



Culinary book

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A collection of favourite recipes from Italy, Romania, Greece and Bulgaria



This collection is prepared with the efforts and hard work of all participants in the project WIN – Women Independence Network and contains favourite recipes from the participant countries.

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Easy classic lasagne Italy



Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil

2 rashers smoked streaky bacon

1 onion, finely chopped

1 celery stick, finely chopped

1 medium carrot, grated

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

500g beef mince

1 tbsp tomato purée

2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
1 tbsp clear honey
500g pack fresh egg lasagne sheets
400ml crème fraîche
125g ball mozzarella, roughly torn
50g freshly grated parmesan
large handful basil leaves, torn (optional)

Method

STEP 1

Heat the oil in a large saucepan. Use kitchen scissors to snip the bacon into small pieces, or use a sharp knife to chop it on a chopping board. Add the bacon to the pan and cook for just a few mins until starting to turn golden. Add the onion, celery and carrot, and cook over a medium heat for 5 mins, stirring occasionally, until softened.

STEP 2

Add the garlic and cook for 1 min, then tip in the mince and cook, stirring and breaking it up with a wooden spoon, for about 6 mins until browned all over.

STEP 3

Stir in the tomato purée and cook for 1 min, mixing in well with the beef and vegetables. Tip in the chopped tomatoes. Fill each can half full with water to rinse out any tomatoes left in the can, and add to the pan. Add the honey and season to taste. Simmer for 20 mins.

STEP 4

Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. To assemble the lasagne, ladle a little of the ragu sauce into the bottom of the roasting tin or casserole dish, spreading the sauce all over the base. Place 2 sheets of lasagne on top of the sauce overlapping to make it fit, then repeat with more sauce and another layer of pasta. Repeat with a further 2 layers of sauce and pasta, finishing with a layer of pasta.

STEP 5

Put the crème fraîche in a bowl and mix with 2 tbsp water to loosen it and make a smooth pourable sauce. Pour this over the top of the pasta, then top with the mozzarella. Sprinkle Parmesan over the top and bake for 25–30 mins until golden and bubbling. Serve scattered with basil, if you like.



Gnocchi alla sorrentina

One of the dishes from the Campania region that's most famous both in Italy and abroad is gnocchi alla sorrentina, Sorrento-style gnocchi in tomato and mozzarella sauce – a dish that's made in restaurants all over the world! What makes this gnocchi dish so well loved is its simplicity: Mediterranean flavors and authenticity combined with easy preparation. Making the gnocchi by hand will remind you of Sundays spent at Grandma's house figuring out all the secrets behind the perfect consistency of those little potato gnocchi. The gnocchi alla sorrentina are then enveloped in a creamy tomato and basil sauce, jazzed up with mozzarella and grated cheese... Just the ingredients that make gnocchi even nicer by creating a stringy cheese effect after being heated for a short time in the oven. To put a different twist on this dish, try making zucchini gnocchi instead of the classic dough with potatoes. Has your mouth started watering? Come and make some gnocchi alla sorrentina with us!



Taramasalata Greece



To make your own taramasalata, all you will need is:

White fish roe: You'll need some white fish roe, such as cod, carp or mullet. While some supermarkets stock fish roe, your best bet would be to visit your local fishmonger and order some in advance.

White bread: Grab yourself some crusty bread and leave it out of its bag for a couple of days to let its moisture reduce. Don't forget to remove the crust and just use the white part. I would avoid sliced toasted bread as it is high in sugar and preservatives so it won't go stale but rather it will turn mouldy first!

Olive oil: Any good quality, extra virgin olive oil will give your taramasalata a delicious earthy flavour!

Lemons: A couple of ripe lemons will give your taramasalata that extra zing and balance out the fish roe saltiness.

Red onion: One medium sized red onion, finely grated, will give your sauce that extra "kick".

Making taramasalata is very simple. Firstly you'll need to remove the crust from your bread and soak it in water. Before moving on to the next step, make sure you squeeze out as much of the water as you can!

Then grab your food processor, add the bread, the finely grated onion and the tarama (fish roe). Blend it until the ingredients are mashed and resemble a pulp. Add half the lemon juice and blend a little bit more.

You can make the tarama dip up to 7 days before you need it and simply store it in an airtight container in the refrigerator. You can also store any leftovers the same way!



Greek Dolmades recipe (Stuffed Vine/ Grape Leaves Dolmathes)

Dolmades

Key Ingredients:

Vine leaves: I used 60 in the recipe to make a plate full of Dolmades but use however many you want for the size of the dish you are creating.

Filling: Rice is mixed with onions, lemon juice, salt and pepper and herbs to stuff into the leaves.

Seasoning: Once the leaves are rolled, you will need some lemon juice and salt and pepper to drizzle over them while cooking.



Preparing the dolmades leaves

To prepare this traditional Greek dolmades recipe, begin by washing the vine leaves. You may use ready-to-eat or fresh vine leaves for this dish (if you're lucky enough to come across them).

If you use leaves from a jar, place them in a bowl of cold water and let them soak for a few moments before draining. If using fresh vine leaves wash them thoroughly, remove the stems, and blanch them in boiling water. Remove the leaves with a slotted spoon and place them in a colander to cool down completely.

Prepare the filling for the dolmadakia leaves

Rinse the rice in a colander, then drain it in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add 1/3 cup olive oil and chopped onions to a big saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium heat.

In a saucepan over medium-high heat, cook the onion in olive oil until it's translucent (but not browned). Add the rice and sauté for 1 more minute. Pour 2 cups of warm water and half lemon juice, then add the rice. Simmer for about 7 minutes, until almost all of the water is absorbed.

Season the dolmades filling with salt and pepper, then add the herbs. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool for a few minutes before adding it to the rice mixture.

