



Vegan Polish/Romanian Cooking class

RECIPES

EGGPLANT SPREAD (TRADITIONAL ROMANIAN RECIPE)

Prep Time: 10 min, Cook Time: 60 min

4-6 eggplants
½ cup olive oil
¼ cup finely chopped onion, bulb or spring onion
Salt to taste

Choose 4-6 firm eggplants, shiny and dark in color. I usually roast as many as fit my baking tray, six.

Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil for easy cleaning afterwards. The juice that comes out of the eggplant usually burns and hardens.

Bake/roast the whole eggplant at 450F for about 1 hour, until very soft. Using long tongs turn them over once after the first 25 minutes. When done, scoop up the flesh with a spoon while still hot. Pick out carefully all the black spots of burnt skin. Some people prefer to remove the seeds too, but I never do this. Drain for 30 minutes in a large colander or a tilted cutting board.

With a long knife, chop the eggplant flesh until it is almost like paste. You can freeze it at this point for later use.

Mix it well with salt, a couple of tablespoons olive oil, and chopped onion by taste. You can use different types of onion: green spring onion, purple, or yellow onion.

VARIATION: Add seeded and finely diced tomatoes and cucumbers. Or, just decorate and serve the spread with sliced tomatoes. Great for stuffing tomatoes, too. Try adding a tablespoon of Vegemise for a different flavor.

If roasted directly on the fire (grill or stovetop fire – very messy!!!) they will have a specific smoke flavor, that many people enjoy.

You may can the roasted eggplant – skin removed – with a little salt and a thin layer of oil on the surface. Use it later, adding the fresh onion and more oil. Quick fix in the winter.

POLENTA (TRADITIONAL ROMANIAN RECIPE)

2 cups corn grits
8 cups water
1 tsp salt

Use a nonstick pot with a thick bottom. Add the salt in the water, set it on high fire and add the corn grits. Stir often with a wooden spoon, up to the end. The corn tends to stick to the bottom very easily. Cover partially with a lid, because it will “spit” over, especially at the beginning of boiling.

The secret is to have it cook until it becomes a thick blob, that easily comes apart from the edges of the pot, when stirred. It is now ready to be put on a serving plate. Turn the pot with a quick and firm move over the plate to get the polenta ready to serve.

SARMALE - STUFFED GRAPE OR CABBAGE LEAVES **(TRADITIONAL ROMANIAN RECIPE)**

Simple version - casserole

Prep Time: 30 min, Cook Time: 60 min

- *2 big onions*
- *3 big carrots, grated*
- *2 cups dextrinized brown rice (toasted in a hot dry pan for 10 minutes, stirring continuously, until it starts crackling like popcorn)*
- *2 small cans tomato paste (total of 12 oz)*
- *½ dense cabbage, medium size (6-7 inches in diameter), cut in coarse pieces*
- *¼ to ½ cup olive oil*
- *Salt to taste*
- *Veggie broth and/or water, about 1/3 inch above the level of the dry ingredients in the casserole dish*
- *Parsley leaf, finely chopped*

Sauté the onion in oil with a little water for 5 minutes.

Add the grated carrots; saute 10 more minutes.

Add the rice and salt; stir well so it will absorb the flavors.

Add the rest of the ingredients in an oiled casserole dish, and bake it covered with aluminum foil at 350 °F for 45 minutes to one hour. Check that the rice and cabbage are cooked well.

TIPS

Instead of raw cabbage, use sauerkraut (salt-pickled cabbage, not in vinegar!) for variety.

Top with sautéed onion at the end for a nice finishing touch.

Try to layer the ingredients in the casserole dish instead of mixing them; some like it better this way.

