

Moussaka

This is a rewrite of my original Moussaka recipe, which came from the *Marshall Cavendish Handbook of Good Cooking* (now sadly lost to me). I've made a few changes.

Firstly, I've scaled it up (and gone to metric measurements) to fit my old ceramic Jamie Oliver "Big Boy" Roaster (the smaller of the two). Being ceramic, it's useless as a roaster 'cos you can't make gravy in it on the hob. It is, however, a decent deep dish for recipes such as this. This would now feed 6 generously.

Secondly, I've learned a much better way of pre-cooking aubergines from Ottolenghi. This makes for a much less oily finished dish.

Now to my original intro, in which I still believe. The first and most important rule of Moussaka is to ignore recipes that use potato instead of aubergine. The second rule of Moussaka is to serve lots of retsina (increasingly difficult to find - try Sainsbury's). I think the atmosphere is enhanced if you play Greek music while you eat it but I understand your disagreeing. With or without the music, **please** don't break the plates afterwards.

Planning

serves:	6-8
prep time:	45 mins
cooking time:	1½ hrs

Ingredients

1kg minced lamb
3 LARGE aubergines
250g onions, roughly chopped
350g tomatoes, roughly chopped
olive oil
1 tbs ground allspice
3 tbs chopped fresh parsley
600ml béchamel sauce
(coating consistency)
yolks of 2 eggs
¼ tsp grated nutmeg
90g Parmesan cheese,
grated

Method

Heat the oven to 200°C fan. Wipe, top and tail the aubergines, then cut them into 1cm slices. Sprinkle these with a little salt before brushing each slice with a little olive oil on both sides and placing them on lined baking trays (you'll need two). bake the aubergines in the oven for 30 minutes (no need to turn) when they should turn a light golden brown.

Heat 2 tbs olive oil in a large skillet over low heat. Fry the onions gently until soft and lightly coloured - about 10 minutes. Add the lamb and fry, stirring frequently until lightly browned. Add the chopped tomatoes, allspice, parsley and salt and pepper to taste. Stir well, cover and cook gently for about 20 mins. The tomatoes should break down.

Heat the oven to 180°C/gas 4. Arrange a layer of aubergine slices on the bottom of a large, deep, ovenproof dish. You should use about half the aubergines. Cover the base aubergines with your meat sauce, then add a further layer of aubergine slices on the top.

Warm the béchamel sauce very gently over low heat, then stir in the egg yolks and nutmeg together with salt and pepper to taste. Pour the sauce evenly over the top layer of aubergines and sprinkle the top with the grated Parmesan cheese. Bake in the centre of the oven for 45 mins until the top is lightly golden and bubbling.

Serve this with a green salad and lashings of cold retsina. You could, of course, try Greek salad but I think that's a bit overkill.