



PREP

30 minutes

COOK

2 hours

YIELD

4-6

READY IN

2 hours 30 minutes

The Libyan Jewish Meat and Potato Recipe You Are Going to Crave This Winter

Mafrum is the dish you want to eat on cold winter nights.

BY SHIMI AARON | NOVEMBER 28, 2022

Mafrum is a Jewish Libyan dish of potato stuffed with spiced ground beef, then simmered in a tomato sauce. It is traditionally eaten on Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

The Libyan kitchen is a mix of Arabic and Mediterranean food, with a strong Italian influence. But since the early 1950s, when the vast majority of Libyan Jews immigrated to Israel, mafrum has evolved. It quickly became very popular in Israel, where it has been interpreted by Jews from different countries, such as Tunisia, Morocco and even Egypt.

I grew up on this dish. My late grandmother used to make it for holidays and it's one of my family's favorite dishes for Shabbat. My mom serves it over couscous with a side of tahini sauce and a finely chopped vegetable salad.

My interpretation of mafrum is a little bit different, mostly because in the original recipe you only use tomato paste for the sauce. I love fresh tomatoes, which is why I use them as a base for my sauce. They make the sauce a bit richer, and put a new spin on it. Sometimes, to make the dish a little lighter, I replace the traditional potato with eggplant, which is my favorite vegetable. But it is the potato version that I want to cook and eat on cold winter nights. I serve it the same way my mom does: the tahini sauce is perfect, the salad brings freshness, and if you squeeze fresh lemon on top of it all, you're basically in

Photo credit Shimi Aaron

Ingredients

4 white medium-size potatoes

water

salt

For the stuffing:

3/4 lb (400 g) ground beef (80% lean, but not more)

one bunch of parsley, washed and chopped

1 medium onion, grated

2 garlic cloves, grated

1 egg yolk (save the white – see below)

salt and pepper

½ tsp ground cinnamon

½ tsp ground nutmeg

½ tsp ground cumin

1 Tbsp breadcrumbs

1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

For the coating:

1½ cups all-purpose flour

3 eggs + the leftover egg white from the stuffing

1 Tbsp tomato paste

½ tsp salt

oil, for frying

For the sauce:

2 large onion, sliced into rings (super thin – on a mandolin, if available)

2 medium tomatoes, grated

4 Tbsp tomato paste

2 cups water

1 tsp sweet paprika

1 tsp salt

1 tsp sugar

pinch of ground nutmeg

½ cup oil, for frying

Directions

1. Peel your potatoes. Slice each potato, lengthwise, into 4 slices. Then take each slice and make a cut, lengthwise, almost all the way through so you create a pocket. Fill a bowl with room-temperature water, add a pinch of salt, and place the potato slices inside for about 45 minutes, while you continue with the recipe.

2. By hand, mix all the stuffing ingredients in a bowl. Divide them equally into 16 meatballs and place on a tray.

3. Drain the potatoes and dry them completely. Sprinkle some flour inside each potato pocket. Take a meatball, smash it with the palm of your hand, and stuff the potato pockets with it. Make sure the meat doesn't stick out too much.

4. In a separate bowl, mix the 3 eggs, the remaining egg white, salt and tomato paste with a whisk.

5. Place all the flour for the coating on a large plate.

6. Using a large, deep frying pan, heat 2 inches of oil on medium heat until it reaches 375°F.

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7. Dip each potato pocket in flour, making sure each piece is fully coated, but tap off any excess flour. Then dip in the egg mixture and fry, in batches, until golden on all sides. Repeat with all the pockets and lay them on a plate or tray.
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8. Heat the oven to 325°F.
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9. Make the sauce in an oven-proof, large, deep skillet. Add the oil and fry the onions slowly until softened. Add the tomato paste and mix. Add the salt and the rest of the spices and mix again. Then add the fresh grated tomato, sugar and water.
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10. When the sauce comes to a simmer, slowly place all the potato pockets into the skillet, laying them side by side. Cover, turn the heat to low, and cook for 10 minutes.
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11. Place the skillet in the oven for 1-1.5 hours, or until the sauce has cooked down by half and potatoes are soft. Serve with chopped herbs, a fresh salad and tahini dressing.

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