

Ground Lamb and Roasted Eggplant with Mint Tzaziki

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Ground Lamb with Caramelized Fennel and Roasted Eggplant with Mint Tzaziki

[Prep: 15mins / Cook: 45mins / TOTAL: 1hr]

[4 servings]

- 2 lbs ground lamb
- 1 1/2 fennel bulb washed, cored, and thinly sliced, fronds reserved
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 3/4 cup faro
- 2 eggplants, washed, stemmed and cut in half lengthwise
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 teaspoon fresh ground pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon hot pepper flakes
- 5-6 large mint leaves, washed and torn up
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter

Mint Tzaziki

[Prep: 10 mins, included above]

[Yields about 1 1/3 cup]

- 1 cup plain whole fat yogurt
- 1/2 a lemon juiced, about 1 tablespoon
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/2 large cucumber, skinned, grated and drained
- fennel fronds roughly chopped
- 8 mint leaves, washed and roughly chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- a few grinds fresh cracked pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika

Preheat oven to 400°.

The eggplant needs about 40-45 minutes to roast so let's start with that. After it's been washed and the cap trimmed off, slice the eggplant in half lengthwise and score the flesh, making sure not to pierce the skin. Drizzle about a 1/2 tablespoon, some fresh cracked pepper and a few dashes of salt over each half. Roast face down on top of foil in on a baking sheet for 40-45 minutes. You'll know the eggplant is finished when the skin becomes wrinkled.

Meanwhile you can make the mint tzaziki. Measure out 1 cup plain yogurt into a small mixing bowl, discarding any liquid. To this add, 2 pressed garlic cloves, juice from 1/2 lemon, the paprika, salt and cracked pepper. Roughly chop up about 1 tablespoon of the fennel fronds and 8 mint leaves and incorporate. Peel and grate the cucumber into a small mixing bowl. Spoon off any liquid, pressing down with the back of the spoon helps to squeeze out any excess, incorporate with the rest of the ingredients and mix well. If you are going to be using the tzaziki as soon as the eggplant comes out of the oven you can leave it out, if you are making it a few hours ahead of time then it should be refrigerated.

Into a small pot add 2 cups water, a dash of salt and 3/4 cups faro. Bring to a boil - this will take about 2-3 minutes. Once the water is boiling, turn the heat down to a simmer and cover the faro. It will need about 20 minutes to cook. Set a timer for yourself so you don't forget about it during your next steps!

Now onto the ground lamb. For some reason I didn't use my cast iron skillet [stupid stupid...] it will really get you the best browning, caramelized flavor that you want. Take a well oiled cast iron skillet let it heat up over med-high heat. You'll want to cook the meat in 2 batches, crowded meat doesn't brown well - and here's the trick, once you've put the meat into the skillet and broken it up a little, just let it sit...and sit without touching it. It's hard I know, but this helps the meat caramelize and not end up a gray nondescript color (and flavor). Leave it for about 1 minute before flipping and you can begin to break it up more and season with salt [about 1/4 teaspoon] some fresh cracked pepper, 1/2 teaspoon cumin, and 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes. The whole process will take about 8-10 minutes each batch - of letting the meat brown and then mixing. When it is ready, remove the skillet from the heat and transfer the lamb to a small mixing bowl. Return the skillet to low-med heat and add 1 tablespoon butter and the sliced fennel. The fennel will take about 5 minutes to turn a nice golden color - stir occasionally so it does not burn. Once the fennel is

nearly finished add the sliced garlic and cook for about 3 minutes longer. Remove the skillet from the heat and incorporate the mixture with the ground lamb.

The faro should be finished by now, reserve 1/4 cup of the water and drain the rest. Add the drained and rinsed cannellini beans to the same skillet and keep the heat on low. Heat them up slowly, stirring occasionally. Incorporate the cooked faro and 1/4 cup reserved faro water into the skillet. Add the ground lamb mixture to the skillet and about 5-6 torn up mint leaves.

The eggplant should be ready to come out of the oven. Carefully flip the halves with a spatula so that they skin side down, and transfer a half to each plate. Add a few spoonfuls of lamb mixture next to eggplant and top the dish off with the tzaziki and garnish with a few mint leaves and fennel fronds. Enjoy!