

Moussaka

This is a classic dish in the Greek style from [*The Essential Mediterranean Cookbook*](#). If you don't happen to have any ground lamb on hand, you can also mince some lamb shoulder meat instead. Just chop it really fine leaving the fat in. If you want to spice things up a bit, add a little bit of cayenne pepper to the filling and dream that you can see the islands of the Aegean from your kitchen window!

Prep time: 20 minutes + 30 minutes standing

Total cooking time: 2 hrs

Serves 6

- 3 lbs eggplant, cut into ¼ in. slices
- ½ cup olive oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 large cloves garlic, crushed
- ½ tsp ground allspice
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1½ lb ground lamb
- 2 large ripe tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 2 Tbs tomato paste
- ½ cup white wine
- 3 Tbs chopped fresh flat leaf parsley

Cheese Sauce:

- 4 Tbs (2 oz.) butter
- ½ cup plain flour
- 2½ cups milk
- pinch of ground nutmeg
- 1/3 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten

1. Lay the eggplant on a tray, sprinkle with salt and leave to stand for 30 minutes. Rinse under water and pat dry.
2. Heat 2 Tbs olive oil in a frying pan, add eggplant in batches and cook 1-2 minutes each side, or until golden and soft. Add more oil when needed.
3. Heat 1 Tbs olive oil in large saucepan, add onion and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add garlic, allspice and cinnamon and cook for 30 seconds. Add lamb mince and cook for 5 minutes, or until browned, breaking up any lumps. Add the tomato, tomato paste and wine, and simmer over low heat for 30 minutes, or until the liquid had evaporated. Stir in the chopped parsley and season to taste.

4. For the cheese sauce, melt the butter in a saucepan over low heat. Stir in the flour and cook for 1 minute, or until pale and foaming. Remove the saucepan from the heat and gradually stir in the milk and nutmeg. Return the saucepan to the heat and stir constantly until the sauce boils and thickens. Reduce the heat and simmer for 2 minutes. Stir in 1 Tbs of the cheese until well combined. Stir in the eggs just before using.

5. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line the base of a 10 x 12 in. ovenproof dish with a third of the eggplant. Spoon half the meat sauce over it and cover with another layer of eggplant. Spoon the remaining meat sauce over the top and cover with the remaining eggplant. Spread the cheese sauce over the top and sprinkle with the remaining cheese. Bake for 1 hour. Leave to stand for 10 minutes before slicing.

NOTE: You can substitute an equal quantity of sliced, shallow-fried zucchini or potatoes, or any combination, for the eggplant.