

GREEK RECIPES

Cooking with Donna:

TZATZIKI

Ingredients:

2 cups plain yogurt.

2 large cucumbers.

1 tablespoon minced garlic.

1 tablespoon white vinegar.

2 tablespoons olive oil.

Salt and pepper to taste.

Preparation Put yogurt in a cheesecloth-lined sieve over a bowl. Drain several hours or overnight in the refrigerator.

Peel, seed, and coarsely grate cucumbers. Drain well. Add garlic, vinegar, olive oil, salt, and pepper to cucumbers and mix well.

Add drained yogurt and blend. Serve with toast points, crackers, or pita bread.

Yield 2 cups.

SPANOKOPITA Greek spinach and cheese pie serves 8

2 lbs fresh spinach

1 lb filo dough

1/2 lb feta cheese

7 eggs

1 onion, diced

Dice the onion and saute it until golden brown.

While the onion is cooking, wash the spinach.

Put it in a bowl and rub lots of salt into it.

Let the spinach/salt sit for 15 minutes. This is meant to reduce the volume of spinach. An alternative to this is to barely steam the spinach (30-60 seconds).

Beat the eggs.

Crumble the feta cheese and add to the eggs. (Note that feta cheese is fairly salty. You can replace half or all of it with ricotta cheese.)

Rinse all the salt out of the spinach. Add it and the onions to the eggs/cheese and mix.

Also add some spices. The original recipes calls for salt, pepper, and oregano. I use basil.

Melt some butter (at least 2 oz.)

Butter the bottom of a 9x13 inch baking dish.

Lay the filo down one layer at a time, brushing butter on each layer.

Turn each successive layer a little so they are not all piled directly on top of each other. The filo will hang over the sides of the dish. Continue until you have 3-5 sheets of filo left.

Pour the filling into the filo. Fold the filo that hangs over the side over the filling.

Place the last pieces of filo on top, buttering each as you go.

Trim off the filo that hangs over the edge of the dish.

These last pieces serve to cover the filling.

Make two or three slits with a knife in the top layers of filo that go all the way down to the filling.

Bake at 375 for 50 minutes.

GRECIAN MEATBALLS

1 large onion
2 cloves garlic
6 sprigs fresh mint
1 lb ground chuck
2 slices white sandwich bread, soaked in 1/3 cup milk or wine
1 egg
1/2 tsp oregano
1 tsp salt

1/4 tsp pepper Flour Vegetable oil, for frying In food processor, finely chop onion, garlic and fresh mint. In mixing bowl, combine ground meat with onion mixture; blend. Mash bread and milk together with hand; blend into meat. Add egg, oregano, salt and pepper; mix well.

Drop by tablespoonfuls on heavily floured surface. Roll into ball shapes.

Pour enough oil in large frying pan to cover bottom, at least 1/2-inch deep.

Heat oil to 360°F; add floured meatballs and fry for about 15 minutes, turning frequently to brown on all sides. Drain on paper towels. Serve hot or cold.

(MAKES 40 TO 50 MEATBALLS)

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DOLMADES WITH RICE STUFFING GREEK STUFFED GRAPE LEAVES

1 jar (2 lb.) grape leaves
1 large onion, chopped
2 bunches green onions, chopped
1 bunch fresh dill or mint, chopped
1 bunch fresh parsley, chopped
3 Tbsp olive oil
2 cups raw rice
2 Tbsp (heaping) pine nuts (optional)
1/2 cup water
3 Tbsp lemon juice salt and pepper, to taste
1 cup chicken broth or cold water
1/2 cup lemon juice

1/4 cup olive oil Drain grape leaves, rinse and trim stems. Place in boiling water; simmer for 15 minutes to tenderize. Drain; let cool. Sauté onions, dill and parsley in 2 tablespoons oil; add rice, pine nuts, 1/2 cup water and 3 tablespoons lemon juice.

Cook about 15 minutes or until all liquid is absorbed, stirring frequently. Add salt and pepper; let cool. Place grape leaves shiny side down on flat surface. Place 1 teaspoon rice filling on center base of grape leaf. Fold stem over filling; turn sides of leaf toward center. Starting from the stem of each leaf, roll tightly like a cigar. Line bottom of deep saucepan with grape leaves; layer rolls in circular fashion on top of leaves. Pour enough chicken broth and remaining lemon juice and olive oil to cover rolls.

Weight down with heavy plate to prevent rolls from opening while cooking. Bring to high boil; reduce heat and simmer for 30 to 40 minutes or until rice is tender. Cool in saucepan; chill. To serve, garnish with lemon wedges.

(Makes about 75 pieces)

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Eggplant Sandwiches With Herbs, Parmesan & Feta Cheese

3 small eggplants, unpeeled (3/4 to 1 pound each)

Coarse salt All-purpose flour, for dredging Egg wash Plain bread crumbs, for dredging

10 Tbs. extra-virgin Greek olive oil

1 cup tightly packed fresh basil leaves

2 Tbs. fresh thyme, finely minced

2 Tbs. Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

1 small garlic clove, peeled and mashed

8 ounces mild Feta cheese Freshly ground black pepper

2 cups marinated roasted peppers, sliced

Garnish: 12-16 Kalamata olives, pitted and cut in half Serves 6 to 8 Cut eggplant crosswise into 1/2 inch slices, about 12-16 slices total (enough for 6-8 sandwiches). Place eggplant slices in a bowl, add ice water to cover & 1 tsp. of coarse salt. Let soak for 30 minutes.

Drain eggplant and dry thoroughly with paper towels. Dredge lightly in bread crumbs, shaking off excess.

Heat 3 Tbs. of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add eggplant slices a few at a time and saute until nicely browned on both sides. Transfer with a slotted spatula to paper towels and set aside.

Continue to saute remaining eggplant slices, adding more oil to the skillet as needed.

Combine basil leaves, thyme, Parmesan and garlic in food processor or blender. Add 3-4 Tbs. of olive oil and process until smooth. Add Feta cheese and a large grinding of black pepper; process again until smooth. Taste and correct the seasonings. Transfer mixture to a bowl, cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes before using.

Before serving, spread a layer of cheese and herb mixture on each of the

6-8 eggplant slices with a small knife. Top with roasted red pepper slices and remaining eggplant to complete the sandwiches.

Place eggplant sandwiches on a large platter, garnish with whole olives and basil leaves. Serve at room temperature.