

Moussaka



This traditional Greek Moussaka Recipe is made with a sliced potato base and thick layers of succulent eggplant in a rich tomato-meat sauce, topped with a creamy bechamel sauce.

MOUSSAKA INGREDIENTS (see complete list below)

Roasted Eggplant (aubergine) is the base layer of this moussaka. Globe eggplant is sliced and often salted to draw out excess moisture and bitterness before being roasted. This step also helps in creating a firmer texture for the dish. For extra flavor, the eggplant can also be grilled.

Potatoes: The sliced potatoes are the base for the dish, give it robustness and make it easy to cut and serve. Is best to use some starchy potatoes like Russet, Idaho, Yukon gold or Marris Piper.

Ground Meat (Lamb or Beef or Plant-based): Moussaka traditionally includes ground lamb, which adds a rich, savory flavor. Beef can also be used as a substitute or use half and half.

Onions and Garlic: These aromatic ingredients are sautéed with ground meat to provide depth of flavor.

Tomato Sauce: A tomato-based sauce adds a tangy and sweet element to the moussaka. It's typically made with tomatoes and a hint of cinnamon.

Béchamel Sauce: This creamy white sauce is a signature component of moussaka. It's made from unsalted butter, all-purpose flour, and milk, and is usually seasoned with a pinch of nutmeg. The béchamel is poured over the assembled layers before baking, giving the dish its beautiful golden top and delicious richness. See recipe notes for vegans.

Cheese: Some recipes call for grated cheese, such as Parmesan cheese or Kefalotyri, to be sprinkled on top of the béchamel layer before baking. This adds a layer of flavor and a golden crust when baked.

Olive Oil: Used for sautéing the meat and onions, as well as roasting the eggplant slices. Olive oil imparts a distinctly Mediterranean flavor to the dish.

Spices and Herbs: Common spices and herbs used in moussaka include oregano, cinnamon, nutmeg, thyme, garlic powder and bay leaves. These seasonings enhance the overall flavor profile.

Salt and Black Pepper: Essential for seasoning each component of the dish and bringing out the flavors.

Egg: Beaten egg yolks are mixed into the béchamel sauce for richness and structure.

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Fresh Parsley – adds a lovely freshness to the tomato sauce.

Preparing the moussaka potatoes

Peel and slice the potatoes in uniform disks of about the same thickness as your little finger (around 1cm). Rinse them under some running water to get rid of the excess starch and finally dry them well.

So, drizzle your sliced potatoes and potatoes with some olive oil, season generously with salt, pepper and garlic powder. Bake them in sheet pans for 20 minutes at 180C/350F until they are cooked and golden brown on the outside.

Preparing the moussaka eggplants (aubergines)

Cut eggplant into 1cm. disks (no thinner), sprinkle with kosher salt, and sit in a colander or bowl for 20-60 minutes. Salting the eggplant will help it release its liquid resulting in a much better texture with less bitterness. If pressed for time, you can skip this step, but I highly recommend it.

Rinse well, pat dry, brush each side with olive oil, season generously with salt, pepper and garlic powder. Place on a greased or parchment sheet pan and roast in a 400 F oven until golden, about 20-30 minutes. Alternatively, you can grill the eggplant on each side (getting nice deep grill marks) then wrap it in foil for 10-15 minutes, so it steams and cooks through. **Precooking the eggplant is absolutely essential here!**

Preparing the moussaka ground meat

Place ground meat in a deep bowl and while stirring pour boiling water over it to cover. Let stand a few minutes, until beef changes color, take beef away from water, drain and let cool.

Preparing the moussaka tomato sauce

Make the tomato meat sauce: In a large saucepan or large skillet, sauté diced onion in olive oil over medium heat for 3-4 minutes: add the garlic and turn the heat down to med-low and sauté for 8-10 minutes until onions are tender. Add the ground meat and brown it, stirring often, for about 10-15 minutes. Add the rest of the ingredients -diced tomatoes, tomato paste, white wine, fresh parsley, sugar, cinnamon, kosher salt and black pepper. Stir and cover and let simmer on low heat for 20 minutes. You'll have a thick, rich tomato sauce.

Preparing the moussaka Bechamel Sauce

In a small saucepan, heat the butter until melted. Whisk in the flour and let cook for 2-3 minutes on med heat, often stirring, letting the flour "cook". Whisk in the first cup of milk a little at a time. Whisk well and add the 2nd cup. Stirring constantly brings to a simmer, lower heat, and let simmer on low for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and add nutmeg, cheese, salt, pepper. Set aside to cool. Lightly beat an egg yolk in a separate bowl, but do not add it just yet.



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Assembling the moussaka

Divide eggplant slices into three stacks, reserving the “best looking” largest pieces for the top and bottom layers. The others can be placed in the middle layer, which will be concealed. Begin layering. In a greased baking dish, arrange the potatoes to cover the bottom of the dish, place one layer of eggplant. Add half the tomato-meat sauce. Add the middle layer of eggplant (using the pieces you want to hide) then add the remaining tomato meat sauce. Add the third and final layer of eggplant (use the prettiest pieces). Whisk in 2-3 tablespoons of bechamel sauce, into the beaten egg, to temper it (to warm up the egg so it doesn't curdle), then pour this egg mixture into the bechamel sauce, whisking until nice and smooth and thickened. Spread the bechamel sauce over the final eggplant layer. Sprinkle with cheese and bake uncovered, for 50-60 minutes, until beautifully golden.

INGREDIENTS

3 lbs. Eggplant (2 extra-large or 3 eggplants)
salt
3 tablespoons olive oil or spray olive oil
Tomato Meat Sauce:
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large onion, diced.
4 cloves garlic, rough chopped
2 lbs. ground lamb, ground beef, I prefer lamb.
1 1/2 cups diced tomatoes, with juices (or 14-ounce can, with juices)
3 tablespoons tomato paste
1/2 cup white wine (optional, sub 1/4 cup water)
4 teaspoons dried oregano
2 tsp sugar
2 tsp cinnamon
Garlic Powder as needed.
3/4 tsp kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon cracked pepper
2–3 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley

Bechamel Sauce:

3 tablespoons butter or olive oil
4 tablespoons flour
2 cups milk (or plant-based milk)
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg (use fresh grated if possible)
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/8 teaspoon white pepper or finely ground black pepper.
1/4 cup grated Parmesan, Pecorino or Kefalotyri Cheese (plus an additional 1/4 cup for the top).
1 egg, room temp, lightly beaten