

Centuries of baking heritage lie between each luscious layer of baklava. These parcels of pastry—their layers of fragile leaves bound together with spice-perfumed honey, a squeeze of citrus, and showers of flavorful nuts—have accompanied celebrations for centuries. For our celebration, we decided to give this age-old specialty a few new and unexpected taste twists. Try one or try them all, and experience how an aromatic ingredient such as saffron, rosemary, or cocoa breathes new life into the long-revered classic.

Written by Annie Kuchard  
Photographer: Elaine Motta  
Food Stylist: Greg Lusa

{Age-Old}

# Layers of Lusciousness



### • Alfajores •

5. Spoon a rounded measuring teaspoon of the filling on the bottom of each of half of the cookies. Top with remaining cookies, flat sides down, pressing lightly together. Makes about 36 sandwich cookies.

**\*TEST KITCHEN TIP:** If you can't find mint-flavor semisweet chocolate pieces, use  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups regular semisweet chocolate pieces and stir  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon mint extract into the melted chocolate mixture.

**TO STORE:** Place assembled cookies in a single layer in an airtight container; cover. Store at room temperature for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 3 months.

### Alfajores (Argentinean Caramel Sandwich Cookies)

Prep: 45 minutes Chill: 2 hours  
Bake: 8 minutes per batch Oven: 350°F

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cups butter, softened
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon finely shredded lemon peel
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon almond extract
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon rum extract
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup finely ground blanched almonds
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 13.4-ounce can dulce de leche\*

1. In a large bowl, beat butter with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add powdered sugar, granulated sugar, and salt. Beat until



### • Double-Nut Baklava •

light and fluffy, scraping bowl often. Add egg, lemon peel, almond extract, and rum extract; beat well.

2. Add the  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup finely ground almonds; beat well. Beat or stir in flour. Divide dough into three portions. Cover and chill about 2 hours.

3. Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a cookie sheet; set aside. On a lightly powdered-sugared surface, roll out one of the dough portions to a  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thickness. Using a fluted square or round  $1\frac{1}{2}$ - to  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cookie cutter, cut out dough. Place dough squares or rounds 1 inch apart on prepared cookie sheet. Bake in a preheated oven for 8 to 10 minutes or until tops are a very pale golden brown. Carefully transfer cookies to a wire rack; let cool. Repeat with other dough portions.

4. Spread about 1 tablespoon of the dulce de leche on the bottom of each of half of the cookies. Top with remaining cookies, flat sides down, pressing lightly together. If desired, sprinkle tops of assembled sandwich cookies with finely ground toasted almonds. Makes about 24 sandwich cookies.

**\*TEST KITCHEN TIP:** Look for dulce de leche in the ethnic foods section of larger supermarkets or in Hispanic grocery stores.

**TO STORE:** Layer unassembled cookies between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight container; cover. Store at room temperature for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 3 months. To serve, thaw cookies, if frozen. Assemble sandwich cookies as directed in Step 4.



### • Pistachio-Cranberry Baklava •

## Layers of Lusciousness

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 106

### Double-Nut Baklava

Prep: 45 minutes Oven: 325°F  
Bake: 35 minutes

- 2 cups pine nuts, toasted
- 2 cups almonds, toasted and finely chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons snipped fresh rosemary
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup butter, melted
- $\frac{1}{2}$  of a 16-ounce package frozen phyllo dough (14×9-inch rectangles), thawed
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup honey
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 fresh rosemary sprigs

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. For filling: In a large bowl, combine pine nuts, almonds,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the sugar, and the snipped rosemary. Set aside.

2. Brush the bottom of a 13×9×2-inch baking pan with some of the melted butter. Unroll phyllo dough; cover with plastic wrap. (As you work, keep the phyllo covered to prevent it from drying out, removing sheets as you need them.) Layer one-fourth (5 or 6) of the phyllo sheets in the prepared baking pan, brushing each sheet generously with some of the melted butter. Sprinkle with about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups of the filling. Repeat layering phyllo sheets and filling two more times, brushing each sheet with



• Orange-Iced Oatmeal Cookies •

- 1/2 of a 16-ounce package frozen phyllo dough (14×9-inch rectangles), thawed
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 teaspoon thread saffron, slightly crumbled

more butter.

3. Layer the remaining phyllo sheets on top of filling, brushing each sheet with more butter. Drizzle with any remaining butter. Using a sharp knife, cut baklava into 24 to 48 diamond-, rectangle-, or square-shape pieces.

4. Bake in the preheated oven for 35 to 45 minutes or until golden brown. Cool slightly in pan on a wire rack.

5. Meanwhile, for syrup: In a small saucepan, combine the remaining 1/4 cup sugar, the water, honey, lemon juice, and rosemary sprigs. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Remove rosemary sprigs. Pour the syrup evenly over slightly cooled baklava in the pan. Makes 24 to 48 cookies.

**TO STORE:** Layer cookies between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight container; cover. Store in the refrigerator for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 3 months. To serve, thaw cookies, if frozen, at room temperature for 1 hour.

## Pistachio-Cranberry Baklava

*Saffron gives this baklava its signature flavor. If you can't find saffron threads, powdered saffron provides a fine substitute.*

Prep: 45 minutes Oven: 325°F

Bake: 35 minutes

- 1 1/2 cups pistachio nuts, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 cups dried cranberries
- 1 1/3 cups sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 3/4 cup butter, melted

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. For filling: In a large bowl, stir together pistachio nuts, dried cranberries, 1/3 cup of the sugar, and the cardamom. Set aside.

