

Ben's Not So Secret Baklava Recipe

Crispy layers of buttery phyllo dough, filled with nuts, cinnamon and sticky vanilla-honey sauce.

Servings: Depends On Cut Size, About 60 Pieces

Prep Time = 1 to 1.5 Hours | **Cook Time** = 50 Minutes | **Cool Time:** Overnight

Personal Notes:

There are a lot of steps here, but trust me, this isn't super hard to make. It does take some dedicated time in prep and at the stove. I've included some helpful tips along the way to make it easier.

Special Equipment

1 x 9x13 Pan | 1 x Medium Saucepan

1 x Spray Bottle (Walmart Travel Section)

1 x Silicone Brush

1 x Spoon

60+ Cupcake Paper Liners

Ingredients:

For Sauce

1 1/2 Cups - Water

1 1/2 Cups - Sugar

3/4 Cup - Honey (preferably orange blossom, or another locally sourced honey)

1 Tablespoon - Vanilla

For Baklava

1 Package - Phyllo Dough (Athens Brand)

1 lb - Walnuts, finely chopped

4 Tablespoons - Cinnamon

2-3 Sticks - Salted Butter



Directions

1. Prepare the nuts by chopping them finely - but not to powder - and evenly coat with cinnamon; set aside.
2. Melt butter and pour into clean spray bottle. Ensure the setting is a nice spray and not stream by practicing into the melting bowl; set aside. If not using spray bottle, substitute references for silicone brush. You may still need a silicone brush to evenly spread the butter.
3. Prepare the 9x13 pan by coating the sides and bottom with a light coating of butter.
4. Open the box of phyllo dough but **NOT** the two inside logs of phyllo dough in plastic.
5. If you work fast, you can skip this step - if slow, prepare a stack of wet paper towels. You'll use these to cover the phyllo dough between layers to help keep it moist.
6. Carefully open one log of phyllo dough and unroll it completely – *take care to ensure you don't rip or drop the sheets as they are folded up*. Cover with damp paper towels, if using. *Note: Some packages are better and some have lots of sheets stuck together. If any sheets rip, just put them how they should go as best you can and you'll never be able to tell.*
7. Working quickly, begin the layering process covering the phyllo dough sheets with the damp paper towels between use, if using; start with 2 sheets of phyllo dough, spritz completely with butter, 2 more sheets, butter, 2 more sheets, butter. **On the 6th sheet (3 layer) mark**, lightly sprinkle some of the cinnamon nut mixture; ~1 tablespoon.
8. **Switch to nuts every layer** until you run out of sheets in package one. Follow the pattern: 2 sheets, butter, layer (~1.5-2 tablespoons) of cinnamon nuts, 2 sheets, butter, cinnamon nuts. **Be sure you are buttering and sprinkling the nut mixture evenly across the entire surface; don't forget the edges or corners!**
9. Once you've used all the phyllo dough from the first log, **preheat the oven to 350 degrees**. Check your stock of nuts and butter. You'll likely need more butter to finish.
10. After you've restocked, open the 2nd log of phyllo dough and **count up from the bottom 8 sheets (4 layers) and slide the plastic in between to mark it.** *MENTAL NOTE: If you're experiencing a lot of ripped sheets, try to keep or swap around at least one good sheet for the top.* For now, continue the same process of 2 sheets, butter, and cinnamon nuts, etc., until you've reached the last 8 sheets you just marked.
11. **The last 8 sheets (4 layers) get NO nuts between them.** Here you'll want to do single sheets and lightly butter every sheet. If you forget and do every 2 sheets, it will work but will be harder to cut. **DO NOT BUTTER THE TOP YET!**

12. Using a sharp knife, cut the baklava into your preferred shapes. I typically do two-bite squares by making 6 rows longways and then cutting them into squares. You'll need to use both hands to gently hold the sheets/rows and cut with a quick sawing motion. Wipe the knife with damp paper towels, as needed, to clean butter off if you have excessive pulling.
13. **Spray tops of cut baklava with a generous coating of butter and cinnamon nuts.** Use about double the nuts compared to what you put between each layer for the top layer.
14. Slide/scrape a spoon along the edges of the pan to carefully remove excess butter and nuts, wiping into damp paper towels to discard or use for other recipes. Wipe along the pan edges to clean off butter above baklava line. *If you skip these steps, you'll likely have burned nuts around the edges that will give the baklava pieces along the edge a burnt taste.*
15. **Bake for ~50 minutes** in the preheated 350-degree oven. It should be a medium golden brown when it's finished. Don't open the door to check until at least 45 minutes.
- 16 **No rest!** While the baklava is in the oven, you'll prepare the sauce so it has time to cool.
17. In a medium saucepan, add water and sugar. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring until the sugar completely dissolves.
18. Add honey and vanilla extract, stir until completely dissolved.
19. Simmer over medium to medium-low heat for **20 minutes**, stirring frequently as it can boil over. After 20 minutes, remove from heat and set aside until the baklava is ready.
21. Once the baklava timer is up, remove from oven. **Immediately** pour sauce slowly and evenly over every single piece (*if you miss one it won't be shiny*). It will seem like there is too much sauce, but it will absorb over the next few hours.
22. Hard part, waiting. You must now wait until it cools to room temp, then chill in the fridge before eating. Once cooled, cut along the existing lines and use a small spatula to carefully remove your first piece. It may pop apart into a top and bottom section but just squish back together. For the next ones, be sure to carefully get underneath (they're sticky!) and remove. Enjoy and share as you wish; cupcake liners are usually easiest for transport or events. Keep the baklava in the pan until ready to transport/eat as it soaks through the cupcake liners.
- DO NOT COVER, OR IT WILL GO SOGGY.** You can partially cover, or cover for short periods like transport, but not for storage. I usually keep mine in the fridge for about a week. Any longer and it seems to dry out a little but is still delicious. I've heard it can be frozen but have never had excess to try. **I wish you the best of luck and hope you enjoy your baklava!**

-Ben