



## Kashke Bademjan (Persian Eggplant Dip)

Bademjan is Farsi for eggplant, kashk is fermented whey, and this barbecued eggplant dip is one of my favourite Persian dishes. Kashke bademjan is best served warm with flatbread for scooping it up, use lavash or pita crisps if you can't find Persian sangak and substitute thick natural yoghurt for the kashk if need be.

**Serves 4 as a starter**

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 brown onion
- 400g Japanese (slipper) eggplants, stems trimmed off
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling and pan-frying
- Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- Pinch ground turmeric
- ½ cup water
- ½ teaspoon dried mint
- 1½ tablespoons kashk, more or less to taste
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped walnuts
- Sangak or other flatbread, for serving

### METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 230°C.
2. Finely slice half the onion and finely dice the remainder. Set aside separately.
3. Halve eggplants lengthways, score with a cross hatch pattern and put on a baking paper-lined baking tray, cut side up.
4. Drizzle generously with oil, sprinkle with salt and place in the oven for about 30 minutes, until well coloured and softened.
5. Meanwhile, place a good drizzle of oil in a small frying pan over low-medium heat.
6. Add diced onion and a generous pinch of salt, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, for 10-15 minutes, until just starting to colour.
7. Add garlic, turmeric and a good grind of pepper and stir for 30 seconds or so, until aromatic. Set aside, if necessary, until eggplant is ready.
8. Transfer eggplant to the pan, skin side-down and return to a low-medium heat.
9. Add water and press eggplant down to submerge it as much as possible.
10. Increase heat, bring to the boil, then reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for about 15 minutes, pressing eggplant occasionally with a wooden spoon to break it up, until it's completely soft and the water has been absorbed. If the mixture starts to catch before the eggplant is tender, add a little more water.
11. Meanwhile, heat another good drizzle of oil in a small saucepan over medium heat, add sliced onion and a good pinch of salt; stir to separate the onion layers and coat them well in the oil.
12. Cook, stirring regularly, for 15-20 minutes, until dark brown and caramelised.
13. Remove from heat and add dried mint, rubbing it between your hands to crush it. Stir to combine well then set aside.
14. Remove eggplant mixture from the heat and stir vigorously to crush it up well, blending the skins into the flesh.
15. Stir in a tablespoon of kashk, taste and add more, and more salt, if you like.
16. Spread into a shallow serving bowl and garnish with the fried onion mixture, walnuts and a drizzle of kashk thinned with a little water.
17. Serve warm or at room temperature with bread.