

Sultan's Delight

Sultan's Delight (Hünkar Begendi) - traditional Ottoman dish with roasted eggplant puree, tender lamb stew, and rich bechamel sauce.
Authentic Turkish recipe.

30	60	90	4	Medium
PREP MIN	COOK MIN	TOTAL MIN	SERVINGS	DIFFICULTY

Sultan's Delight

Ingredients

- 1 lb stew meat
- 1 onion
- 4 clove garlic
- 1 tomato
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 4 eggplant
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp flour
- 1 cup milk
- 2 cup water
- 100 g kashari cheese
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper

Instructions

- Roast the eggplants**
Preheat oven to 200°C (400°F). Pierce the 4 eggplants all over with a knife and place on a baking sheet. Roast for 40-45 minutes until completely soft when pressed and skins are charred black.
- Remove eggplants from oven and immediately wrap in plastic wrap. Let steam for 15 minutes to loosen the skin.
- Prepare eggplant puree**
Peel away all charred skin and scoop out the flesh, discarding any large seed pockets. Mash the flesh with a fork until completely smooth and set aside.
- Brown the lamb**
Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large heavy-bottomed pan over medium-high heat. Add 1 pound lamb cubes and brown on all sides, about 8-10 minutes total until deeply colored.

- 5 Add the diced onion and 4 cloves minced garlic to the pan with the meat. Cook, stirring frequently, until onion is soft and translucent, about 5 minutes.
- 6 **Simmer the stew**
Stir in 1 tablespoon tomato paste and cook for 1 minute until fragrant. Add 2 cups stock, 2 teaspoons salt, and 1 teaspoon black pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 45 minutes until meat is fork-tender.
- 7 **Make the bechamel**
In a separate saucepan, melt 3 tablespoons butter over medium heat. Whisk in 2 tablespoons flour and cook, whisking constantly, for 2 minutes to make a pale roux.
- 8 Gradually whisk in 1 cup warm milk, pouring slowly while whisking constantly to prevent lumps. Cook, stirring continuously, until sauce thickens enough to coat a spoon, about 5 minutes.
- 9 **Finish the eggplant puree**
Combine the mashed eggplant with the bechamel sauce and 100g grated cheese. Mix until completely smooth and season with salt and white pepper to taste.
- 10 **Serve**
Spoon the warm eggplant puree onto serving plates, creating a well in the center. Ladle the hot lamb stew into the well and serve immediately while hot.

Tips

Choose heavy, firm eggplants without soft spots or wrinkles for the best texture and flavor.

Char the eggplant skins completely over an open flame or under the broiler to develop that signature smoky flavor essential to authentic Hünkar Begendi.

Make the bechamel sauce slowly and whisk constantly to prevent lumps - if lumps form, strain the sauce before mixing with eggplant.

Cut the meat into uniform 1-inch cubes to ensure even cooking and professional presentation.

Add the cheese gradually to the eggplant puree while it's still warm to ensure smooth melting and incorporation.

Season the eggplant puree generously with salt and white pepper - eggplant absorbs a lot of seasoning.

If the eggplant puree becomes too thick, thin it with warm milk rather than water to maintain richness.

Let the dish rest for 5 minutes after plating to allow the flavors to meld and the temperature to equalize.