

A little more time and work, but worth it

Baklava

Many groups claim Baklava as their own. However, a check of the history of baklava yields surprising results. It is widely believed that it is of Assyrian origin.

Around approximately the 8th century B.C., Assyrians baked thin layers of dough with nuts, poured honey over it, and enjoyed this sumptuous treat.

Baklava was baked only on special occasions, usually by the rich who could afford such a luxury.

The history of Baklava changed with the history of the land. The Near and Middle East saw many civilizations come and go. Baklava and the recipe had spread to the Near East, Armenia, and Turkey. With the advent of the Grecian Empire, it spread westward to Greece.

Phyllo dough is named after the Greek word for "leaf", being "as thin as a leaf". The thickness (or for that matter, the thinness) of Phyllo gives baklava its delicious crispy taste. So, when some people eat a piece of baklava, they may want to think of Greece. However, the history of baklava reveals it came from farther East. Even so, various countries offer tasty variations and have loyal followings.

The history of Baklava is as colorful as the History of the lands of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Bon Appétit!

The time consuming part of this recipe is chopping the nuts into a fine state if you don't have a food processor. Yes, I have chopped nuts by hand, and it took like an hour since I didn't have a food processor.

Baklava is the Greek version of the Armenian dish known as Paklava. The main differences are the kind of nuts used.



Recipe # 1:

1 box frozen phyllo dough [available in most markets] need 10 sheets.
corn starch [separating medium for phyllo] OPTIONAL
1/2 lbs. clarified butter
1/2 lbs. Crisco® shortening
1/4 cup sugar
1 1/2 cups grated walnuts, grated roasted almonds or both
Pinch of cinnamon [optional]

Mix clarified butter and Crisco® together, heat and then set aside until ready to bake paklava. Take a loaf pan [not Teflon® about 12 X 12 x 2 inches and spray with non-stick cooking spray and place upside down on 10-12 sheets of phyllo dough. With a very sharp knife, cut around the pan to make dough the same size as the pan. Separate phyllo dough sheets carefully and dust with cornstarch if necessary. Place 5 sheets one at a time into the pan, buttering each sheet. Now spread an even layer of the walnuts, sugar and cinnamon which have

been mixed together. Now place the other 5 sheets of dough on top of the nuts, buttering each sheet. With a sharp knife, cut the stack of dough into diamond shaped pieces [about 25-30]. Generously brush the butter/Crisco mixture over the dough and then bake in a 350 degree oven for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and brush the rest of the butter/Crisco mixture over the dough [this makes the dough rise]. Bake again for 20-25 minutes or until a light golden brown on top. Remove from the oven and let cool. To serve, drizzle warm sugar-lemon-honey syrup over the top. Do not syrup too long in advance of serving, or paklava will become soggy.

Syrup:

1 1/2 cups sugar
1/2 cup honey
1 cup water
1/4 cup lemon juice

Combine the sugar, honey and water and cook for 10 minutes. Add lemon juice and cook for 2 minutes.

Recipe #2:

4 cups walnuts, finely crushed
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 package phyllo dough
olive oil or melted butter

Preheat oven to 350. Combine the walnuts, sugar, and cinnamon in a bowl. Oil a 9" x 12" rectangular baking pan. Place a sheet of phyllo in the pan, brush with a little olive oil, and sprinkle some of the walnut mixture on top. Repeat the process until all the sheets of the phyllo and walnut mixture are used up. Bake for 45 minutes or until the top is golden brown. Remove from oven, allow to cool

and score the cake into diamond shapes with a sharp knife.

Syrup:

6 tablespoons honey
1 1/2 cups warm water
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Put honey, water and lemon juice in a saucepan and simmer, stirring, for 10 minutes. Pour over the baklava and allow cooling for several hours before serving.

If you aren't fond of walnuts or almonds, substitute pistachios.

Falafel

8 ounces chick peas (use canned)
1 onion, very finely chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 slice of white bread, soaked in a little water
1/4 teaspoon cayenne
1 teaspoon coriander, ground
1 teaspoon, cumin, ground
2 tablespoons parsley, finely chopped
Salt to taste
Oil for frying

Strain chickpeas. Place in a food processor and puree. Squeeze out bread and add to the chickpeas with the rest of the ingredients. Knead well for a few minutes.

