

Moussaka

Serves about 8

2 large eggplants, sliced lengthwise
2 large russet/baking potatoes, peeled and sliced lengthwise
olive oil
1 batch meatsauce (recipe follows)
1 batch bechamel (recipe follows)

Meatsauce

1-2 Tbsp. olive oil
1 large onion, diced
1.5 lbs. ground beef or lamb
2 cloves garlic, minced
6 Tbsp. (just over half a small can) tomato paste
1.25 cups water
1 cinnamon stick
1/4 heaping tsp. ground allspice or cloves
2 bay leaves
1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley or about 1.5 Tbsp. dried
salt and pepper

Béchamel

1 stick butter
1/2 cup flour
4 cups milk (at least 2%)--kept warm
nutmeg (I grate maybe 1/4 of a nutmeg into it)
salt and pepper
1 cup kefalotyri (or Romano) cheese
4 eggs
a little extra cheese

Whether (or how) you peel the eggplants is up to you. I usually peel about half of it, leaving what appear to be strips on the eggplant. Then, slice the eggplants into about 1/3" thick lengthwise slices. Layer them in a colander, sprinkling them with salt as you go, and then put that colander over a bowl. Let the eggplant sit for about 30 minutes. Then rinse the eggplant slices and pat them dry well.

Start your meatsauce. Heat a large, heavy bottomed pan over medium heat and add the oil. Add the onion and let it sweat for a little bit before adding the beef or lamb. Brown the meat completely and drain if necessary. Then stir in the garlic and tomato paste and cook it off a little before adding the water. Stir to combine the water and paste well, and add the

cinnamon stick, bay leaves, parsley, and salt and pepper. Bring to a boil and then reduce the heat to a simmer. Simmer for 35-45 minutes.

Meanwhile, roast your prepared eggplant slices. Heat your oven to 375. Lightly brush a baking pan or two with olive oil, place the eggplant slices on the pan, and brush the tops with a little more oil. Season the eggplant with pepper and roast about 15-20 minutes or until tender, but not mushy. Leave the oven on.

While the eggplant is in the oven and your meatsauce is simmering, make the béchamel. Melt the butter in a large saucepan, and then add the flour. Stir frequently with a wooden spoon until your roux is golden and the flour is cooked off. Slowly add the warm milk, switching to a whisk if necessary to get rid of any clumps. Add salt and pepper to taste. Heat the mixture until it thickens and can coat the back of the wooden spoon. Then, stir in the nutmeg and off the heat, and the cheese and more salt and pepper if necessary. Then, mix in the eggs well. Be SURE to taste your béchamel and add any more seasonings to taste. A batch of béchamel this big will require quite a bit of salt and pepper. If you don't want to eat raw eggs, just taste it before the eggs go in, as eggs will not really alter the taste much.

In a nonstick pan, heat some olive oil. Sprinkle the potato slices with salt and pepper and pan-fry in the oil until they are almost, but not completely, cooked through. Place the fried potatoes in a 9x13" or 10x14" baking dish. After the eggplant has roasted, layer half of it on top of the potatoes. Then, pour the meatsauce on top, followed by another layer of eggplant. Layer the eggplant as closely together as possible, trying to not leave any holes where the béchamel would slip through. Finally, pour the bechamel on top and sprinkle a little bit of extra cheese on top. Bake the moussaka for about 40 minutes or until the béchamel has firmed up and is golden on top. Let the moussaka set for 20 minutes before slicing into it.