TRADITIONAL GREEK MOUSSAKA RECIPE (MOUSSAKA WITH BÉCHAMEL)

https://www.mygreekdish.com/recipe/mousakas/

Base ingredients

- 6 eggplants
- 5 potatoes (optional)
- vegetable oil (for frying the eggplants)

For the meat sauce

- 750g ground lamb (26 oz)
- 2 red onions (chopped)
- 2 cloves of garlic (chopped)
- 1 tin chopped tomatoes (400g / 14oz)
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 glass of red wine
- Pinch of sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- A pinch of cinnamon or one cinnamon stick

- 1/4 of a cup olive oil

For the bechamel sauce

- 900ml milk (31 fl.oz)
- 120g butter (4 oz)
- 120g flour (4 oz)
- a pinch of nutmeg
- 2 egg yolks
- 100g Parmigiano-Reggiano or Kefalotyri or your favorite hard cheese (3.5oz)
- salt to taste

Instructions

1. To prepare this Greek moussaka recipe, begin by **preparing the eggplants**. Remove the stalks from the eggplants and cut them into slices, 1 cm thick. Season with salt and place in a colander for about half an hour.

2. **Rinse the eggplants with plenty of water** and squeeze with your hands, to get rid of the excessive water. Pat them dry and **fry in plenty of oil**, until nicely colored. Place the fried eggplants on some paper, in order to absorb the oil. (For a **lighter version** of the traditional Greek moussaka try **drizzling the aubergines with some olive oil and bake them** for 20 minutes instead of frying them). Set aside when done.

3. If you are adding **potatoes** to your moussaka, now its time to slice them into 0.5cm, half a finger width slices. **Fry them or bake them** in the same way as the eggplants. Season with some salt and set them aside when done.

4. **Prepare the meat sauce** for the moussaka. Heat a large pan to medium-high heat and add the **olive oil**. Stir in the chopped **onions** and sauté, until softened and slightly colored.

Stir in the **meat** breaking it up with a wooden spoon and sauté. When it starts to brown, add the the **garlic** and **tomato paste** and sauté until the garlic starts to soften. Pour in the **red wine** to deglaze the meat juices and wait to evaporate. Add the **tinned tomatoes**, the **sugar**, a pinch of **cinnamon**, **1 bay leaf** and a good pinch of **salt** and **pepper**. Bring to the boil then turn the heat down and simmer with the lid on for about 30 minutes or until most of the juices have evaporated. Set aside when done.

5. **Prepare the béchamel sauce** for the moussaka. Use a large pan to melt the **butter** over low-medium heat. Add the **flour** whisking continuously to make a paste. Add **warmed milk** in a steady stream; keep whisking in order to prevent your sauce from getting lumpy. If the sauce still needs to thicken, boil over low heat while continuing to stir. Its consistency should resemble a thick cream.

6. Remove the béchamel pan from the stove and stir in the **egg yolks**, **salt**, **pepper**, a pinch of **nutmeg** and the **most of the grated cheese**. Reserve some cheese to sprinkle on top! Whisk quickly, in order to prevent the eggs from turning an omelette! Season with **salt** to taste. Take one spoon full of béchamel and stir it in the meat sauce. Set the béchamel sauce aside.

7. Now its time to assemble the moussaka. For this moussaka recipe you will need a large baking dish, approx. 20x30cm / 8x12inch and 8cm/3 inch deep). Butter the bottom and sides of the pan and layer the **potatoes** first (if you're using them), then **half the eggplants**. Pour in all of the **meat sauce** and spread it out evenly. Add a second layer of **eggplants**, top with all of the **béchamel** sauce and smooth out with a spatula.

8. **Sprinkle with the remaining grated cheese**. Preheat you oven at **180C/350F** and bake your moussaka for about 60 minutes or until its crust turns light golden brown. Even though it will be really hard to do so, you should wait for the moussaka to **cool down** and be just warm to the touch before cutting into pieces.

This will prevent the béchamel sauce from pouring out when you're cutting your pieces.

9. Serve the Moussaka with a refreshing Traditional Greek Salad and enjoy over a glass of wine!