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DEDICATED TO  
*my mum and dad*

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*Life is Sweet*

Nana, what sweet will you be making? This would be my sister Eleni's first question every single day. My grandmother, a miracle worker in the kitchen, would never leave us without some sweet.

Besides, there were always guests staying at our home in Mytilene in the summer. My godmother, aunts and uncles, friends from Athens. These visitors were always welcomed with a sweet treat, usually spoon sweet with a glass of cold water.

And then there was the 'neighbourhood' ritual, when the local women would gather at Rita's, Mrs. Zannet's or Auntie Cornelia's. My brother Yannis and I would tag along with mum, because apart from banter and gossip, this ritual also involved a late afternoon coffee, which was always accompanied by a sweet. In many ways, it was more like an unofficial confectionery competition to see who had made the tastiest cookies or most aromatic orange cake.

My mother's personal sweet fetish was *fanouropita*, a cake traditionally made in honour of St. Fanourios, the patron saint of lost things. But one of my fondest childhood memories is of my dad making bitter orange spoon sweet. I would climb up into the tree and pick the fruits when they were still small and green. I remember him patiently changing the water in which he had placed the fruits to remove their bitterness. My mum would decorate the glass jars with flowery labels that read "Bitter Orange - Marios" and the date.

This book is inspired by all those moments in life which are accompanied by the taste of something sweet. Hopefully, it will evoke cherished childhood memories and affirm the value of offering happiness to others. In this collection of 65 home recipes curated by Ioanna Stamoulou, tradition, emotion and fine Greek products are mixed with time-honoured and contemporary techniques to create an alluring mosaic of homemade Greek confectionery.

Welcome to the magical world of "MY GREEK SWEETS".

*Ioanna M. Pavlaki*



# ΣΙΡΟΠΙ | SIROPI

*Syrup*





## SWEETS WITH SYRUP

From the distant past and the seraglios of the Ottoman sultans, syrupy sweets take pride of place in the pantheon of Middle Eastern confections, although the recipe for the first baklava can actually be traced back to ancient Greece. The secret of their deliciousness lies in the proper consistency of the syrup and the gossamer-thin, almost transparent sheets of filo dough, first stretched by the pastry chefs of Topkapi Palace. In variations featuring nuts and dried fruits, enhanced by the warm aromas of spices and pastry creams, the syrupy sweet is the perfect accompaniment to every special occasion, whether happy or sad, enriching our social life with dozens of recipes from ancient times to the present day.



## ΜΠΑΚΛΑΒΑΣ | BAKLAVAS

### *Baklava*

*There is no one single recipe for baklava. Each region of the Near East has its own version. Ours is rich in syrup and made with walnuts or almonds. A sweet treat associated with happy occasions, it is mainly offered around Christmas and at other big celebrations such as weddings, betrothals and christenings.*

*Prep time:* 40 minutes | *Wait time:* 12 hours | *Bake time:* 1½ hours | *Servings:* 32

#### Ingredients for a 36 cm diameter baking pan

26 filo pastry sheets

300 g melted butter (from goat and sheep milk) or ghee

whole cloves

#### For the filling

600 g almonds with skin or walnuts, finely chopped

20 g toasted breadcrumbs

1 Tbsp cinnamon powder

½ tsp clove powder

#### For the syrup

750 ml water

1 kg sugar

2 sticks cinnamon

½ lemon, peel and juice of

125 g honey

#### Preparation

1. Mix all the filling ingredients in a bowl and preheat the oven to 150°C.

2. Butter the bottom and sides of the baking pan and place the first 5 pastry sheets, brushing each sheet with butter. Spread 3 Tbsp of filling on the 5th sheet. Keep 5 sheets for the end. Continue to add pastry sheets one at a time, spreading 3 Tbsp of filling on each sheet without buttering them. Slice off the overhanging sheets at the edges of the pan. Cover with the 5 sheets you have kept, without buttering them.

3. Using a sharp knife, cut deep lines into the pastry to create lozenges, taking care to cut right down to the bottom of the pan. Press one clove into the centre of each lozenge.

4. Heat the remaining butter well and spoon evenly over the baklava, making sure it also passes through the cracks.

5. Cover with aluminium foil and bake for 1 hour. Remove foil and bake for another 30 minutes.

6. Meanwhile, prepare the syrup. Place the ingredients in a pan on high heat. When the syrup starts to boil, lower the heat and simmer for 7 minutes. Set aside to cool.

7. As soon as you take the hot baklava out of the oven, immediately pour over the cold syrup with a tablespoon. Without covering, set aside until the next day for the syrup to absorb.









## KANTAIΦI | KATAIFI

### *Kataifi*

*Much loved across the Near East, kataifi is believed to have first appeared at Afyonkarahisar in Asia Minor. Strongly associated with the Carnival period before Greek Lent, it is made with chopped almonds or walnuts encased in shredded filo dough.*

*Prep time:* 40 minutes | *Wait time:* 12 hours | *Bake time:* 1½ hours | *Servings:* 30

#### Ingredients

500 g shredded filo dough  
200 g melted butter  
(from goat and sheep milk)

#### For the filling

300 g walnuts  
finely chopped  
1 tsp cinnamon powder  
¼ tsp clove powder  
50 g toasted breadcrumbs

#### For the syrup

1 L water  
800 g sugar  
1 stick cinnamon  
½ lemon, juice  
and peel of

#### Preparation

1. Mix all the filling ingredients in a bowl and preheat the oven to 170°C.
2. Toss the dough gently with your hands until the strands separate. Butter the bottom and sides of a baking pan (approx. 25x35 cm).
3. Pour half the melted butter over the dough. Gently toss the dough so the butter is evenly distributed. Take a handful of dough, place 1 Tbsp of filling in the middle and wrap into a roll.
4. Place the rolls one next to the other in the baking pan, leaving no gaps in between. Reheat the remaining butter and pour over the rolls. Bake at 150°C for about 1½ hours until crisp and golden brown.
5. Meanwhile, prepare the syrup. Place all the ingredients except the juice in a saucepan on high heat. Stir to dissolve the sugar. When the syrup starts to boil, lower heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Then add the lemon juice and again bring to the boil. Set aside to cool.
6. After taking the kataifi out of the oven, leave for 5 minutes before ladling over the cold syrup. Without covering, set aside until the next day for the syrup to absorb. Do not cover the kataifi, otherwise it will become soggy.

