, each layer being brushed with the melted butter.

Now, distribute about ½ of the nut mixture evenly over the top layer of phyllo.

Continue assembling the baklava, one sheet of phyllo pastry at a time using another 1/3 of the phyllo. Again, brush each layer with a bit of the melted butter.

Distribute the remaining ½ of the nut mixture evenly over the top layer of phyllo.

Finish the remaining 1/3 of the phyllo pastry following the same process, laying one folded sheet at a time and brushing each layer with melted butter. Brush the very top sheet of phyllo with butter.

Cut the Baklava Pastry Into Pieces: Using a sharp knife, cut the pastry into 24 diamond shaped pieces (you can get up to 36 smaller pieces). (Review the tutorial above to see how I cut baklava).

Bake: Place the baking dish on the middle rack of your heated oven. Bake anywhere from 35 to 45 minutes or until the top of the baklava turns golden and a skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. (IMPORTANT...Because ovens vary, be sure to check your baklava half-way through baking).

Pour Syrup Over Hot Baklava: As soon as you remove the baklava from the oven, pour the cooled syrup all over the hot baklava.

Cool Completely: Allow baklava to sit for a few hours before serving or for at least 1 hour. Cut through the earlier marked pieces. Serve with a garnish of chopped pistachios, if you like.

Cook's Tip: Before you begin thaw the baklava pastry package in the fridge overnight (review package instructions). Take it out of the fridge 1 hour before you start.

Let Baklava Sit a While Before Serving: Make sure baklava sits cools completely before serving. Baklava is even better the next day when it's had time to absorb the syrup.

Credit: themediterraneandish.com