

Lamb and Rice Stuffed Eggplant with Greek Salad

For some reason we seem to think that stuffing something takes a lot of effort when in fact it is so simple. You could do this recipe with red or green capsicum, butternut pumpkin, even sweet potato.....but it is so seriously good with eggplant you probably won't. With the lovely greek flavours of cinnamon, oregano and lemon and paired with a crisp, fresh greek salad this dish is just superb and a great one for the budget too!

Prep time: 20 Minutes
\$ Low Budget

Cooking time: 50 Minutes

Serves 4

2 large eggplants, halved lengthways

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

1 medium brown onion, diced

300gm of lamb mince

3 cloves of garlic, chopped

1/3 cup of white rice

1/2 a cup of water

1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

2 tbs lemon juice

1 tbs dried oregano (rigani)*

1 cup of grated hard goat cheese (parmesan will do)

sea salt and cracked black pepper

For the salad:

1 packet of baby salad leaves

1 lebanese cucumber, roughly chopped in chunks

1 punnet cherry tomatoes, halved

1 cup of kalamata olives

1 small red onion, sliced into rounds

100gm of fetta, crumbled (I use persian.....seriously good!)

1/4 cup of extra virgin olive oil

1/4 cup of red wine vinegar

1 tsp castor sugar

1 tsp of dried oregano

sea salt and cracked pepper

Pre heat the oven to 200 degrees celsius. Cut a 1cm border inside each eggplant and scoop out the flesh and try to avoid breaking the skin. Baste each half with a little olive oil and bake in the oven for approx 20 minutes or until tender.

Heat a heavy based pan on the stove. Roughly chop the eggplant "meat" that you have scooped out. Add a little oil to the pan and lightly fry the flesh of the eggplant until tender and golden. Remove from the pan and set aside.

In the same pan add a little more oil and lightly fry the onion until soft. Add the lamb mince, garlic and cinnamon and cook until mince is browned, stirring frequently. Return the eggplant to the pan with the rice and water, stir, cover and cook for approx 10 minutes until the rice is tender. Stir in the lemon juice and oregano.

Spoon the mince mixture into the eggplant halves and top with grated cheese. Return to the oven for 20 minutes until the cheese is golden.

To make the dressing combine the olive oil, vinegar, sugar and salt and pepper in a small bowl. Arrange all the salad ingredients in a large salad bowl and drizzle the dressing over the salad, topping with the dried oregano. Serve with the eggplant and lemon wedges.

* Rigani is greek oregano that you buy in bunches at specialty food stores and deli's. It has a much nicer flavour than your normal oregano but the normal will do if you can't get it. I use it all the time now....