The original version

Prep Time: 60 min, Cook Time: 60 min

- *2 cups chopped onions (the more, the tastier!)*
- *2-3 cups grated carrots*
- *½ cup grated parsley roots, if available*
- *2 cups rice*
- *2 small cans tomato paste (12 oz. in total)*
- *3-4 spoons chopped parsley leaves*
- *salt by taste*
- *5-6 Tbsp olive oil (or less)*
- *1 jar grape leaves preserved with salt, or thin cabbage leaves, softened for 5 minutes in hot water*

Optional:

- *½ cup walnuts*
- *juice from a lemon*
- *1-2 Tbsp chopped dill herb*

Sauté the chopped onions until soft in water with oil, but do not let them get brown. Add the grated carrots and optional parsley roots. Continue to cook them for 5 minutes. Add the rice and tomato paste to the mixture and sauté for 1-2 more minutes. This helps the rice absorb the flavored oil and results in a better flavor.

Put the mixture in a large bowl and add salt to taste and the optional chopped walnuts, chopped parsley leaves and dill.

Next, carefully take the grape leaves out of the jar, put them in a large pot and pour very hot water over them. Let them soften for 10 minutes. **DO NOT BOIL THEM, and DO NOT LET THEM BE TOO SOFT.** They should not break easily!

Remove the little stem from each leaf with your fingers. Then begin rolling the leaves, placing a spoonful of the rice on the edge; tuck the ends in. Try to make a long shape with the stuffing. Roll the leaf and insert the two ends of the rolled leaf inside the roll. The roll should not be too tight, so it will not break and the stuffing in the pot while boiling!

Actually, it is much easier to cook them in a glass casserole dish for an hour. Cover with foil. Bake at 450 °F for 20 minutes until water starts boiling, then bake them at 350 °F for 40 minutes. If you use the glass dish in the oven, skip the next step.

On the bottom of a large pot, preferably with a thick bottom, you can put any leftover leaves and/or strips of carrot to keep the rolls from burning. Arrange the stuffed leaves in circles going toward the middle of the pot. Arrange them as tightly as you can. Make more layers, but take care to not fill the pot more than half way because the rice will double in size as it cooks.

Bring water to boil in another pot. Add salt to taste and (optional) lemon juice for a special flavor. Pour the hot water over the stuffed leaves in the pot. The water level should be 1 inch above the leaves. Cover them immediately with a lid smaller than the pot opening. This will press the leaves down and not allow them to open while boiling. Continue cooking on low heat. Test the rice from one of the rolls to see if it is done. If the water level decreases too much, add more unsalted water. Keep the leaves covered with water at all times. When finished, almost all the water will be soaked into the leaves and just a little will be left in the pot.

TIPS

DO NOT OVERCOOK! If you boil the stuffed leaves too long, they fall apart and the stuffing spills out in the pot! If this happens, let them cool and refrigerate the pot for 1-2 hours. You can then remove the stuffed leaves from the pot more easily without breaking them.

This dish is served in Romania with sour cream on top of the stuffed grape leaves and polenta (MAMALIGA in Romanian, a thick hot cereal made by boiling yellow corn flour with salt). Polenta must be hot when served. It has been used for centuries in Romania as a bread alternative for certain dishes.

Use grated cabbage instead of grape leaves and do not roll them. Just place the cabbage and the rice mixture in a casserole dish and cook them until done. Serve with vegan sour cream and polenta as above.

You can also use large cabbage leaves to make the rolls, but this is much more tedious work. First, you have to be sure you pick the right kind of cabbage, with large and soft leaves, not always available. Then you have to soften them in hot water as above. Cut out the thick central vein of each leaf. Make thicker rolls from cabbage than from grape leaves.

POFTA BUNA! (Romanian for “Enjoy your meal!”)

**PIEROGIE
(TRADITIONAL POLISH RECIPE)**

Serves about 25 people

Filling:

2 large onion
2 large eggplant
2 small cans of sauerkraut
½ lb mushrooms (either portabella or white)
2 packages veggie chicken starter meal
½ cup of olive oil
1 Tbsp of Vegeta I can bring that since I don't believe you can buy it locally
1 to 2 Tbsp of sweet basil flakes
1 Tbsp of Spanish paprika powder
1 tsp of Pieprz ziolowy

Dough:

1 cup of whole wheat flour
3 cups of white flour
Water
1 tsp of salt

Filling:

Fry the onion in a little olive oil and salt. When onion starts turning in golden color, add the chopped eggplant and veggie chicken starter and fry them all together with onion until really well done.