Let mixture stand for 1 – 2 hours, then roll between palms into firm 1" balls. Wetted hands makes this easier.

Heat oil (at least 1" deep) in a wok. Test the oil with a wooden spoon handle. If bubbles form it is ready. Fry the balls, a

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few at a time, until nicely brown all over. Usually that is 2 to 3 minutes each.

Drain and serve hot with lemon wedges.

This can also be served with a runny cucumber yogurt sauce and slices of fresh tomato, cucumber, and red onion. The cucumber sauce can be made and the fresh vegetables sliced while the chickpea mixture is setting.

Cucumber sauce:

2 English cucumbers
6 cloves garlic, peeled
Salt
4 cups plain non-flavored yogurt
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
Freshly ground black pepper
4 tablespoons olive oil

Grate cucumbers and place in a colander, weighted down with a plate for 15 minutes, so that some of their liquid drains out. Using a cloth napkin, place the cucumbers in the napkin, gather, and squeeze any remaining liquid out. Place the garlic and a little salt in a mortar. Crush with the pestle until the garlic is pureed.

Put cucumber, garlic, yogurt, vinegar and pepper into a food processor. Blend until smooth, slowing adding the oil while the blades are running. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

I like to put the slices of tomato, cucumber, and red onion on a piece of lettuce. Then I put one or two balls of falafel and a spoon full of cucumber sauce. Then I squeeze a lemon wedge on top of it all. Wrap up the lettuce and chow down!

Fried Chicken Balls

I know the name is laughable. Matt laughs every time I say it. The taste though is no laughing matter. Truly yummy.

Preparation Time: 6 hours in advance
2 dozen appetizers

2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons flour
1-½ cups chicken broth
¼ cup chopped onion
½ teaspoon dry mustard
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon black pepper
2 cups cooked chicken
¼ cup breadcrumbs
2 eggs
2 cups seasoned breadcrumbs
Oil for frying

Melt butter in a 3-quart saucepan over low heat, add flour and cook until bubbly without browning. Remove from heat, whisk in broth, return to heat. As sauce thickens, add onion, mustard, cayenne, and black pepper. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly, cook until mixture thickens.

Remove from heat stir in chicken and ¼ cup breadcrumbs. Spread the mixture into a pie plate in a thin layer, and refrigerate for several hours until firm.

About 1-½ hours before serving, beat egg in a bowl. Place the breadcrumbs in a shallow bowl. Scooping up the chicken mixture with a spoon, roll into ¾ inch balls. Roll in egg mixture to coat, and then coat with breadcrumbs. Set aside on a plate, and refrigerate, covered, for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Heat oil in a deep fat fryer or wok to about 350°. Fry the balls in batches for three to five minutes. Drain on a paper towel for about five minutes to allow the balls to cool. Serve with dipping sauces.

Greek Cheese Rolls

Preparation Time: 1 hour
8-10 appetizer servings

8 ounces feta cheese (any flavor)
3 ounces soft cream cheese
8 ounces Ricotta cheese
2 eggs
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon white pepper
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
1 batch Alison's Basic Phyllo pastry
1 cup melted butter

Preheat oven to 375. Combine feta, cream, and ricotta cheese, eggs, flour, nutmeg, pepper, and parsley in a bowl. With an electric mixer blend together starting on low and increasing to high speed.

Place three sheets of phyllo in a stack. Spoon about ½ cup filling in a layer (1-inch wide) about 1-inch from the lengthwise edge of the stack of phyllo. Gently fold the edge of the dough over the filling and continue to roll completely. Place filled roll on an ungreased shallow baking pan, seam side down. If you wish you may cover the rolls with plastic wrap and refrigerate until the next day, or freeze up to 3 months.

Bake for 15 minutes (25 minutes for frozen) or until puffed and golden brown. Let cool slightly and cut each roll

into eight pieces about 1 or 2 inches long.

Larrupin's Stuffed Phyllo Chicken

This is my take on a wonderful dish served at the Larrupin Café in Trinidad, California. I lived less than a mile from the café from 1995 – 1997 and went there as often as my pocketbook could afford.

