

## Baklava

One of my most cherished childhood memories that I have with my grandmother are of her baking delicious pastries in our kitchen. The scents of rose water, cardamom, and sugar are a few of the comforting smells the house would bring while she would prepare many baked goods. My absolute favorite pastry she would make is baklava (a.k.a. baklawa) with walnuts. I had the privilege of her making it in my very own kitchen a few years ago. She's an excellent teacher and I credit her for amazing cooking talents and skills. I decided to attempt making it on my own and created a recipe as close to my grandmothers as I could with her being 3000 miles away. A little memory and a phone call went a long way. Thank you Nana....

## Ingredients

2 cups + 3 tablespoons sugar, divided  
1 cup water  
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice  
3 cups chopped walnuts (about 12 ounces)  
1 teaspoon finely ground cardamom  
3 teaspoons rose water  
1 cup unsalted butter, melted  
20 14x9 inch sheets frozen phyllo dough, thawed

**Special Equipment:** 13x9x2 Baking Pan

## Preparation

Combine 2 cups sugar, 1 cup water, and 1 teaspoon lemon juice in a saucepan over medium heat, stirring to dissolve sugar. Simmer over medium heat until reduced to 1 ½ cups, about 8-10 minutes. Test to see if syrup has formed by placing a drop on your finger. Set aside and let syrup cool.

Place nuts in a food processor and pulse until nuts are chopped into small pieces, about 8-10 pulses. Pour nuts into mixing bowl and add 3 tablespoons sugar, cardamom, and rosewater. Thoroughly mix and set aside.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees with one rack in the third position from the bottom (center) and one in the third position from the top. Brush 13x9x2 inch baking pan with melted butter. Place 2 phyllo sheets on bottom of the pan and generously brush with melted butter, making sure to brush all corners. Repeat 4 more times with phyllo sheets and melted butter to equal 10 sheets total. Sprinkle walnut mixture evenly over phyllo, keeping mixture away from the edges to prevent burning. Place 2 sheets of phyllo dough over nut mixture and brush with melted butter. Repeat 4 more times with phyllo sheets and melted butter to equal 10 sheets total.

Using a sharp knife, cut diagonally through top phyllo layer from top left corner to bottom right corner. Cut top layer of phyllo into 1-inch wide rows parallel to both sides of first cut. Turn pan and carefully cut rows going the opposite direction, forming a diamond pattern.

Bake baklava in the center rack of the oven for 25 minutes. Move pan to the upper rack of the oven for 5 minutes longer until golden and crisp. Remove from oven and drizzle 1 cup of the cooled syrup mixture evenly over hot baklava. Add more if preferred. Cool in pan then recut baklava along lines all the way through and serve.

\*Baklava can be made 2 days ahead and stored in an airtight container at room temperature. You may also freeze the baklava in an airtight container layered with wax paper and thaw before serving.

Makes about 25-30 pieces.