2. Brush the bottom of a 13×9×2-inch baking pan with some of the melted butter. Unroll phyllo dough; cover with plastic wrap. (As you work, keep the phyllo covered to prevent it from drying out, removing sheets as you need them.) Layer one-fourth (5 or 6) of the phyllo sheets in the prepared baking pan, brushing each sheet generously with some of the melted butter. Sprinkle with about 1 cup of the filling. Repeat layering phyllo sheets and filling two more times, brushing each sheet with more butter.

3. Layer the remaining phyllo sheets on top of filling, brushing each sheet with more butter. Drizzle with any remaining butter. Using a sharp knife, cut baklava into 24 to 48 diamond-, rectangle-, or square-shape pieces.

4. Bake in the preheated oven for 35 to 45 minutes or until golden brown. Cool slightly in pan on a wire rack.

5. Meanwhile, for syrup: In a medium saucepan, stir together the remaining 1 cup sugar, the water, honey, vanilla, and saffron. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Pour the syrup evenly over slightly cooled baklava in the pan. Makes 24 to 48 cookies.

**TO STORE:** Layer cookies between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight container; cover. Store in the refrigerator for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 3 months. To serve, thaw cookies, if frozen, at room temperature for 1 hour.

## From the Editor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

### Orange-Iced Oatmeal Cookies

Prep: 35 minutes Oven: 375°F

Bake: 8 minutes per batch

Stand: 30 minutes

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup honey
- 3 1/2 teaspoons finely shredded orange peel (set aside)
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3 cups rolled oats
- 2/3 cup chopped walnuts, toasted
- 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
- 3 tablespoons orange juice

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. In a large bowl, beat butter with an electric mixer on medium to high speed for 30 seconds. Add granulated sugar, baking powder, and salt. Beat until combined, scraping bowl occasionally. Beat in eggs, honey, and the 1/4 cup orange juice until combined. Beat in as much of the flour as you can with the mixer. Using a wooden spoon, stir in any remaining flour. Stir in oats, nuts, and 2 teaspoons of the orange peel.


2. Drop dough by rounded teaspoons 2 inches apart onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in the preheated oven for 8 to 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Transfer to a wire rack; let cool.

3. For icing: In a small bowl, stir together powdered sugar, the 3 tablespoons orange juice, and the remaining 1 1/2 teaspoons orange peel. Brush icing over cooled cookies. Let stand about 30 minutes or until set. Makes about 60 cookies.

## Classic Baklava

Prep: 45 minutes Oven: 325°F

Bake: 35 minutes

  
Brush edges of phyllo sheets first. Once edges are brushed, begin in the middle and brush outward to the edges.

- 3 cups walnuts, finely chopped
- 1½ cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¾ cup butter, melted
- ½ of a 16-ounce package frozen phyllo dough (14×9-inch rectangles), thawed
- ¾ cup water
- 3 tablespoons honey
- ½ teaspoon finely shredded lemon peel
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 inches stick cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. For filling: In a large bowl, stir together walnuts, ½ cup of the sugar, and the ground cinnamon. Set aside.

2. Brush the bottom of a 13×9×2-inch baking pan with some of the melted butter. Unroll phyllo dough; cover with plastic wrap. (As you work, keep the phyllo covered to prevent it from drying out, removing sheets as you need them.) Layer one-fourth (5 or 6) of the phyllo sheets in the prepared baking pan, brushing each sheet generously with some of the melted butter. Sprinkle with about 1 cup of the filling. Repeat layering phyllo sheets and filling two more times, brushing each sheet with more butter.

3. Layer the remaining phyllo sheets on top of filling, brushing each sheet with more butter. Drizzle with any remaining butter. Using a sharp knife, cut baklava into 24 to 48 diamond-, rectangle-, or square-shape pieces.

4. Bake in the preheated oven for 35 to 45 minutes or until golden brown. Cool slightly in pan on a wire rack.

5. Meanwhile, for syrup: In a medium saucepan, stir together the remaining 1 cup sugar, the water, honey, lemon peel, lemon juice, and stick cinnamon. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Remove stick cinnamon. Pour the syrup

PISTACHIO-CRANBERRY  
BAKLAVA  
(RECIPE, PAGE 117)

evenly over slightly cooled baklava in the pan. Makes 24 to 48 cookies.

**TO STORE:** Layer cookies between sheets of waxed paper in an airtight

container; cover. Store in the refrigerator up to 3 days or freeze up to 3 months. To serve, thaw cookies, if frozen, at room temperature for 1 hour.

## GET TO KNOW PHYLLO

Frozen phyllo dough is not as difficult to work with as its delicate nature suggests. Follow these techniques for success:

- \* Allow frozen phyllo dough to thaw while it is still wrapped and sealed. Once unwrapped, sheets of phyllo dough can dry out quickly and crumble.
- \* To preserve the phyllo until needed, keep the opened stack of dough covered with plastic wrap or a moist cloth.
- \* Brush each sheet you lay down with melted butter, margarine, or—in the case of a savory dish—olive oil.
- \* Tightly rewrap any remaining sheets of dough and return them to the freezer.