

Baklava

500 g filo pastry sheets

150 g clarified butter, warmed (* see note below on how to make clarified butter), or you can also use Ghee or if there is no time at all then use regular melted butter

250 g shelled pistachio nuts/walnuts or other nuts of your choice

For the Pastry Cream:

300 ml milk

40 g Semolina

1 tbsp caster sugar

For the Syrup:

600 g granulated sugar

1 tsp lemon juice

Enough water to reach the top of the sugar

* To make Clarified Butter: Place butter in a small pan and leave it over a very low heat until it has melted. Skim off any scum from the surface and pour off the clear (clarified) butter into a bowl, leaving behind the milky white solids that will have settled on the bottom of the pan. The butter is ready to use.

1. First make the pastry cream. Put the milk and semolina into a small, non-stick pan and slowly bring to the boil, stirring. Simmer for 1 minute, then transfer the mixture to a bowl, press a sheet of clingfilm onto the surface to prevent it from forming a skin and leave to go cold.
2. Use the food chopper or manual food processor to chop your nuts to a fine even consistency – don't be tempted to do it in a regular food processor, it won't be the same!
3. Preheat the oven to 160C. Cut down the filo pastry sheets if necessary so they will be the same size as the medium bar pan. Brush the base and sides of the tin with some of the butter using the chef's silicone basting brush, then line the base with 15 single layers of pastry, brushing each one lightly with butter before adding the next. Don't butter the last sheet of pastry.
4. Mix the pastry cream until smooth, loosening it slightly with a little milk if it seems stiff, then spread it evenly over the top of the pastry. Sprinkle over the chopped pistachios/nuts in an even layers. Cover the top of the baklava with another 15 layers of filo pastry, lightly brushing with butter between each layer.
5. Using a larger, very sharp knife, cut the baklava into portion-sized pieces - make 6 evenly spaced cuts lengthways down the tin and then cut across at an angle to make small diamond-shaped pieces (Note: I prefer to cut them into square pieces, less wastage).

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Drizzle over any remaining butter. Bake the baklava for 1 hour until crisp and richly golden.

6. Meanwhile, for the sugar syrup, put the sugar and 350 ml water into a pan and leave over a low heat until the sugar has completely dissolved and the mixture is clear. Then bring to the boil and simmer vigorously for approx 5 mins. Add the lemon juice to the syrup and set aside.
7. A minute or two before the baklava is ready to come out of the oven, bring the sugar syrup back up to the boil. Remove the baklava from the oven, quickly and carefully run a knife along the cuts to check the pieces are all separated, then immediately pour over the hot syrup. This will look like a large amount, but it will gradually be absorbed by the pastry as it cools. Leave the baklava to go cold, then carefully remove from the tin using mini serving spatula to serve.

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