

# Sour Leek

Turkish Sour Leeks (Ekşili Pırasa) - a healthy Mediterranean dish with leeks, onions, and celery braised in olive oil.

Served cold as perfect tapas.

30 min

PREP

1h 15min

COOK

1h 45min

TOTAL

6

SERVINGS

Medium

DIFFICULTY

## Ingredients

- 2.2 lb leek
- 2 onion
- 1 cup olive oil
- 2 celery
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 0.5 cup water
- 1 lemon
- 3 tsp granulated sugar
- 1 bunch parsley
- 1 tsp salt

## Instructions

- 1 Prepare the vegetables**

Clean 2.2 lb leeks thoroughly by cutting off root ends and dark green tops, then slicing lengthwise and rinsing under cold water to remove dirt. Cut into 1-inch pieces and set aside.
- 2** Peel 2 celery stalks with a vegetable peeler to remove tough strings, then chop into 1-inch pieces. Slice 2 onions into thin crescents and set all vegetables aside separately.
- 3 Cook the base**

Heat 1 cup olive oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat until it shimmers, about 2-3 minutes. Add sliced onions and cook for 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until translucent and light pink but not browned.

- 4 Add prepared leeks and celery to the pot and stir to combine with the onions. Cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring frequently, until vegetables begin to soften.
- 5 **Braise the vegetables**  
Reduce heat to low, cover the pot, and cook for 20 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes to prevent sticking. Leeks should be tender and translucent when done.
- 6 Add 1 tablespoon tomato paste, 3 tsp sugar, and 3 tsp salt to the pot. Stir well to dissolve the tomato paste completely and coat all vegetables.
- 7 Add 1/2 cup water and bring to a gentle simmer. Cook uncovered for 30-40 minutes, stirring occasionally, until liquid reduces by half and vegetables are very tender and jammy in consistency.
- 8 **Finish and chill**  
Remove pot from heat and immediately stir in juice from 1 lemon and 1 tsp salt. Finely chop 1 bunch fresh parsley and stir into the hot vegetables.
- 9 Let cool completely to room temperature, about 1 hour, then refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving. Serve chilled as a meze or appetizer.

## Tips

Choose leeks with bright green tops and firm white portions - avoid any with yellowing leaves or soft spots, as these indicate age and will result in mushy texture.

Clean leeks thoroughly by slicing lengthwise and running under cold water to remove sand trapped between layers - this step is crucial for avoiding gritty texture.

Use the highest quality extra-virgin olive oil you can afford, as it's the primary flavor component - the oil should be fruity and peppery, not bland or bitter.

Cut vegetables uniformly to ensure even cooking - leeks and celery should be roughly the same size for consistent texture throughout the dish.

Keep the heat at medium-low throughout cooking to prevent burning the olive oil, which would create bitter flavors that overwhelm the delicate vegetables.

Add the lemon juice just before serving rather than during cooking to preserve its bright, fresh flavor and prevent the vegetables from becoming overly acidic.

Taste and adjust seasoning after the dish has cooled completely, as flavors change dramatically between hot and cold temperatures in olive oil dishes.

Garnish with extra fresh parsley and a drizzle of good olive oil just before serving to enhance both visual appeal and flavor intensity.

