

Stuffed Grapevine Leaves (Dolmades)

A Middle Eastern dish. I harvest the largest and healthiest young wild grape leaves growing in the spring. They can be laid flat and frozen, but can deteriorate significantly if not store in oil or canned. I used our home grown grass fed ground beef and eliminated the mint. I also used organic wild rice, but cooked it in advance because I was preparing this dish for a couple older persons; one who has dentures and the other has no teeth. However, neither could chew the grape leaves, so I had, just in case, made half the recipe as large meatballs, eliminating the grape leaves. Canned leaves can be purchased in large grocery stores.

8 servings

1 jar or 9 ounces of grapevine leaves (about 30 leaves) or harvest your own fresh
2 medium onions, finely chopped
1 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 ½ pounds ground lamb or beef
1.5 cups cooked regular rice (2/3 cup uncooked regular rice)
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon snipped mint leaves (or ½ teaspoon dried)
1 ½ cups water
3 eggs
3 tablespoons lemon juice

Wash and drain grape leaves. Cook and stir onions and 1 teaspoon salt in oil until tender, about 5 minutes. Mix half the cooked onions, lamb, rice, 1 teaspoon salt, the pepper, and mint. Place rounded measuring tablespoon meat mixture on center of couple layer of grape leaves. Fold stem ends over filling; fold in sides.

Roll up tightly; place seam side down in 12-inch skillet or two 10-inch skillets. Repeat with remaining meat mixture and grape leaves. Add water and remaining cooked onions. Heat to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer until tender, 50 to 55 minutes.

Beat eggs until thick and lemon colored about 3 minutes. Slowly beat in lemon juice. Carefully, pour off broth from skillet into a measuring cup, then add enough water to measure one cup. Gradually stir into egg mixture. Pour over grape leaves.

Simmer uncovered 10 to 15 minutes.

** based on the recipe from Betty Crocker's International Cookbook, 1980.