

## GREEK MOUSSAKA | Eggplant, Zucchini + Potato Casserole

2 lbs eggplant, cut into 1/2-inch-thick slices  
2.5 lbs russet potato (about 4 large), cut into 3/8-inch-thick slices  
2.5 lbs zucchini, cut into 1/2-inch-thick slices  
kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

for the tomato sauce

1.5 lbs / 3 1/2 cups heirloom Beefsteak tomato (about 3 large), sliced  
5 cloves garlic, sliced  
1/2 teaspoon sugar

3 tablespoons first cold-pressed extra-virgin olive oil, plus more  
toasted plain bread crumbs  
Himalayan pink salt  
nonstick cooking spray

for the meat sauce

3 medium-small onions (about 3 cups), finely diced  
1 Jalapeño chili pepper, finely diced  
2 1/2-to-3 lbs 90% lean coarse ground beef  
1 teaspoon freshly grated tangerine zest  
pinch of cinnamon  
1 3/4-to-2 1/4 teaspoons pink salt  
1/3-to-1/2 teaspoon black pepper  
2 tablespoons dry white wine  
1/4-to-1/2 cup fresh parsley leaves, coarsely chopped

for the béchamel sauce

5 tablespoons unsalted butter  
3/4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour  
3 1/2 cups whole milk, warmed until steaming  
1 1/2 teaspoons pink salt  
1/8 teaspoon white pepper  
1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg  
1/2 teaspoon sugar  
1/2-to-3/4 cups finely grated Kefalotyri cheese  
2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice  
1/2 cup heavy cream, warmed until steaming  
3 eggs, blended with fork

Salt the eggplant. Layer eggplant slices in a colander as you generously sprinkle with kosher salt. Let it sit for 1 1/2-to-2 hours. Rinse in cold water and press on kitchen towels to dry.

Roast the vegetables. Place eggplant, potato and zucchini in three separate bowls. Gently toss each with extra-virgin olive oil, lightly season with salt and pepper then transfer them onto baking sheets in a single layer. Roast in a preheated 400°F, turning once, until almost tender and slightly browned. Roast eggplant slices for 18-to-25 minutes until edges starts to crinkle, potatoes for 15-to-25 minutes and the zucchini for 10-to-18 minutes. Set aside until ready to use.

Make the tomato sauce. Oil the bottom of a skillet and heat over high heat until shimmering. Arrange tomato slices into the hot olive oil with the garlic cloves. Add sugar and lightly season with pink salt. Cook on high heat until tomatoes are cooked down and juices reduced.

Make the meat sauce. Heat three tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil in a large pot over medium high heat. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for eight minutes until translucent. Add chili pepper and cook for another two minutes. Turn the heat up to high, add the ground beef and cook as you break up meat with a wooden spoon until browned, for another eight minutes. Mix in tangerine zest and seasoning. Add the wine, turn the heat down to medium low and gently simmer for about 8-to-10 minutes. Set aside to cool before you mix in the parsley. You can make the meat sauce up to two days ahead and keep in the fridge, or freeze for up to three months.

Make the béchamel sauce. Melt the butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over low heat until foaming. Add the flour all at once and cook, whisking continuously, for three minutes. Whisk in warmed milk and bring contents to a gentle boil. If you are inexperienced at making flour-based sauces, cook over low or medium low heat, until sauce is lump-free, bubbly and thickened. I tend to turn up the heat to medium high at first and whisk vigorously to avoid bottom from sticking to pan. Once sauce starts to thicken I turn down the heat to medium or medium low and continue to cook until very thick.

Once béchamel is thickened, stir in salt, white pepper, nutmeg and sugar. Add Kefalotyri to the white sauce in batches along with the lemon juice. Remove saucepan from heat and let sit for about twelve minutes until the cheese melts, stir every so often. The recipe calls for Kefalotyri cheese which can be found at your local cheese shop. If not, good substitutes are other hard-ripened cheeses like Graviéra, Kefalograviéra, Pecorino Romano, Parmigiano Reggiano, aged Gruyère and Kerrygold's Dubliner cheese.

Meanwhile, break the eggs into a small bowl placed on a kitchen towel and lightly blend using a fork. Add warmed heavy cream to eggs in a thin slow stream as you whisk. Tempering the cream into the eggs this way gradually warms them up and reduces the risk of curdling. Pour this mixture into the béchamel sauce and stir to thoroughly combine. You can make the béchamel sauce up to two days ahead and keep in the fridge, just warm up a little and stir prior to use.

Pre-bake groundwork. Lightly spray the bottom and sides of an 18"x10"x3.5" casserole dish or four 9"x5" loaf pans with nonstick cooking spray. Or, brush with olive oil. If you intend to freeze moussaka make sure to use a dish that is both freezer and oven safe. You can freeze unbaked moussaka for up to three months. Defrost in the fridge until thawed and then bring up to room temperature before baking.

Assemble and bake. Generously sprinkle breadcrumbs on the bottom of the dish. Arrange the potatoes in an even layer on top of the breadcrumbs. Spread the tomato sauce on top of the potatoes followed by the meat sauce. Layer the eggplant in an even layer on top of the meat sauce. Arrange the zucchini on top of the eggplant as you did the potatoes. Top with béchamel sauce. You can refrigerate unbaked moussaka for up to a day; just bring up to room temperature before baking.

Bake moussaka in a pre-heated 375°F oven until bubbling and top turns golden brown, 45-to-60 minutes. Let it sit at room temperature for 20 minutes before serving.