

Turkish Imam Bayildi

Traditional Turkish Imam Bayildi recipe - stuffed eggplant with vegetables. Vegan, healthy Ottoman cuisine dish perfect for Mediterranean dining.

20 min

PREP

45 min

COOK

1h 5min

TOTAL

4

SERVINGS

Easy

DIFFICULTY

Ingredients

- 4 eggplant
- 3 onion
- 4 zucchini
- 3 tomato
- 2 cup sunflower oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 5 tbsp olive oil

Instructions

1 Prepare the eggplant

Cut 4 large eggplants in half lengthwise and score the flesh in a crosshatch pattern, cutting about 1/2 inch deep but not through the skin. Sprinkle generously with salt and let sit for 20 minutes to draw out bitterness.

2 Prepare the aromatics

Slice 3 large onions into thin half-moons. Crush 4 garlic cloves and mince them finely.

3 Make the filling

Heat 3 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the sliced onions and cook for 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened and lightly golden. Add the minced garlic and cook for 1 minute until fragrant.

- 4 Stir in 1 tablespoon tomato paste and cook for 1 minute until darkened. Add 3 diced tomatoes, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1 teaspoon black pepper. Cook for 5-7 minutes until tomatoes break down and mixture thickens slightly.
- 5 **Prepare eggplant for stuffing**
Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Pat the salted eggplant halves dry with paper towels. Brush the scored flesh with 2 tablespoons olive oil.
- 6 **Stuff and bake**
Arrange eggplant halves cut-side up in a large baking dish. Spoon the onion-tomato mixture evenly over each eggplant half, pressing gently into the scored flesh.
- 7 Pour 2 cups hot water around (not over) the eggplant in the baking dish. Cover tightly with foil and bake for 45-50 minutes until eggplant flesh is completely tender when pierced with a fork.
- 8 Remove foil and bake for an additional 10-15 minutes until the tops are lightly golden. Let cool to room temperature before serving, as this dish is traditionally served at room temperature or chilled.

Tips

Salt the eggplant slices and let them sit for 30 minutes before cooking to remove bitterness and excess moisture, then pat dry with paper towels.

Use high-quality extra virgin olive oil as it's the star of this dish - the flavor will significantly impact the final result.

Don't rush the cooking process; low and slow cooking allows the vegetables to become tender while developing deep, complex flavors.

Layer the vegetables thoughtfully in the pot, with firmer vegetables on the bottom and delicate ones on top to ensure even cooking.

Cover the pot tightly to create a steam environment that helps cook the vegetables evenly without drying out.

Let the dish rest for at least 30 minutes after cooking to allow flavors to meld before serving.

Taste and adjust seasoning at the end of cooking, as the vegetables will concentrate in flavor during the slow cooking process.

Serve at room temperature for the most authentic experience and optimal flavor balance.