

Baklava

The best baklava in Turkey comes from the southeast, notably the town of Gaziantep, which is surrounded by pistachio groves and known for its master baklava makers. Traditionally it would be made with yufka, which is a super-fine dough rather like filo, and baked in a round dish called a tepsi in a wood-fired oven. There are all kinds of different baklava shapes – layered, rolled, twisted and coiled – and it can of course be made with different nuts – walnuts, pistachios and hazelnuts being most common. For added flavour use honey instead of some or all of the sugar.



Makes: one 30cm diameter circular tray or one 27cm square tray or one 20cmx35cm rectangular tray

450g filo or yufka pastry sheets

350g walnuts (or pistachios or hazelnuts or a mix)

200g unsalted butter

450g sugar (or use half sugar, half honey)

250ml water

2 tbsps lemon juice, orange blossom water, rose water or 1 tbsp vanilla essence

1. Heat the oven to 160C. Melt the butter in a small saucepan. Get out the pastry and keep it under a very slightly damp tea towel to stop it drying out.
2. Brush your tray (see above for sizes that work) with melted butter. Cover the base with a sheet of filo and brush lightly with butter. Repeat layering and buttering until you have used nearly half the dough.
3. Blitz nuts in a processor until around half are finely chopped and half are coarsely chopped. Spread over the dough in your baking tray.
4. Cover the nuts with more layers of buttered filo, as before, until the packet has been used up. Butter the top layer too. Then use a sharp knife to trim the pastry edges and cut the baklava into squares, diamonds or triangles.
5. Bake for one hour in the lower third of the oven, or until the top is golden and the pastry cooked all the way through. If the top is going too dark before the baklava is done, cover it with some baking paper.
6. Meanwhile prepare the syrup: Put the sugar in a saucepan and pour around the water. Cover and heat gently until all the sugar has dissolved, without boiling. Now uncover, add lemon juice, orange/rose water or vanilla, bring to a boil and then simmer for 15 minutes or until it has thickened slightly.
7. When the baklava is done, remove it from the oven and pour the hot syrup all over. Let sit for a few minutes then re-cut the shapes to check they will lift out easily. Let cool. Serve with tea or coffee.

