

Treasure Barrel

Classic Greek Eggplant Moussaka - Eat Healthier

45 min Prep time	**1 h** Cook time	**1 h 45 min** Total time
6 Servings	**Hard** Difficulty	**Greek** Cuisine

Ingredients

For the Eggplant Layers

- [ ] 2 large globe eggplants (about 2.5 lbs total)
- [ ] Kosher salt
- [ ] 3 tbsp olive oil

For the Meat Sauce

- [ ] 2 tbsp olive oil
- [ ] 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- [ ] 3 cloves garlic, minced
- [ ] 1.5 lbs ground lamb
- [ ] 1 (15-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- [ ] 2 tbsp tomato paste
- [ ] 1/2 cup dry red grape juice or beef broth
- [ ] 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- [ ] 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- [ ] 1/4 tsp ground allspice
- [ ] 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- [ ] 1 tbsp chopped fresh mint
- [ ] Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

For the Creamy Béchamel Topping

- [ ] 4 tbsp unsalted butter
- [ ] 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- [ ] 3 cups whole milk, warmed
- [ ] Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
- [ ] Salt and white pepper to taste
- [ ] 1 large egg yolk
- [ ] 1/2 cup grated Parmesan or Kefalotyri cheese, divided

Instructions

1. First, let's prepare the eggplant. Slice the eggplants lengthwise into 1/3-inch thick planks. Arrange them in a single layer on baking sheets or in a colander and sprinkle generously with kosher salt. Let them stand for 30-60 minutes. You'll see little droplets of moisture appear on the surface; this is the salt drawing out the bitterness. Afterward, rinse the slices thoroughly under cold water and pat them completely dry with paper towels. Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C), toss the eggplant slices with olive oil, and roast for 20-25 minutes, until tender and lightly golden. This gentle roasting step is so much easier than frying, trust me.

2. While the eggplant is roasting, let's make that beautiful meat sauce. Warm the olive oil in a large skillet or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and cook until it’s soft and translucent, about 5-7 minutes. Stir in the minced garlic and cook for another minute until you can smell its gorgeous aroma. Add the ground lamb, breaking it up with a spoon, and cook until it's browned all over. Drain off any excess fat if you need to. The kitchen already smells amazing, doesn't it? Just as good as when you make banana bread.

3. Now, let's build the flavor. Stir the tomato paste into the meat and cook for a minute to deepen its flavor. Pour in the red grape juice or broth to deglaze the pan, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom. Add the crushed tomatoes, cinnamon, oregano, and allspice. Season with salt and pepper, bring it to a simmer, then reduce the heat to low, cover, and let it gently bubble away for about 30 minutes. The sauce should be thick and deeply fragrant. Once it's done, stir in the fresh parsley and mint. This fresh herbaceousness at the end really brightens everything up.

4. For the final layer, our creamy béchamel. In a medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and cook for one minute, stirring constantly, to create a roux. Gradually pour in the warm milk in a slow, steady stream, whisking vigorously to prevent lumps. Continue to cook, stirring often, until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon, about 8-10 minutes. Remove it from the heat and stir in the nutmeg, salt, white pepper, and half of the Parmesan cheese. In a small bowl, whisk the egg yolk with a tablespoon of the hot sauce to temper it, then stir the yolk mixture back into the béchamel. This adds a lovely richness.

5. It's time to assemble! Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F (175°C). In a 9x13-inch baking dish, arrange a single layer of the roasted eggplant slices, slightly overlapping them. Top with half of the meat sauce. Repeat with another layer of eggplant and the remaining meat sauce. For the final eggplant layer, arrange the slices neatly on top. Carefully pour the béchamel sauce over everything, using a spatula to spread it evenly to the edges. Sprinkle the remaining Parmesan cheese over the top. It looks so beautiful already.

6. Bake for 45-60 minutes, until the top is beautifully golden brown and the sauce is bubbling around the edges. Ugh, the waiting is the hardest part! Once it's done, you absolutely must let it rest on a wire rack for at least 20-30 minutes before cutting into it. This is so important for the layers to set properly, allowing you to get those perfect, clean slices. Garnish with a little fresh parsley if you like, and then serve it warm. Enjoy every single comforting bite.

Nutrition per serving

480 kcal	28 g	22 g	30 g
Calories	Protein	Carbs	Fat

Tips & notes

- To get a really lovely golden-brown top, you can switch the oven to the broiler for the last 1-2 minutes of cooking. Just watch it very carefully, as it can go from golden to burnt in a matter of seconds! It's a little trick that makes it look extra special.
- If you find your meat sauce has too much liquid after simmering, just let it cook for a few more minutes with the lid off to allow some of the moisture to evaporate. The goal is a thick, rich sauce, not a watery one, as this helps the layers hold together.
- This recipe, like any great comfort food, is a journey. Don't be intimidated by the steps. Put on some music, pour yourself something nice to sip, and enjoy the process. Good food takes time, and that's okay. In fact, that's what makes a dish like this, or even a simple banana bread, feel so full of love.