

Kataifi - Καταΐφι (kataifi)



Shredded phyllo pastry filled with nuts and sweetened with syrup.

SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	CUISINE
Makes 24 pieces	35 minutes	35 minutes	2 hours 10 minutes	Greek

Ingredients

- 300 g (10 1/2 oz) kataifi pastry, thawed if frozen
- 200 g (7 oz) walnuts, finely chopped
- 50 g (1 3/4 oz) blanched almonds, finely chopped
- 100 g (3 1/2 oz) caster sugar
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground cloves
- 1 lemon, finely grated zest
- 150 g (5 1/2 oz) unsalted butter, melted
- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) caster sugar [for the syrup]
- 300 ml (10 fl oz) water [for the syrup]
- 1 cinnamon stick [for the syrup]



- 3 cloves [for the syrup]
- 1 strip lemon peel [for the syrup]
- 2 tbsp lemon juice [for the syrup]
- 1 tbsp honey

Method

1. First make the syrup: put the 500 g sugar, water, cinnamon stick, cloves and lemon peel into a small saucepan and bring slowly to the boil over medium heat, about 6–8 minutes.
2. Once boiling, reduce to low heat and simmer for 8 minutes, until the syrup is slightly reduced and lightly viscous.
3. Remove from the heat, stir in the lemon juice and honey, then leave the syrup to cool completely; it should be cool or barely warm before use.
4. Heat the oven to 160°C fan (180°C conventional, 350°F, gas 4). Brush a large baking dish or tray, about 30 x 20 cm, with a little of the melted butter.
5. In a bowl, mix the chopped walnuts, almonds, 100 g sugar, cinnamon, cloves and lemon zest until evenly combined.
6. Fluff the kataifi pastry apart gently with your fingers to loosen the strands without tearing them, then cover with a slightly damp tea towel to stop it drying out.
7. Take a small bundle of pastry, spread it out into a thin nest, place a spoonful of the nut filling along one end, and roll up loosely into a compact cigar shape; repeat with the remaining pastry and filling.
8. Arrange the rolls seam-side down in the prepared dish, packing them closely together so they support one another during baking.
9. Brush the tops and sides generously with the remaining melted butter, making sure the strands are well coated for even browning.
10. Bake on the middle shelf for 30–35 minutes over medium oven heat until deep golden, crisp and lightly audibly dry when lifted at the edge.
11. As soon as the pastry comes out of the oven, ladle the cold syrup slowly and evenly over the hot kataifi; it should sizzle at first and then soak in.
12. Leave to stand for at least 1 hour, until the syrup is fully absorbed and the pastry has settled into a crisp-but-succulent texture, then serve.

To serve



Serve the kataifi in neat portions with a little of the syrup spooned over the plate and a few chopped nuts scattered on top. It is excellent with thick Greek coffee or a small glass of dessert wine; a little unsweetened yoghurt alongside is a pleasant contrast.

