

## Halva - Χαλβάς (halvas)



A dense, sweet confection made from sesame paste (tahini) and sugar, often flavored with nuts or cocoa.

| SERVES                           | PREP       | COOK       | TOTAL      | CUISINE |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|---------|
| Makes 1 loaf, about 10–12 slices | 20 minutes | 15 minutes | 35 minutes | Greek   |

### Ingredients

- 300 g (10 1/2 oz) caster sugar
- 180 ml (6 fl oz) water
- 1 strip lemon peel
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 300 g (10 1/2 oz) tahini, well stirred
- 80 g (2 3/4 oz) blanched almonds, toasted and roughly chopped
- 2 tbsp shelled pistachios, lightly toasted and chopped
- 1 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted

### Method



1. Line a 900 g (2 lb) loaf tin with baking parchment, leaving overhang on two sides for easy lifting. Lightly grease the parchment with a little neutral oil and set aside.
2. Put the sugar, water, lemon peel and cinnamon stick into a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to the boil, stirring just until the sugar dissolves, then simmer for 4–5 minutes until the syrup is clear and slightly reduced.
3. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the vanilla extract. Discard the lemon peel and cinnamon stick.
4. Tip the tahini into a large mixing bowl. If using cocoa, sift it over the tahini now and stir thoroughly until evenly combined and glossy.
5. With a wooden spoon or sturdy spatula, begin pouring the hot syrup into the tahini in a thin stream, stirring constantly and briskly to emulsify. Keep mixing until the mixture thickens, turns opaque and starts to pull away from the sides of the bowl.
6. Fold in the toasted almonds and pistachios, reserving a small handful for the top if you like a neater finish.
7. Scrape the mixture into the prepared loaf tin and press it down firmly with the back of a spoon or a spatula to eliminate air pockets. Smooth the surface and scatter over the reserved nuts.
8. Leave at cool room temperature for at least 3 hours, or until completely set and firm enough to slice cleanly. For a cleaner cut, chill briefly before slicing, then let stand 10 minutes before serving.
9. Lift the halva out using the parchment, cut into thin slices or small diamonds, and serve at once or store covered in a cool, dry place.

## To serve

*Serve halva in slender slices after a meal or with Greek coffee, alongside fresh fruit if you like. A few extra chopped pistachios on top make a simple finish, and a sweet wine or strong black coffee suits it well.*

