

Gourmet

When our friend and colleague Bruce Feiler mentioned that he was working on a nationwide interfaith dialogue, we offered to help in any way we could. He asked us for a couple of recipes, and we chose two of our favorite desserts: brownies with three kinds of chocolate (one for each Abrahamic faith?) and baklava, a Middle Eastern delicacy.

TRIPLE CHOCOLATE FUDGE BROWNIES

Makes 24 brownies

- 6 oz fine-quality bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 2 oz unsweetened chocolate, chopped
- 1½ sticks (¾ cup) unsalted butter
- 1½ cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 4 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

- ▶ Preheat oven to 350°F.
- ▶ In a metal bowl set over a pan of barely simmering water, melt bittersweet chocolate and unsweetened chocolate with butter, stirring until mixture is smooth.
- ▶ Remove bowl from heat and let mixture cool until lukewarm. Stir in sugar and vanilla and add eggs, 1 at a time, stirring well after each addition.
- ▶ Add salt and flour, stirring until mixture is just combined. Stir in chocolate chips.
- ▶ Pour batter into a well-buttered and floured 13- by 9-inch metal baking pan and smooth top of batter. Bake in middle of oven until a tester comes out with crumbs adhering to it, 20 to 30 minutes.
- ▶ Let cool completely in pan on a rack, then cut into 24 bars.

BAKLAVA

Nut-Filled Phyllo Pastries

Makes about 25 pastries

For baklava

- 1 lb walnuts (about 4 cups), finely chopped
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 13 (17- by 12-inch) phyllo sheets (about ¾ pound), thawed if frozen, halved crosswise with scissors, and halves stacked between 2 sheets of plastic wrap and covered with a kitchen towel
- 2 sticks (1 cup) unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- About 1 tablespoon whole cloves

For syrup

- ½ cup water
- 1 cup honey
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

- ▶ Preheat oven to 375°F.
- ▶ In a bowl, stir together walnuts, sugar, and cinnamon.
- ▶ Arrange 1 phyllo sheet on a work surface, keeping remaining sheets covered, and brush with some butter. Put buttered phyllo in bottom of a 13- by 9-inch metal baking pan and top with 4 more buttered phyllo sheets.
- ▶ Sprinkle ½ cup nut mixture over phyllo in pan and top with 2 phyllo sheets, buttering them and arranging them so that nut mixture is completely covered. Continue layering, topping each ½ cup nut mixture with 2 buttered phyllo sheets, until all nut mixture is used.
- ▶ Top baklava with remaining phyllo sheets, buttering them in same manner as bottom layer and covering top evenly.

- ▶ Using a sharp knife with a ruler as a guide, make 4 lengthwise cuts, 1¾ inches apart, to divide baklava into 5 strips. Make diagonal cuts, 1½ inches apart, to divide baklava into about 25 diamonds (there will be irregular pieces around edge). Pour remaining butter evenly over top of baklava, leaving white milky solids behind, then press 1 clove into center of each diamond.
- ▶ Reduce oven temperature to 325°F and bake baklava until golden, about 1 hour.

Make syrup while baklava is baking:

- ▶ In a saucepan, bring all syrup ingredients to a boil, stirring until sugar is dissolved, then simmer syrup until reduced to about 1½ cups, about 5 minutes more.
- ▶ Pour warm syrup over hot baklava and cool in pan on a rack. Let baklava stand, covered, at room temperature at least 12 hours (for flavors to develop) and up to 5 days.
- ▶ Serve baklava in paper cupcake liners if desired.