Use a food processor to blend mushrooms into very fine pieces and add them to the onion-eggplant mixture.

Add the spices and fry until half of the juice from mushrooms disappears.

Pour the sauerkraut into a big bowl and add the onion-eggplant-mushroom mixture to it.

Mix them well together.

Dough:

Take about 1 to 1 1/2 cups of water and warm it up.

Pour it over the flour (both whole wheat and white flour mixed together with salt). Roll it out with a rolling pin until very thin.

Take a round object a little bigger than the diameter of the cup and use it to cut round pieces of the dough.

Place about 1 Tbsp of the filling in the middle of the round piece of the dough and close the dough by folding it and squeeze the edges.

You just made your first pierogie!

SUNFLOWER SEED SPREAD **(POLISH RECIPE)**

½ cup sunflower seeds
½ cup water or soymilk
1/6 tsp salt

Take sunflower seeds and place them on dry frying pan. When they turn golden brown, place them in a blender. Add salt and soymilk or water just to cover them. Blend until smooth.

NUT SPREAD **(POLISH RECIPE)**

5 dried dates
½ cup walnuts
½ cup soymilk

Place dried dates in a blender and add enough soymilk to cover them. Blend them until smooth. Add walnuts (or any other nut) and add them to the dates. Add just enough soymilk to cover the nuts. Blend until smooth.

MIZERIA - CUCUMBER SALAD **(POLISH RECIPE)**

1 large cucumber
1/2 cup vegan sour cream (Tofutti "Better Than Sour Cream" or recipe below)
1 tsp salt
1 tsp sugar
1/2 lemon, freshly squeezed
1-2 Tbsp freshly chopped dill

Peel and slice the cucumber. If using English cucumber, run a channel knife or fork down the length of the cucumbers to produce a pretty edge, and slice thinly.

Place in a colander, sprinkle with salt and leave to drain for half an hour.

Rinse and pat dry.

Arrange the cucumber slices in a dish, or place them in a bowl.

Make a dressing from the sour cream and lemon juice and pour over (or toss with) the cucumber.

Sprinkle with additional dill, if desired, and serve.

TIP:

Add the dressing just before serving so the dish doesn't become watery.

Tofu Sour Cream

Blend till smooth:

- 1 box Mori-Nu silken tofu*
- 3-4 Tbsp canola or olive oil (use soy milk for low fat option)*
- 1 Tbsp (fresh) lemon juice*
- 1 tsp sweetener (optional)*

TOFU CHEESE CAKE

Crust

- 3 cups graham cracker crumbs*
- ¼ cup melted margarine*
- ¼ tsp salt*
- ½ tsp coriander*

Combine the graham cracker crumbs and the melted margarine. Mix in the coriander. Using your hands, press evenly in the bottom and all the way up the sides of a of spring-form pan.

Filling

- 1 cup 100% pineapple juice*
- ½ cup raw cashew nuts*
- 1 ½ box Mori-Nu silken tofu*
- 1 Tbsp Better than Sour Cream (optional)*
- ¾ cup honey (or sugar)*
- 1 Tbsp vanilla*
- ¼ cup cornstarch*

Blend the ingredients until smooth and creamy.
Pour everything into the springform pan and bake at 350 °F for 35 minutes.
Let it set for about 2 hours before serving.

Blueberry Sauce

- 1 cup blueberries*
- ¼ cup honey (or sugar)*
- dash salt*
- 1 Tbsp cornstarch*

Puree the berries. Strain out the seeds using a fine mesh strainer.
Place the cornstarch in a sauce pan. Mix enough of the juice into the cornstarch to dissolve it, then stir in the remaining juice.
Heat the sauce over low heat. Add the raw sugar, adjusting the amount as needed, depending on the sweetness of the berries. Simmer the sauce for 1 minute. Cool and thin with water if necessary. Cover and store in refrigerator.