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Baklava with Roquefort and Figs

By: Bonita Hart Andrews

First-Place Winner — Martin Ranch Wine Club BBQ, Saturday, August 23, 2008

Ingredients:

1 box phyllo dough
1/2 pound butter melted
3 ½ - 4 cups chopped unsalted nuts (pecans & pistachios, or your favorites).
1 ½ tsp. kosher salt
6-8 oz. Sheep's milk Roquefort cheese
8 oz. Jar of fig spread
1 ½ cups of sugar
¾ cup water
2 thumb sized pieces of peeled ginger
Fresh figs sliced into thin circles

Equipment:

Plastic wrap
Baking sheet with at least 1" sides. (It is helpful to have it be the same size as the phyllo, but you can always cut the stack of phyllo sheets to fit the pan you are using.)
Pastry brush
Fine strainer or cheesecloth

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 375. Unroll phyllo dough and cover immediately with plastic wrap to keep it from drying out. As you remove each sheet, recover the dough. Place one sheet of dough on baking pan and brush with melted butter. Continue placing sheets and brushing with butter until you have about 6 layers. Sprinkle with half of the chopped nuts and ¼ tsp salt. Finely crumble about 2 ounces of Roquefort and sprinkle over the nuts. Place another sheet of phyllo over the nut mixture and brush with butter. Continue layering phyllo and butter until you have 4-6 layers. Sprinkle with remaining nuts, ¼ tsp. Salt and about 2 oz. Crumbled Roquefort. Layer additional buttered phyllo sheets until you have about 8 layers covering the nut layer. Cut through all layers into small diamond shapes.

Bake in center of oven until top layers are golden brown, 25-40 minutes.

While pastry is baking prepare the syrup. In medium saucepan combine the fig spread, sugar, water, piece of ginger, lemon juice and 1 tsp. Salt. Bring to a boil stirring occasionally. Boil about 5 minutes then remove from heat. Pour through a fine strainer or cheesecloth to remove the solids. The syrup should resemble honey.

When you remove the baklava from the oven, immediately pour the syrup over the top making sure to distribute it over the whole pan. While the baklava is still really hot place one thin fig slice atop each diamond and then place a small crumble of Roquefort on top of the fig slice. The cheese will melt a little.

Allow to cool completely before serving.