Stuffed Aubergines



4 small-medium sized aubergines  
olive oil  
For the filling  
2 tbsps olive oil  
1 onion, finely chopped  
1 clove garlic, minced  
2 medium or 1 large tomato  
500 g minced pork  
a large pinch of dried thyme  
a large pinch freshly ground nutmeg  
salt  
freshly ground pepper  
4 tbsps fresh breadcrumbs  
1 egg  
For the bechamel  
500 mL milk  
80g unsalted butter  
4 tbsps plain flour  
salt  
freshly ground pepper  
a large pinch of freshly ground nutmeg

freshly grated parmesan cheese

Prepare your filling. First we’ll make a sofregit of the onions, garlic and tomatoes. In a frying pan, heat the oil over low heat and add the finely chopped onion. This has to cook until the onions have become soft and golden – this will take at least 15 minutes on a low temperature. When the onions are close to this, you can add the minced garlic and continue cooking until the onions are cooked and the garlic has lost its rawness. In the meantime, prepare your tomatoes – cut each in half around its equator and deseed them. Use your palm to push each cut half against a box grater and grate the tomato pulp, leaving behind the skins. Add this tomato pulp when the onions are golden and continue cooking over low heat until the tomatoes have melted into the onions and its redness is darker. That’s your sofregit. Add the minced pork and fry, stirring frequently so that the pork is crumbly, until the pork is all cooked (about 10 minutes). Add the thyme and nutmeg and season well with salt and pepper. Stir again and then turn off the heat. In a bowl, beat the egg and add the breadcrumbs to this. Stir together and then add this mixture to the pan with the pork. Stir to incorporate and there’s your filling.

Make the bechamel. In a heavy bottomed pan, melt the butter over low heat. Add the flour and whisk together until incorporated. Let it cook for about 3-4 minutes, whisking from time to time. Pour in the milk about a quarter of the volume at a time (you could whack in the whole thing but then it always seems to take longer). Whisk very well after each milk incorporation and then continue adding once the mixture gets thick. After all the milk has been added, continue cooking over low heat and whisking often until the bechamel is thick. Season with salt, freshly ground black pepper and a little freshly ground nutmeg, give it a final whisking and turn off the heat.

Put it together. Preheat your oven to 200 degrees Celsius. Lay your roasted aubergine halves in a baking dish and fill them with the pork mixture. Really stuff them well – use all that filling up! Top each filled aubergine half with a good couple of spoonsful of bechamel and then sprinkle with some finely grated parmesan cheese. Bake in the oven for about 15-20 minutes – the filling should be cooked through (that egg) and the tops should be golden brown.