

Karniyarik (Split Eggplant Stuffed with Meat)

Turkish · Main Course · Medium · 70 min total · Serves 4

Karniyarik means 'split belly': eggplants are fried, slit open and filled with a spiced beef, onion and tomato mixture, then baked until silky. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Ingredients

- 4 medium eggplant (slender Italian or Japanese eggplants with smooth, shiny skin)
- 0.33 cup vegetable oil (for frying, plus more if needed)
- 0.5 lb ground beef (80% lean)
- 1 tbsp olive oil (for the filling)
- 1 medium onion (finely chopped)
- 1 small green bell pepper (finely chopped)
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 2 medium tomato (finely chopped, skin on)
- 1 tsp pul biber (or sweet paprika)
- 1 tsp salt
- 0.25 tsp ground black pepper
- 0.25 cup flat-leaf parsley (finely chopped)
- 0.25 cup water (for the baking dish)

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Peel the eggplants in alternating strips so some skin remains, then soak them in salted water for 10 minutes to keep them from browning and pat them dry.
2. Heat the vegetable oil in a wide skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers (about 350°F / 175°C), then fry the eggplants 3 to 4 minutes per side until golden and a knife slides in easily.
3. Drain the eggplants on paper towels, then cut a slit along one side of each lengthwise without cutting through the ends and gently open the cut into a pocket.
4. In a clean skillet, cook the onion in the olive oil over medium heat for 5 to 6 minutes until soft and golden, add the beef and break it up, cook 6 to 8 minutes until browned with no pink, then stir in the pepper and garlic for 2 minutes.
5. Stir in the tomato paste for 1 minute until it darkens, add the chopped tomatoes, pul biber, salt and black pepper, and simmer 8 to 10 minutes until the filling is thick and jammy with little liquid; stir in the parsley.
6. Lay the eggplants in a baking dish, spoon the filling generously into each pocket, and pour the water into the bottom of the dish.
7. Cover with foil and bake for 25 to 30 minutes until the eggplant is very soft and collapses when pressed with a spoon, then uncover for the last 5 minutes to brown the top lightly.
8. Rest for 10 minutes, then serve warm or at room temperature with yogurt, rice or bread, spooning over the pan juices.