

## Berenjenas Rellenas a la Catalana

stuffed eggplants

*This eggplant main course is somewhat reminiscent of Greek moussaka in flavor. Beef was used in the earliest versions of this recipe, according to Muslim tradition. Today, pork is the more likely ingredient.*

4 small globe eggplants (aubergines), about ½ lb (250 g) each  
olive oil for brushing, plus 4 tablespoons (2 fl oz / 60 ml) olive oil  
½ lb (250 g) ground (minced) beef or pork  
1 yellow onion, finely chopped  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
¼ cup (2 fl oz / 60 ml) dry white wine  
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 tablespoon all-purpose (plain) flour  
⅓ cup (3 fl oz / 80 ml) milk  
freshly grated nutmeg to taste  
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
2 eggs  
½ cup (2 oz / 60 g) fine dried bread crumbs

☞ Preheat an oven to 350°F (180°C).

☞ Cut the eggplants in half lengthwise and scoop out the soft pulp from each half, leaving a shell ½ inch (12 mm) thick. Reserve the pulp. Put the eggplant shells in a baking pan and brush them with olive oil. Bake until soft, about 20 minutes.

☞ Meanwhile, chop the eggplant pulp coarsely. In a frying pan over high heat, warm 3 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the meat and sauté until browned, 8–10 minutes. Add the onion, garlic, and eggplant and sauté until softened, 5–8 minutes. Stir in the wine and cinnamon and cook until all the liquid has been absorbed, 3–5 minutes. Remove from the heat.

☞ Make a tiny batch of béchamel sauce: In a small saucepan over low heat, warm the remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Add the flour and stir for a few minutes until well combined; do not allow to brown. Add the milk and stir until the sauce thickens, about 5 minutes. Season with nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Remove from the heat and fold into the meat mixture.

☞ Lightly beat 1 of the eggs, add to the meat mixture, and mix well. Taste and adjust the seasonings. Oil a baking dish in which the eggplant shells will fit comfortably in a single layer. Spoon the meat mixture into the shells, dividing it evenly. Beat the remaining egg and spoon it over the tops of the filled eggplants, then sprinkle with the bread crumbs.

☞ Bake until golden brown on top, about 20 minutes. Serve immediately.

serves 8

