

**Melintzanes Yemistes
(Stuffed Aubergines)****Serves 4**

One of the most versatile and most familiar of Greek dishes is yemistes (stuffed vegetables) and there are as many variations of this dish as there are home cooks who prepare them. The vegetables that are most commonly used for stuffing are tomatoes, aubergines, courgettes, courgette flowers and peppers not to forget the vine leaves which make the ubiquitous dolmades.

Ingredients

4 large aubergines
4 tbsp olive oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 red and 1 yellow pepper, cored, de-seeded and finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
350g minced lamb
2 large tomatoes, skinned, de-seeded and finely chopped
Or 250g canned tomatoes, drained
2 tsp freshly ground cumin
2 tsp dried oregano
Small bunch of fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

**For the topping**

300ml Greek yoghurt
2 medium free-range eggs
125g ketalotyri, parmesan or any other hard cheese, grated
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C / 170°C fan / Gas 5.
2. Place the aubergines in a pan of boiling salted water and cook for 6-8 minutes until they start to soften.
3. Drain and let the aubergines cool. Cut them in half lengthways and using a spoon scoop out most of the flesh making sure you leave the solid shell intact. Roughly chop the scooped out flesh and set aside.
4. Place the aubergine halves open side up in a shallow baking dish.
5. Over a medium heat, heat the oil in a large heavy based frying pan until hot but not smoking and fry the onion and peppers for 3-4 minutes. Add the garlic and fry for 1 minute more. Stir in the lamb and cook for 5-6 minutes stirring occasionally, until the meat is golden brown. Stir in the tomatoes, cumin, oregano and parsley into the aubergine mixture. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Cook over a medium heat until the mixture almost dries out and is like a thick paste. Spoon the meat mixture into the aubergine shells, forming a meat mound.
7. To make the topping, beat together the yoghurt and eggs in a bowl. Stir in half of the cheese and season with salt and pepper. Pour over the aubergines and sprinkle with the remaining cheese.
8. Bake uncovered on the middle shelf of the preheated oven for 30-35 minutes until the topping is golden brown and bubbling. Serve hot.

Notes

Omit the mince lamb to make a vegetarian version of the melitzanes yemistes.