

Recipe ideas – the “very best” Baklava

Baklava is a rich and sticky treat at this time of the year, particularly favoured if you love both nuts and pastry.

At Antioch Restaurant in Dunfermline the chefs bake generations of experience into each and every slice.

Recipes vary but they always include the essentials of filo pastry sheets, a sweet syrup, (typically honey mixed with juices and spices), nuts (most often walnuts and/ or pistachios) and butter.

Like other filo-based pastries, baklava is made by brushing the thin, papery sheets with butter and layering them with nuts, sugars, and spices. Baklava is topped with a sweet honey-based syrup that is allowed to soak into the stacked layers.

The dessert is most often associated with both Turkey and Greece, with each country changing the recipe slightly to make it unique, but certainly Turkey can lay most claim with modern Baklava that we enjoy today most likely to have been invented during the Ottoman Empire.



Baklava

The act of layering unleavened flat bread with chopped nuts and honey can be traced back as far as 2025 BC, during the Assyrian Empire.

It's not hard to make baklava, but it is time consuming. It is certainly worth the effort though. Here are two recipes – one for a traditional baklava, and one for a rose baklava. Make sure you don't use concentrated rosewater as the flavour will be far too strong. If you can only find concentrated rosewater (in a 60ml bottle), always dilute it – 2 tsp diluted in 250ml water. Use 4 tbsp of this diluted version for the syrup, and 150ml for pouring over the baklava.

Or you can sit back and enjoy a truly authentic Baklava at the award winning [Antioch Restaurant](#) in Dunfermline, winner of Best Restaurant in Scotland.



Owner Nihat Oymat, and his team of experienced pastry chefs, have years of experience in creating this most classic of desserts.

CLASSIC BAKLAVA

Makes 24-28 pieces, cooks in 1 hr 5 mins

Ingredients

- 200g butter, plus extra for greasing
- 200g pistachios
- 50g walnuts
- 50g pecans
- 3 tbsp honey
- 2 x 270g pack filo pastry

For the syrup

- 250g golden caster sugar
- 50g honey
- 2 tsp orange blossom water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp ground cardamom (from 3 pods)

Method

▪ STEP 1

Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4 and grease a 21cm x 21cm square cake tin with butter. Chop the nuts into small pieces using a food processor, taking care not to blitz them to a paste. Put them into a bowl, stir in the honey and a pinch of salt and set aside.

▪ STEP 2

Melt the butter in a pan over a low heat. Cut the first pack of filo pastry sheets in half (so that they fit the tin). Put one sheet in the tin and brush with the melted butter. Lay another sheet on top and brush with butter again, keep layering like this until the whole pack is used up.

▪ STEP 3

Spread the honey and nut mixture over the pastry and press it down lightly with the back of a spoon. Open the other pack of filo, cut in half and continue the layering and buttering process. When you reach the last sheet pour any remaining butter over the top to finish. Use a sharp knife to cut deep lines into the pastry to create either squares or diamond shapes then bake in the oven for 20 mins.

▪ STEP 4

Reduce the heat to 150C/130C fan/gas 2 and bake for a further 45 mins. While the baklava cooks put all the syrup ingredients

into a saucepan and add 200ml water. Heat gently until the sugar has dissolved then boil the mixture for 8-10 mins or until it has reduced to the consistency of runny honey.

▪ **STEP 5**

When the baklava comes out of the oven, pour the warm syrup over the top, allowing it to run into the lines you have cut. Leave it to soak in and serve when it's completely cold.

ROSE BAKLAVA

Makes 16 pieces, cooks in 45 mins.

Ingredients

- **Greek yogurt, to serve**

For the syrup

- **300g golden caster sugar**
- **juice $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon**
- **4 tbsp rosewater (not concentrated, see tip)**
- **1 large cinnamon stick**

For the baklava

- **75ml olive oil**
- **500g chopped almonds**
- **75g golden caster sugar**
- **2 tbsp ground cinnamon**
- **$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cloves**
- **250g-270g pack filo pastry sheets**
- **150ml rosewater (not concentrated, see tip)**

Method

▪ **STEP 1**

Put all the ingredients for the syrup in a heavy-based saucepan, and add 400ml cold water. Stir over a gentle heat to

dissolve the sugar, then bring to a steady simmer for 10 mins or until it becomes slightly syrupy. Leave to cool.

▪ STEP 2

Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. Lightly brush the sides and base of a 23 x 33cm shallow ovenproof dish with a little of the oil.

▪ STEP 3

For the baklava, mix together the almonds, sugar, cinnamon, cloves and rosewater.

▪ STEP 4

Place 1 sheet of filo in the bottom of the dish and brush liberally with oil. (If the filo sheets are very large, cut them all in half before using.) Place another one on top and coat again with oil. Repeat this process of layering and brushing with oil until half of the filo sheets are used up. Now spread on the filling and cover with the remaining filo sheets, layering and oiling as before. Be sure to brush the top sheet with oil too. Score the top to form diamond-shaped slices.

▪ STEP 5

Bake in the oven for about 30 mins, increasing the heat for the last 5 mins to 200C/180C fan/gas 6 to give the pastry a light golden colour.

▪ STEP 6

Remove from the oven and immediately pour half the cooled rose syrup over the hot pastry. Leave to rest for at least 30 mins so the syrup can seep through the layers. Serve with big dollops of Greek yogurt and the remaining syrup.

Tip: If you can only find concentrated rosewater (in a 60ml bottle), use 2 tsp and dilute it in 250ml water. Use 4 tbsp of

this diluted version for the syrup, and 150ml for the baklava.

