

Pastitsio

The Meat Sauce

- 1 ½ lbs. ground veal (or beef, though minced lamb can also be used)
- 1 large or 2 medium-sized yellow onion(s), finely diced
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml.) dried rosemary
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cloves of garlic, grated
- 1 ½ cups (375 ml.) fresh strained tomato juice (or ¼ cup tomato paste diluted in 1½ cups of water.)
- ¼ cup (60 ml.) white wine
- ¼ cup (60 ml.) - ⅓ cup (80 ml.) Greek extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

The Pasta

- 1 pound of Greek No.2 pasta (or Bucatini or Ziti)
- 2 Tablespoon (30ml.) Greek extra virgin olive oil
- 3 egg whites, beaten (the yolks will be used in the béchamel sauce)
- ¼ cup (60 ml.) grated Kefalotyri (or Parmesan cheese)



The Béchamel Sauce

- 4 cups (1 litre) of scalded milk
- 1 cup (250 ml.) all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup (180 ml.) grated Kefalotyri (or Parmesan cheese)
- ½ cup (125 ml.) of salted butter
- 3 egg yolks, well beaten
- ½ - 1 teaspoon of ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon fresh ground black pepper

Heat the olive oil in a large pan and sauté the diced onion(s) over a medium heat until soft. Add the ground veal to the pan and break it up thoroughly. Keep stirring constantly over a medium high heat for 5 minutes or so to brown all of the meat and mingle it completely with the onion.

Once the meat is completely browned, add the rosemary, garlic, wine, and the fresh tomato juice (or tomato paste diluted in water) to the pan along with salt and pepper to taste, and mix well. Bring to a boil, add the bay leaves and make sure to immerse them in the sauce, then reduce the heat to medium-low and cover the pan with its lid leaving it only slightly uncovered to allow the excess water to evaporate as steam. Simmer for about 30 minutes or so. Stir the sauce occasionally. When ready, the meat will have absorbed the liquid in the

pan. Remove the bay leaves and set aside when done.

Bring a large pot of water to a rolling boil, add the pasta to the water and parboil it until soft but not fully cooked (about 3/4 of the suggested cooking time on the package).

While the pasta is cooking, make the béchamel sauce. Start by melting the butter in a deep saucepan over a medium heat, then, using a whisk or immersion blender with a whisk attachment, slowly incorporate the flour by adding it to the melted butter in stages while stirring continually to avoid the formation of lumps. Once the flour has been fully incorporated, slowly add the hot milk while continuing to constantly stir the butter and flour paste to ensure a smooth consistency. Once the milk has been added, remove the saucepan from the heat and add the grated cheese, nutmeg, pepper and egg yolks in that order while continuing to rapidly stir the mixture. Set aside when smooth and well-mixed. However, do not let it stand for too long without a good stirring as you do not want the top to start congealing. By this point your pasta should be ready.

Drain the water completely from the pasta pot and return pot with pasta to the heat, add the two tablespoons of olive oil to the pasta and mix well to ensure a thorough coating of oil as we do not want the pasta to get sticky. Remove the pot from the heat, let stand for a few minutes to cool and then add the egg whites to the pasta, along with the ¼ cup of grated Kefalotyri cheese and mix well, then set aside momentarily.

Rub a little olive into the sides and bottom of your baking dish, and then add about two-thirds of the pasta to the dish to form a bottom layer. Make sure to spread the pasta evenly in order to completely cover the bottom of the dish, make sure not to leave any empty spaces.

Spread the meat sauce over the top of the bottom pasta layer, ensuring to distribute it evenly and right to the edges of the casserole. The meat layer must be of uniform thickness and must not have any gaps. Add the remaining pasta otop of the meat layer, distributing it evenly. Pour the béchamel sauce over of the final pasta layer, make sure to cover the entire surface area of the dish.

Place the casserole uncovered in an oven pre-heated to 350°F (180°C) and bake for approximately 30 minutes, or until the béchamel sauce is golden brown.

Remove casserole from oven and set aside to cool before serving. As already mentioned above, this dish is best served on the following day after its baking. However, if you must eat it on the same day, make sure it has a chance to cool for at least 30 minutes before cutting it into pieces. Do not make the mistake of cutting it before it has had a chance to cool, you will end up with messy servings. Cut it only when it has cooled, (ideally overnight in the refrigerator) and warm the pieces before serving.

Makes approximately 8 generous servings

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