

melomakarona

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Melomakarona

The other Greek Christmas cookie: an olive oil and semolina biscuit, spiced with orange and cinnamon, baked dry, then drowned in honey syrup and scattered with walnuts. Where [kourabiedes](#) is white, dry and buttery, this one is dark, wet and made with no butter at all — it is a Lenten cookie by construction, and vegan in its traditional form.

What makes it work

- **Cold syrup onto hot cookies, or hot syrup onto cold ones. Never both hot.** A temperature difference is what drives the syrup into the crumb. Both hot and the cookie disintegrates; both cold and the syrup sits on the surface.
- **Bake them properly dry** — longer than looks right, until they are firm all the way through. A soft cookie collapses into porridge in the syrup.
- **Do not soak longer than 20 seconds.** They keep drinking after they come out. A minute in the syrup gives a cookie that never firms up again.
- **Olive oil is the fat and it should taste of something.** This is one of the few cookies where a grassy oil is an asset. See [olive oil](#).
- **Honey syrup, not sugar syrup** — or at least half honey. The flavour is the whole finish. See [Honey](#).

Ingredients

Makes about 40.

Cookies:

- 250 ml [olive oil](#)
- 100 g granulated sugar
- 120 ml fresh orange juice
- zest of 1 orange
- 60 ml brandy
- 5 g baking soda
- 500 g all-purpose flour
- 150 g fine semolina
- 8 g ground [cinnamon](#)
- 2 g ground cloves
- 2 g [nutmeg](#)
- 3 g fine salt

Syrup:

- 400 g granulated sugar
- 300 ml water
- 250 g [honey](#)
- 1 cinnamon stick, 3 cloves, a strip of orange peel

To finish: 200 g [walnuts](#), finely chopped, and more cinnamon

Method

Make the syrup first and let it cool completely: boil the sugar and water five minutes with the aromatics, take it off the heat, stir in the honey, and leave it. Fish out the spices.

Whisk the oil and sugar, then the juice, zest and brandy. Dissolve the soda in a spoonful of juice and add it. Fold in the flour, semolina, spices and salt to a soft, oily dough. Do not knead — this dough goes tough if you work it.

Shape 30 g ovals, flatten slightly, and mark the tops with a fork or a grater. Bake **180 °C / 350 °F for 22–25 minutes**, until dark and firm.

Drop the hot cookies into the cold syrup for 15–20 seconds, turning once. Lift them out with a slotted spoon onto a rack set over a tray, and scatter walnuts and cinnamon over immediately so they stick.

Notes

- **Reuse the drained syrup** for the next batch; it does not spoil for a week.
- Some households stuff them with a walnut paste before baking, which makes them *melomakarona gemista* and roughly doubles the work.
- **Keeps two weeks** at room temperature in a covered dish, and improves for the first three days. Never refrigerate — the syrup crystallises.

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