

Franz's Yemeni Eggplant & Lamb

This is a dish Franz learned to cook in Yemen in the mid '60s from a fellow street cook. It can easily be doubled or halved to serve more or less people, and leftovers reheat well too.

Serves 4



INGREDIENTS

- 4 large eggplants
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- 500g fatty lamb mince ((1lb 1½oz)
- 3 teaspoons Yemeni 7-Spice
- 1½ tablespoons finely chopped preserved lemon rind
- Salt flakes and freshly ground white pepper, to taste
- Rock salt, for baking
- ¼ cup tahini (60ml)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice (20ml)
- 3 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 1½ tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley,
- 2 green onions, finely chopped
- Flatbread, for serving

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 220°C (425°F).
2. Meanwhile, cook 2 eggplants over an open flame on the stovetop or BBQ for 10–12 minutes, turning often, until charred and soft.
3. Set aside until cool enough to handle, then scoop out the flesh, discarding the skin. Place flesh in a mixing bowl and mash well using a potato masher or fork.
4. Cut remaining eggplants in half, rub all over generously with oil, place in a baking dish and bake for about 25 minutes, until the cut side is well browned.
5. Turn them over and bake for a further 5 minutes.
6. Remove from oven, but don't turn it off.
7. Set eggplants aside until cool enough to handle then hollow out the flesh, reserving it and the eggplant skins.
8. Add the baked eggplant flesh to the flesh from the first eggplants and set aside.
9. Place lamb mince, 7-Spice, preserved lemon and plenty of crushed salt flakes into a mixing bowl and knead to combine well. Divide into 4 portions.
10. Line the baking dish with rock salt.
11. Mould an eggplant skin around each portion of lamb mixture to reshape it like an eggplant half and place it in the baking dish.
12. Bake for 12–15 minutes, until mince is just cooked through (less is better, so check after 12).
13. Meanwhile mix combined eggplant flesh with tahini, lemon juice, cumin, a good grind of pepper and about 2 teaspoons of salt flakes crushed.
14. Place in a serving dish, drizzle with oil and top with parsley and green onion.
15. Serve eggplant shells with eggplant mixture and flatbread.

