

Pumpkin Baklava

Pastry Ingredients

1 medium size pumpkin, 4-6 cups shredded
1 stick butter
1 cup sugar (white or brown)
1/2 to 1 cup vegetable oil
1.5 – 2 cups walnuts, coarsely chopped
1 box phyllo dough (Follow thawing instructions on the box)

Syrup Ingredients

2 cups water
2 cups sugar (white or brown)
1 tsp of lemon juice
A few drops vanilla extract

Directions

Sauté pumpkin in butter until semi-soft (approx. 7-10 minutes).
Leave to cool.

Place phyllo sheets flat on your countertop or table and spread sautéed pumpkin, walnuts, and sugar (approx. 1-1.5 TBSP each) on the top sheet.

Roll first 2 sheets to the end. Place in a greased baking pan.
Fill entire pan with remaining filled and rolled phyllo, single or double sheets.

Sprinkle some sugar on top (optional).

Bake at 425 degrees F for 8-10 minutes.
Reduce temperature to 345 degrees F and bake for additional 17-20 minutes or until the bottom is nice and golden.

Broil for 1-2 minutes on high temperature for golden crispy result.
Total bake time 30-32 minutes.

Cool and cut the baklava.

While the baklava is baking and cooling, prepare the syrup.

For the Syrup

Bring water to a boil. Add the sugar and reduce the heat.

Stir until all sugar is dissolved.

Add lemon juice and vanilla and stir (total time approx. 20 minutes).

Using a spoon, gently drizzle over cooled baklava. This is very important!

Do not pour hot syrup over hot baklava.

Cover the pan and let the syrup soak in and cool down for couple of hours.

Tips:

- Add more pumpkin for extra flavor. This will also make the baklava moister.
- Baklava is best to serve the next day.

Bulgarian Tzatziki Sauce

Ingredients (3-4 servings)

4 cups plain yogurt
5-6 medium sized pickles, chopped
1-2 Tbsp olive oil
1 garlic clove chopped or 1/2 Tbsp granulated garlic
1/2 cup walnuts, finely chopped
Salt to taste
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
1/2 Tbsp fresh or dried dill (use as garnish)

Directions

Drain yogurt overnight in cheese cloth.
Add chopped pickles and olive oil to the drained yogurt and stir.
Add remaining ingredients, stir again, and garnish.

Tips:

- If too thick, add a bit of pickle juice to thin and use as a dip or serve with stuffed grape leaves.
- Thick yogurt can be shaped into snowmen to serve at Christmas or New Year's parties.
- The best way to preserve fresh dill (or parsley) is to chop and keep refrigerated packed in a jar with salt and olive oil. This way, it will be always available to use.

Feta Squares

Ingredients (3-5 servings)

4-7 oz Feta cheese (sheep's or cow's milk)

1/4 Tbsp sweet paprika

1/4 to 1/2 Tbsp olive or vegetable oil (original recipe calls for sunflower oil)

Directions

On a serving plate, place the cheese and cut it into 1-inch squares first and then to 1/2 inch cubes.

Sprinkle paprika and slowly drizzle olive oil on top.

Serve as appetizer.

Tip:

- Any leftovers can be used to make the feta dip below.

Feta Dip

Ingredients (3-5 servings)

1 cup Feta cheese (sheep 's or cow's milk), roughly crumbled

1/2 Tbsp sweet paprika

1/2 Tbsp granulated garlic (original recipe calls for 1 garlic clove chopped)

1/3 cup olive oil (original recipe calls for sunflower oil)

Directions

In a bowl, slightly mash the cheese with a fork. Add paprika and garlic.

Slowly add olive oil and mix.

Serve as appetizer with your choice of fresh bread or crackers.