



RECIPE OF THE WEEK: 12/04/2021
Nistisimes Tomates Yemistes
(Stuffed Vegetarian Tomatoes)

Stuffing vegetables such as tomatoes, courgettes, aubergines, peppers and onions are part and parcel of the Greek cuisine especially in summer and early autumn.

The most popular recipe is probably the one that involves large ripe but firm tomatoes stuffed with onion, garlic, mincemeat and herbs. Here I present a vegetarian version bursting out with summer tastes and enhanced by the explosive flavours of the mountain herbs.

Serves 4

Ingredients

125g long grain rice
8 large ripe tomatoes plus 300g extra tomatoes
6 tbsp extra virgin olive oil and some for drizzling
2 medium onions, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
100g courgettes, finely diced
4 spring onions with their greens, finely chopped
60g pine nuts
A small handful of fresh flat- leaved parsley, finely chopped
A small handful of fresh mint, leaves only, finely chopped
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper



Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C /160°C / gas 5
2. Rinse the rice in a colander under the cold tap, shake well and leave to drain.
3. Slice off the top end of each tomato at the stalk end and set aside.
4. Scoop out with a teaspoon the seeds and flesh of the tomatoes, chop coarsely and put in a bowl with the washed rice.
5. Place the hollow tomatoes upside down on a baking dish to drain.
6. Heat 2 tbsp of olive oil in a heavy based frying pan over medium heat. Gently fry the onions for 2-3 minutes until soft and translucent.
7. Add the garlic and fry for 1 minute until aromatic.
8. Increase heat and add the courgette and fry for 2 minutes until soft.
9. Spoon the mixture into the rice. Add the spring onions, pine nuts, parsley, mint and 2 tbsp of the olive oil. Season to taste and mix well.
10. Season the inside of the tomatoes, then gently stuff the cavity with the rice stuffing until the tomatoes are three quarters full. Cover with the top ends of the tomatoes and the place on a baking dish.
11. Cut a cross on top of the extra tomatoes and cover with boiling water. Leave for 2 minutes and then peel. Quarter the tomatoes and put in a food processor and blend until smooth. Alternatively chop them finely with a large knife.
12. Add the tomato puree, the rest of the olive oil and 350ml cold water, season and pour into the baking dish containing the tomatoes.
13. Bake in the centre of the oven, uncovered for 50-60 minutes. Serve hot or cold.