

Imam Bayildi (Olive Oil Stuffed Eggplant)

Turkish · Main Course · Medium · 75 min total · Serves 4

Imam bayildi means 'the imam fainted', and this slow-cooked eggplant is stuffed with onion, tomato and garlic, then bathed in olive oil. It is served cold or at room temperature as a meze.

Ingredients

- 4 medium eggplant (slender, about 4 inches (10 cm) long)
- 0.5 cup extra-virgin olive oil (divided, plus more to finish)
- 2 medium onion (thinly sliced)
- 4 cloves garlic (thinly sliced)
- 3 medium tomato (peeled and chopped)
- 1 small green bell pepper (thinly sliced)
- 0.25 cup flat-leaf parsley (finely chopped)
- 1 tsp sugar (balances the acidity of the tomatoes)
- 1 tsp salt
- 0.5 cup water (for the baking dish)
- 1 tbsp lemon juice (to finish)

Method

1. Trim the stems, peel the eggplants in alternating strips and cut a lengthwise slit along one side without cutting through the ends; soak them in salted water for 15 minutes, then drain and pat dry.
2. Heat 0.25 cup of the olive oil in a wide skillet over medium-high heat and fry the eggplants 3 to 4 minutes per side until lightly golden and softened, adding a little more oil if the pan looks dry; transfer them to a plate.
3. Lower the heat to medium-low, add the remaining 0.25 cup oil and cook the onions for about 10 minutes, stirring, until very soft and pale gold rather than brown; add the garlic for 1 minute and the sliced pepper for 3 minutes.
4. Add the tomatoes, sugar, salt and parsley and simmer 10 minutes until the mixture is thick and jammy with no watery liquid pooling at the edges.
5. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C). Arrange the eggplants in a baking dish, open each slit gently with your fingers, spoon the filling inside, and pour the water into the dish around them.
6. Cover with foil and bake for 40 to 45 minutes until the eggplants are completely soft, the skins are wrinkled and a knife slides through the flesh with no resistance.
7. Let the dish cool to room temperature in its juices, then drizzle with the lemon juice and a little more olive oil and serve with bread.