

Moussaka

Inspired by my recent travels to Greece and coupled with the fact that aubergines are in season and in abundance at the moment, I couldn't resist cooking up a Moussaka! It was delicious and so easy to make ...

Ingredients:

Yield: 4 - 5

1 Finely Chopped Onion

Olive Oil

4 Cloves Crushed Garlic

1 kg Lamb or Beef Mince

250 ml Good Quality Red Wine

800grms Can Chopped Tomatoes

125ml Good Quality Beef Stock

2 tsp Ground Cinnamon

4 Sprigs of Fresh Oregano (or substitute with 2 – 3 tsp dried oregano)

3 or 4 Aubergines / Brinjals

75grms Butter

75grms Flour

500ml Milk (or more if sauce is too thick)

250ml Grated Parmesan

125ml Bread Crumbs

Salt & Pepper

Method:

Slice your aubergines into thin rounds and place in a colander or on a cooling rack and sprinkle generously with salt. Leave for 30 minutes to extract all the bitter juices (the colander / cooling rack will help the juices to drain away from the aubergines). After 30 minutes, dab with carlton towel to drain away any remaining liquid and salt.

Preheat the oven to 180°c

In a large saucepan, sweat the onion in 2 – 3 tbsp olive oil, once soft but not coloured, add the crushed garlic and cook for a further minute. Add the mince and fry until nicely browned. Add the wine and stir for a minute before adding the chopped tomatoes, beef stock, oregano and cinnamon. Simmer for 40 minutes and adjust the seasoning with salt & pepper.

Whilst this is simmering, coat the aubergine rounds in olive oil and fry in batches , in a non stick pan over high heat for a minute or two before turning and cooking the other side – you want to achieve a nice charred appearance. (If you have a griddle pan, use it).

Prepare the white sauce by melting the butter in a saucepan over a low heat, whisk in the flour and cook for 1 minute. Slowly add your milk little by little, whisking the entire time to avoid lumps. Continue whisking until the sauce thickens, if the sauce becomes too thick, add more milk until you achieve the correct consistency (think of the consistency used in a lasagne). Remove from the heat, stir in the parmesan cheese and season with salt & pepper quite generously but don't forget that the cheese will bring additional saltiness to the sauce on its own.

Layer your oven proof dish with the mince sauce, white sauce and a layer of aubergines, repeat if necessary and end with a final layer of white sauce. Mix together the remaining parmesan cheese with the breadcrumbs, sprinkle on top and bake for 30 – 40 minutes until bubbling and golden !

Serve with a salad of baby spinach leaves, tomatoes, cucumber and feta and a good bottle of red wine :)