Preparation time: 35 minutes
Cook time: 45 minutes

8 sheets phyllo dough
4 fresh boneless skinless chicken breasts
1 jar marinated artichoke hearts
1 small yellow onion
½ cup Italian bread crumbs
4 slices provolone cheese
Butter flavored PAM cooking spray

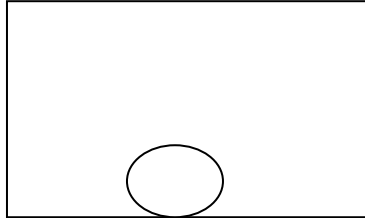
Strain the juices from the marinated artichoke hearts. Reserve four pieces of artichoke heart and put the rest of the jar's worth into a food processor. Add the onion and bread crumbs to the food processor and blend.

Butterfly the chicken breasts and open them. Place them on plastic wrap and cover over the split breast with another piece of plastic wrap. Using a rolling pin, flatten and thin the chicken breasts.

After they've been flattened, place a piece of provolone cheese in the middle of the butterfly cut. Place one of the reserved artichoke pieces, and a heaping spoon full of the mixture from the food processor on top of the provolone cheese. The heaping teaspoon will vary in size according to the size of the chicken breast.

Roll the chicken breast together, tucking it like a burrito.

Take two pieces of phyllo dough and place them on a flat surface. Spray with PAM over the entire piece, coating it lightly. Place the chicken towards the bottom center of the piece of phyllo, seam side of the breast on the bottom.



Fold length wise once. Then fold the right side over. Then fold lengthwise again. Then fold the left side over. Then fold lengthwise again until the chicken breast is completely wrapped.

Place the wrapped chicken breast on a greases sheet of parchment paper on a cookie sheet. Spray the completed wrapped breast with more PAM. Garnish with a sprig of fresh rosemary, or another of your favorite herbs.

Bake at 300° for 45 minutes.

Remove and serve plain or with a variety of sauces:

Suggestions: Alison's Pesto Sauce, Alison's Tomato Sauce, or Béchamel Sauce. Or if you have an Italian theme going, why not spread all three on a plate in the order of the Italian flag, and place the baked chicken breast on top of it.

Larrupin's Cornish Hens with Orange-Brandy Glaze

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Marinating time: 4 hours
Cook time: 40 – 55 minutes

*Note: You can make the glaze up to 1 day ahead; cover and chill.

4 Cornish hens (about 1 pound each)
4 ½ cups beer, such as pale ale
(3 - 12 ounce bottles of beer)

2 cups soy sauce
¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar
¼ cup molasses
2 tablespoons minced garlic
2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
1 tablespoon dry mustard
1 tablespoon black pepper
¾ cup frozen orange juice concentrate
½ cup brandy
½ cup fat-skimmed chicken broth
½ cup whipping cream
Orange slices (optional)

Remove necks and giblets from hens; reserve for another use or discard. Rinse hens.

Marinade: In a large bowl, whisk beer, soy sauce, ½ cup brown sugar, molasses, garlic, ginger, dry mustard, and black pepper until well blended.

Immerse hens in marinade. Cover and chill at least 4 hours or up to 1 day turning hens occasionally and submerging in liquid.

Glaze: Meanwhile, in a 2 ½ to 3 quart pan, combine orange juice concentrate, remaining ¼ cup brown sugar, and the brandy. Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat and stir until sugar is dissolved, 2 to 4 minutes. Use warm or cool.

Lift hens from marinade (discard marinade) and set breast up in a 10" x

15" pan. Brush generously with orange brandy glaze.

Bake at 400°, brushing every 10 minutes with glaze, until hens are richly browned and meat at breast and thigh bones is no longer pink (cut to test), 30 to 40 minutes.

Transfer hens to a platter or plates and let stand in a warm place.

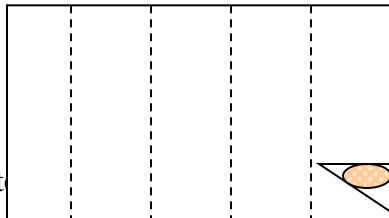
Meanwhile, skim and discard fat from pan juices. Add broth, cream, and remaining orange-brandy glaze to pan and stir often over medium-high heat, scraping up browned bits, until liquid is slightly thickened, 10 – 12 minutes. Pour into a small pitcher or bowl. Garnish hens with orange slices, if desired, and serve with pan juices.

