

Batu's

Hünkârbeğendi (Sultan's Delight)

Servings: 3-4

Prep time: 45 minutes

Cook time: 90 minutes



(One photo is the meat version (left), the other is the veggie version (right))

This is one of the recipes survived from the Ottoman court cuisine, rumored to have been created in the 19th century by combining the eggplant mash widely used in Turkish cooking and the Béchamel sauce from the French cuisine. The dish contains two parts, an eggplant mash in the bottom and a lamb stew on top (which can be substituted with veggies to make it vegetarian). Feel free to change the amount of cheese and milk you put in the eggplant mash depending on how creamy you want it to be.

Ingredients

For the eggplant mash

4 large eggplants
1.5 cup warm milk
1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
3 - 4 tablespoon butter
2 tablespoon flour
salt
pepper

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F, prick a few holes in the eggplants with a fork or knife to let the steam escape, and bake for 1 hour until eggplants are really soft. Set aside to cool down.
2. Start making the stew. Melt the butter in a pan, then add the stew ingredients (lamb, peppers and garlic for the original recipe, or onions first, then bell peppers and garlic for the vegetarian version). Add spices and cook over medium heat until meat is well done and/or veggies are softened. (If you want a more tender meat, you can add boiling stock and let it simmer for about an hour in reduced heat).

Choose one version from below:

For lamb stew (original version)

1.5 - 2 lb lamb (leg, shank or shoulder; beef can be used too), cut into small cubes

4 - 5 sweet mini peppers

1 garlic clove, crushed

2 tablespoons butter

spices to taste (recommended: oregano, zaatar, chili flakes, chili powder, cumin, salt, pepper)

For veggie stew (vegetarian version)

1 onion, Julienne cut

1 yellow bell pepper, Julienne cut

1 red bell pepper, Julienne cut

1 green bell pepper, Julienne cut

1 garlic clove, crushed

2 tablespoons butter

spices to taste (recommended: oregano, zaatar, chili flakes, chili powder, cumin, salt, pepper)

3. Once the eggplants cool down, peel them and remove the stem. Put the flesh of the eggplants in a food processor to blend it into a purée like consistency. (If you don't have a food processor, you can finely chop the flesh with a knife until it looks like a purée).
4. In a large pan, melt the butter and add the flour. Stir well over medium-heat to obtain a flour-butter mix that will act as a thickening agent. Then add the eggplant and stir it for about 5 minutes. Then add cheese and milk gradually while stirring to let them blend well with the eggplant mash. Add salt and pepper, and continue stirring for about 10-15 minutes until the mash gets a smooth, creamy consistency.
5. Put the eggplant mash on a flat plate as a thick, flat layer, and top with your stew of choice. Afiyet olsun! (Enjoy!)