

How to Make Greek Moussaka

YIELD: Makes 12 to 14 servings

Ingredients

- 3 lb eggplant (2 large or 3 medium)
- 2 large russet potatoes
- Salt as needed
- 1/3 cup olive oil, or as needed
- 2 cups diced onion
- 1 1/4 lb ground lamb (or substitute beef, turkey, pork, or combination)
- 2 cups chopped plum tomatoes
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 2 cloves
- Small piece cinnamon stick (or 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon)
- 1 bay leaf
- Pinch ground allspice
- Freshly ground black pepper, as needed
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 1/4 cup dry red wine
- 1/4 cup plain bread crumbs
- 2 cups Cheese Sauce

Preparation

1. Peel, salt, and rinse the eggplant if desired (see note “Preparing Eggplant for Cooking” below).
2. Place potatoes in a pot and add enough water to cover them. Over medium-high heat bring them to a boil and boil lightly for 5 minutes. Cool, cut into 1/8-inch slices, and set aside.
3. Heat about 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Add the eggplant to the hot oil a few slices at a time and sauté the eggplant slices, turning as necessary, until tender and lightly colored, 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Transfer to a rack to drain while you sauté the remaining eggplant, adding more oil to the skillet as necessary.
4. To prepare a meat sauce: Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a skillet. Add the onion and cook over medium high heat, stirring frequently, until tender, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the ground meat and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until the meat loses its raw appearance, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes, garlic, cloves, cinnamon, bay leaf, allspice, salt, pepper, and about 1/2 cup water. Simmer until thick and flavorful, about 30 minutes. Add the tomato paste and red wine and continue simmering until the wine has developed a sweet aroma, about 10 minutes.
5. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
6. To assemble the moussaka: Scatter the bread crumbs in a deep, rectangular baking dish. Place a layer of half of the eggplant slices over the bread crumbs. Add the meat sauce and spread it into an even layer. Place an even layer of sliced potatoes over the sauce. Add the remaining eggplant in an even layer over the meat sauce. Pour the cheese sauce over the eggplant. Bake, uncovered, until the cheese sauce is thick and golden brown and the eggplant is very tender, about 45 minutes. Let the moussaka rest for about 20 minutes before cutting and serving.

Preparing Eggplant for cooking:

Many recipes instruct you to salt eggplant before you cook it. Some say this step is necessary because it draws out any bitterness in the eggplant. We think it's a good idea, even if the eggplant isn't large or bitter. Drawing out some of the moisture in eggplant collapses the vegetable a little, so it doesn't act as much like a sponge for oil when you fry it. Peel the eggplant if you wish and slice the eggplant to the required thickness. Place the slices in a colander and put the colander in a large bowl. Sprinkle the slices liberally with kosher salt and let them rest until the salt begins to draw moisture to the surface, about 20 minutes. Rinse the eggplant thoroughly, let drain, and blot dry.