Phyllo Triangles

Preparation Time: 2 hours
40-50 pieces

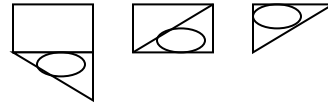
1 batch Alison's Basic Phyllo Dough
Your choice of filling
Mushrooms and cream cheese
Spicy shrimp
Bean and cheese

Prepare filing of your choice (recipes follow). Preheat oven to 350°. Place one sheet of phyllo on your working space, brush with melted butter. Place another sheet of phyllo on top of the first sheet. Also brush with butter. With a sharp knife, cut phyllo into five strips. Place 2-tablespoons filling on the edge of each phyllo strip and fold as indicated in the diagram below.



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Continue folding each strip as indicated below.



Brush triangles with melted butter and place on baking pan or prepare for freezer storage.

If you use more than one type of filling, you may want to sprinkle sesame seeds, poppy seeds or paprika on top of each type of triangle to tell them apart.

Fillings:

Mushrooms and cream cheese

- ½ pound mushrooms
- 2 green onions
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons white wine
- 8 ounce white wine
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- 1-teaspoon dill weed

Chop mushrooms and onions finely. Sauté with butter until tender. Add wine, cook until pan juices have evaporated. Removed from heat and let cool.

In a bowl, mix cream cheese and Parmesan. Stir mushrooms and mix thoroughly.

Spicy Shrimp

- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 onion
- 1-pound raw shrimp
- 1-tablespoon sesame oil
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1-teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin

Preheat oven to 350°. Chop mushroom and onions finely. Clean shrimp and

chop finely. Heat oil in a 2-quart saucepan. Add garlic and onion, stirring occasionally until tender, about 5 minutes.

Add garlic powder chili, and cumin, cook for 1-2 minutes. Add shrimp, cover and cook for 3-4 minutes. Remove from heat.

Bean and Cheese

16 ounces refried beans
1 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese
6 ounce diced green chilies
8 ounces salsa

After phyllo has been sliced into five strips place one tablespoon of refried beans on the edge of the strip. Add about a tablespoon of cheese, a teaspoon of green chilies, and a tablespoon of salsa. Fold triangle as directed.

Rich and Elegant Cheesecake



Preparation Time: 7 hours
12 slices

2 cups graham crackers (crushed in a food processor)
1-teaspoon cinnamon
¾ cup butter, melted
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1 ½ cups cream cheese

1-cup sugar
2 tablespoons flour
1-teaspoon vanilla
1 whole egg
1 egg yolk
2 cups sour cream

Preheat oven to 375°. In a medium bowl combine crushed graham crackers and cinnamon. Stir in melted butter. Press crumb mixture around the bottom and two inches up the side of an 8 or 9 inch springform pan. If desired, reserve some to sprinkle on top of cheesecake. Set pan aside.

In a large bowl, beat cream cheese, sugar, flour, and vanilla with an electric mixer on medium speed until combined. Add eggs and sour cream all at once. Beat on low speed just until combined.

Pour filling into springform pan. Sprinkle with reserved crumbs (optional). Place cheesecake on a cookie sheet and bake for 60 minutes.

Cool cheesecake in springform pan on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Using a dull knife, loosen crust for the sides of the pan. Cool for 30 minutes more. Remove sides from springform pan. Let cheesecake cool completely, then chill for at least 4 hours.

Seafood Crepes in Mornay Sauce

Preparation Time: 2 hours
4 servings

1-cup milk
2 eggs
¾ cup flour
2 teaspoons flour
2 tsp oil
2 tsp butter



1-tablespoon butter
4-6 mushrooms, sliced
½ zucchini, sliced
1 small onion minced



1-tablespoon butter
1-tablespoon flour
1-cup milk
¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese



1 cup cooked shrimp, crab, scallops, or whitefish
¼ pound thinly sliced Jarlsberg or Swiss cheese

In a medium-size bowl, blend milk and eggs with a wire whisk. Add flour and oil, mix until smooth. Let batter stand at room temperature for on hour. (you may also cover and refrigerate it overnight.)

