

Moussaka me Melitzanes: Moussaka with Eggplant

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Classic Greek Moussaka
Photo © Jim Stanfield

In Greek: μουσκά με μελιτζάνες, pronounced moo-sah-KAH meh meh-leed-ZAH-nes

Moussaka can be any dish of layered vegetables and ground meat, and dishes with the same or similar names are prepared in several areas of the world. Other Greek versions call for artichokes, potatoes, and zucchini, or a combination, but this is the classic known worldwide. Moussaka is generally served in large portions.

No one ever said it was easy, but it's worth the effort!

[Step-by-step recipe with photos](#)

Prep Time: 2 hours, 30 minutes

Cook Time: 45 minutes

Ingredients:

- 5-6 medium Globe eggplants (about 5-6 pounds)
- sea salt
- olive oil
- 4 medium onions, chopped
- 2 1/2 pounds of ground beef (or lamb)
- 3 cups of chopped ripe tomatoes with juice (or canned tomatoes)
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 6-8 whole cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon of ground cinnamon or a small stick (break off around 1 inch long)
- 1/8 teaspoon of ground allspice
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 cup of grated kefalotyri cheese (or pecorino or parmigiano reggiano)
- 1 cup of breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup of dry red wine
- 3 tablespoons of tomato paste
- freshly ground pepper
- béchamel with cheese* or 6 cups of basic béchamel**

Preparation:

* [Recipe for Béchamel with Cheese](#)

** [Recipe for Basic Béchamel](#)

Wash eggplants and trim off stems. Cut off 1/2-inch wide strips of the skin lengthwise, leaving about an inch in between, all around the eggplant, then cut eggplant lengthwise into 1/2-inch slices. Put slices in a large bowl or on a tray, sprinkle liberally with salt and let them sit for 30 minutes. Rinse well, drain, and pat dry. Brush slices lightly on both sides with olive oil and run them under the broiler on an ungreased cookie sheet until lightly browned and soft. Remove and set aside to cool.

Note: If you've never fixed this before, there are two reasons often given for salting the eggplant: (1) to remove any bitterness, and (2) to absorb some of the natural liquids.

Preheat the frying pan or skillet over low heat.

When the pan is hot, add 2 tablespoons of oil and increase the heat to medium low. Sauté the onions with a wooden spoon, until onions are translucent. Add the meat and continue to sauté until lightly browned. Add tomatoes, 1/2 the breadcrumbs, salt, pepper, garlic, cinnamon, cloves, bay leaves, allspice, wine, and tomato paste, and mix well. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer until all the