Stuffing the dolmades leaves

Grab a large pot and layer the bottom of the pot with some grape leaves. I prefer using the ones that are slightly torn as they would go to waste!

Finishing the dish

Place the stuffed vine leaves (folded side down) on the bottom of the pot and fill in tightly. When cooking, avoid leaving any gaps between the dolmades to avoid them from cracking open.

Drizzle the stuffed vine leaves (dolmathes) with the rest of the olive oil and lemon juice, then add salt and pepper. Pour enough water in to just cover them and place an inverted plate on the top.

Mamaliga Romania

Mamaliga is the Romanian version of this staple and has been called the country's national dish. While the recipe itself is not revolutionary, the history behind mamaliga is fascinating. Cooked in a round-bottomed kettle called a "ceaun," the cornmeal porridge would be turned out into the center of the peasantry's wooden farm tables, where it hardened as it cooled, holding its rounded shape. Portions would be sliced off using a piece of string held taut, and pieces would be topped with butter and sour cream, or with cascaval cheese, a sheep's milk cheese similar to pecorino. After each meal the matriarch would scrub the table clean, and it's said that many a Romanian table is concave and shiny in the center, a testament to the daily tradition of eating mamaliga.

HOW TO MAKE MAMALIGA OR POLENTA

Make polenta using only salted water most of the times, but if you like you can use half milk and half water or you can even cook the polenta in vegetable or chicken broth (made with organic bullion cubes). Salt is very important when making polenta. Read the instructions on the polenta packet and add the amount of salt required and maybe $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon more than that. Reduce the amount of salt only if you are cooking the polenta in broth.

Instructions

1. **Heat the water** in a large pot but don't let it come to a boil (it helps against the formation of lumps). Add the salt.
2. **Slowly add the cornmeal** while stirring or whisking (with an egg beater, not a mixer) all the time. A word of caution - be careful when the polenta starts to bubble; if the bubbles are too big, you might get burned – so turn the heat down if that happens.
3. **Stir:** When all the cornmeal is incorporated, continue stirring or whisking shortly to ensure no lumps. Turn the heat down, place a lid on top, but leave a crack open. Stir every 3 minutes or so, but there is no need to stir all the time.
4. **Cook:** Read the cooking instructions on the polenta packet to know how long the cornmeal needs to be cooked. Cook the polenta made with coarse cornmeal for

40 to 50 minutes and the polenta made with medium cornmeal for about 15 minutes.

5. **Serve** immediately or leave to cool if you want to use it another way.



Jumări (Greaves)

Pork greaves and lard are traditional Romanian foods that are traditionally prepared prior to the holiday season and then eaten pretty much throughout the year.

It is fairly easy to make pork greaves and lard. The two recipes are really in one because when you make pork greaves, you make, by default, lard.

All you need is pork bacon, salt and a little water. In some part of the country milk is used instead of water, but that's rather the exception than the rule.

How to make Pork Greaves and Lard

Remove the rind from the bacon and cut it into large square pieces. Traditionally, pigs in Romania are fatten to obtain a bacon with a very high fat concentration. You can really spot by the color – the more whiter the higher the fat concentration.

Put the meat into a large saucepan or glazed pot and add salt. Remember: an unglazed pot will make the lard rancid!

Using a wooden spoon, stir slowly over a high heat until the greaves are browned. TIP: if you are afraid of the fat burning, add a little water.

Remove the greaves with a strainer, leave to cool and then keep in the refrigerator.

Strain the fat left over from cooking the greaves and put in jars.

Wait for it to cool and then harden before closing the jars and keeping cool in the pantry (in a dark and dry place) or in the fridge. The leftovers from unstrained greaves can, in time, make the lard rancid.

Pork greaves can be used in different forms, in different foods, or even as is. They can be served plain with bread and hot polenta with sheep cheese, in a cabbage dish, in an omelette, or you can also make bread with greaves or other dishes depending on your taste and imagination.





Banitsa Bulgaria

Banitsa is a traditional Bulgarian cheese pie made with cheese, yogurt and eggs. It's perfect for breakfast or as a snack and it's best enjoyed warm!

How to make banitsa

Mix crumbled Feta cheese, with yogurt, eggs and baking soda. Lay a sheet of filo pastry on your worktop, spoon some of the filling over (you can spread it slightly) and roll. This is then rolled into a snail like shape and placed in a greased oven-proof dish.

Tips for making the best banitza

Each filo pastry sheet needs only a little bit of the feta filling. Adding way too much of it will result in a very salty banica. Now that being said, you can double the filling and add more, if you like.

You don't have to cover the whole area of the filo sheet with the mixture.

When rolling the Filo sheets are very fragile so avoid using pressure when rolling them into a sausage. Cooking time may vary. There are many things that affect this from the size of your oven to its quality, the size of your pie as well as the oven-proof dish/pan you use (they all conduct heat differently). For that reason, if you are making banitsa for the first time, cook it on a lower rack and increase cooking time if not golden brown and puffed on top. Use unsalted butter!



Tarator Bulgaria

Ingredients

4 Servings

- 2 cucumbers
- 400 g Bulgarian yoghurt
- finely crushed walnuts (to taste)
- 1 clove of garlic
- 1/2 l cold water
- sunflower oil
- dill, chopped

Preparation

Step 1/5 Peel the cucumbers and cut into small cubes.

Step 2/5 Stir yogurt while still in the pot, then add it to the cucumbers and continue stirring.

Step 3/5 Pour in half a liter of cold water (more or less water may be needed depending on the desired consistency).

Step 4/5 Crush the garlic with some salt in a mortar and pestle, then add to the soup together with ground walnuts and finely chopped dill. Season with a little sunflower oil.

Step 5/5

Serve cold, as an appetizer.