Heat 1-tablespoon butter in an 8-inch skillet over medium heat. Add mushrooms, zucchini, and onion. Sauté until soft. Remove from pan to a medium size bowl, and set aside. Clean skillet.

Heat skillet over medium heat until a drop of water sizzles on the pan. Grease lightly with butter. Stir batter and pour about ¼ cup of the batter into the middle of the pan. Immediately tilt pan in all directions so that the batter flows all over the entire surface.

If the pan is not enough, crepe will set immediately and begin to form tiny bubbles. Cook until the edges are lightly browned. Run a spatula around the edges and turn to cook on the other side for about 20 seconds. This side does not brown. Turn crepe out of the pan onto a plate. Repeat this process for each crepe. (Crepes may be prepared 2-3 days in

advance.) After cooling, place a sheet of wax paper between each crepe, place in an airtight container, and refrigerate. Allow crepes to reach room temperature before separating otherwise they will tear.

Preheat oven to 350°. Melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a saucepan. Add flour, stirring constantly with a wire whisk, and cook until bubbly. Remove from heat. Stir in milk with a wire whisk and return to low heat stirring until sauce begins to thicken. Add parmesan cheese. Stir for on to two minutes longer, and remove from heat. Sauce will thicken quite a bit more upon standing.

Add seafood to the vegetables, then mix in ¼ cup sauce (enough to coat seafood/vegetable mixture). Place crepes, one at a time in a baking dish. Fill each crepe with a ½-cup seafood/vegetable mixture, and roll up. Repeat with remaining crepes. Place crepes side by side in a large baking dish or place in single serving dishes for each person. On top of crepes, place sliced cheese. Then pour sauce over all crepes. Bake uncovered for 20-25 minutes.

Smoked Salmon Ravioli with Sour Cream & Dill

Preparation time: 1 hour 30 minutes

Cook time: 2 – 3 minutes

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/3 cup finely chopped shallots
½ cup finely chopped smoked salmon
¼ cup cream cheese (at room temp)
3 tablespoons minced fresh dill
3 tablespoons minced fresh chives
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Salt to taste
Freshly ground black pepper

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24 won ton wrappers

Melted butter
Sour cream
Fresh dill

In a small skillet melt the butter over moderate heat and cook the shallots, stirring, until soft. Transfer to a bowl and let cool. Stir in the salmon, cream cheese, dill, chives, lemon juice, salt and pepper, mixing well to combine and chill, covered, for 1 hour.

Prepare the won ton ravioli:

Place 1 won ton wrapper on a lightly floured surface, mound 1 tablespoon of the filling in the center of the wrapper, and brush the edges with water. Put a second wrapper over the first, pressing down around the filling to force out the air, seal the edges well, and trim the excess dough around the filling with a decorative cutter or sharp knife. Make won ton ravioli with the remaining wrappers and filling in the same manner, transferring them as they are formed to a dry kitchen towel, and turn them occasionally to let them dry slightly. Bring a pot of salted water to a gentle boil and in it cook the ravioli in batches for 2 minutes, or until they rise to the surface and are tender. Do not let the water boil vigorously once the ravioli have been added.

Transfer the ravioli as they are cooked with a slotted spoon to paper towels to drain and keep them warm. Serve the warm ravioli drizzled with the melted butter and topped with sour cream and minced fresh dill.

Spanakopita

Preparation time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 40 – 45 minutes

1 package phyllo pastry
Melted butter or olive oil



2 pounds fresh baby spinach, washed, trimmed, and roughly chopped
8 green onions, finely chopped
4 tablespoons finely chopped fresh dill
12 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
2 eggs, beaten
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon olive oil

Blanch the spinach in boiling water, drain thoroughly, remove to a bowl and allow to cool. Add all other ingredients and combine well.

Preheat the oven to 350°. Unwrap the phyllo pastry on a flat surface and cover with a damp tea towel. Lightly oil a 12 inch square baking dish. Place half the phyllo sheets in the bottom of the dish, brushing each sheet with the melted butter as it is added. Add all the filling and then spread the remaining phyllo sheets on top, brushing each one with melted butter. Sprinkle a little water on top to prevent the phyllo from burning.

Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until the top is golden brown. Eat either hot or cold.