

MOUSSAKA

(Baked Eggplant with Meat)

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. ground beef or ground lamb
1 large yellow onion, chopped
4 Tablespoons butter
1 15 oz. can tomato sauce
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
2 Tablespoons dried oregano
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 garlic clove, minced

3 large eggplants (peeled or unpeeled – (I removed wide strips leaving strips of green)
Salt
8-12 Tablespoons butter, melted

3/4 cup flour
6 Tablespoons butter
1-quart whole milk
3 large eggs, beaten
1 1/2 teaspoons salt

**if using one large pan, make double recipe for the béchamel sauce **.

1/2 cup flavored bread crumbs – Italian style
1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated

DIRECTIONS:

Meat Sauce:

1. Melt 4 tablespoons butter over medium heat and sauté chopped onions until soft (about 3-4 minutes).
2. Add ground meat, breaking up and cook until meat has browned and no longer pink (don't overcook the meat).
3. Drain off the fat; add 1 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon pepper, 2 tablespoons dried oregano, 1 teaspoon cinnamon and minced garlic. Stir well and simmer for 5 minutes, on medium-low heat.
4. Add 15 oz. can tomato sauce and let simmer on low heat for 45 minutes.

Eggplant:

1. Peel eggplant or unpeel – your choice (I removed wide strips to retain some skin)
2. Slice into 1/2 " thickness, and spread in one layer on paper towels.
3. Sprinkle lightly with salt on both sides.
4. Cover the top with paper towels and set for 30 minutes, to draw out the moisture.
5. Turn on broiler.
6. Blot eggplant slices dry and place slices on a sheet pan, brush each side with the 8-12 tablespoons of butter. May need to do this in stages, depending how many sheets are available.
7. Place the sheet pan about 5-6" from the broiler until golden brown and soft, turn and broil other side (2 – 3 minutes each side). Watch carefully so they don't burn.
8. Place the slices on fresh paper towels to soak up the butter. Repeat with remaining slices.

Béchamel Sauce:

1. Melt 6 tablespoons butter in large saucepan (suggest a 4-quart, 10-inch size non-stick) over medium heat.
2. Add 3/4 cup flour slowly, blending well and brown slightly – about 3-4 minutes.
3. Lower the heat to medium-low and add 1-quart milk SLOWLY, stirring constantly (first used a wooden spoon and then a whisk) to prevent lumps, until thickened. Consistency should be thicker than a creamed soup.
4. Stir in 1 1/2 teaspoons salt, removed from heat and let cool for 15-20 minutes.
5. Slowly add the 3 beaten eggs to the cream sauce with whisk.

Assemble: Recipe makes one 17" x 12" x 2" or two 13" x 9" x 2" casserole pans. **If using one large pan, need to double the béchamel sauce recipe**.

1. Turn oven to 350 °
2. Butter the bottom of pan/s.
3. Sprinkle the bottom of the pan with half of the bread crumbs. (If using 2 pans, need to divide the bread crumbs using 2 tablespoons bread crumbs). This helps to absorb the liquid from the vegetables.
4. Layer the eggplant slices, sprinkle the rest of the bread crumbs on top.
5. Sprinkle half of the grated parmesan cheese (2 tablespoons if using 2 pans)
6. Evenly spread out the meat sauce (divide if using 2 pans).
7. Add another layer of eggplant slices.
8. Sprinkle the other half of the grated parmesan cheese (other 2 tablespoons for 2 pans)
9. Spoon the béchamel sauce equally over the two casseroles, spread to cover all the eggplant, like a topping (about 3 cups for each of the two casseroles).
if using one large pan, remember to make double recipe for the béchamel sauce.
10. Bake at 350° , in center of oven, uncovered for 1 hour and 15 minutes until the top is a nice golden-brown color.
11. Remove from oven and let set for at least 20-30 minutes, to it doesn't fall apart when slicing. The béchamel sauce in particular needs to settle. Cut and serve in squares.
17" x 12" x 2" pan = 16 servings
13" x 9" x 2" = 8 servings for each of the two pans

Notes:

- Can make the meat sauce and the eggplant a day in advance, cover tightly and store in refrigerator. Remove to counter for 1 hour prior to assembling. May need to reheat the meat sauce in the microwave.
- Casserole/s **unbaked** can be frozen up to 3 months – two methods:
 1. Béchamel sauce not added – cover with a sheet of parchment paper, wrap tightly with plastic wrap and then aluminum foil. Place in freezer.
To unfreeze, remove casserole/s from freezer the night before planning to use, and let thaw. Day serving: Prepare fresh béchamel sauce, cover the eggplant with the béchamel sauce and bake accordingly.
 2. Adding the béchamel sauce - make sure the casserole has cooled to room temperature - cover with a sheet of parchment paper, wrap tightly with plastic wrap and then aluminum foil. Place in freezer.
To unfreeze, remove casserole/s from freezer the night before planning to use, and let thaw. Day serving: Remove aluminum foil, plastic wrap and parchment paper and bake accordingly.

Jo Ann Hess – recipe from Tiffany Corbett "For Hospitality's Sake" published 1982.