

# Stuffed eggplant with lamb & pine nuts

SERVES 4 GENEROUSLY

4 medium eggplants (about 2 1/2 lb / 1.2 kg), halved lengthwise  
6 tbsp / 90 ml olive oil  
1 tsp ground cumin  
1 tbsp sweet paprika  
1 tbsp ground cinnamon  
2 medium onions (12 oz /340 g in total), finely chopped  
1 lb / 500 g ground lamb  
7 tbsp / 50 g pine nuts  
2/3 oz / 20 g flat-leaf parsley, chopped  
2 tsp tomato paste  
3 tsp superfine sugar  
2/3 cup / 150 ml water  
1 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice  
1 tsp tamarind paste  
4 cinnamon sticks  
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Elran Shrefler, the youngest of Ezra and Rachela Shrefler's nine children, together with his brothers runs Azura. This restaurant in the heart of Machne Yehuda market serves Jerusalemites traditional Kurdish recipes with a Turkish influence, the cuisine of Ezra's birthplace. A member of the Slow Food movement, Elran starts work at four every morning and cooks all his food in massive pots on small oil-burning stoves, just as his family has done for generations. His food, long-cooked stews and hearty soups, is ready for the first customers who arrive at around 8 a.m. (!). It is essentially real fast food—after the long hours of slow cooking, it takes seconds to plate and serve. Elran showed us how to make his stuffed eggplant, Turkish style, which is our favorite dish at Azura. This is our interpretation.

In their book, *The Flavor of Jerusalem*, Joan Nathan and Judy Stacey Goldman give a slightly unorthodox recipe for stuffed eggplant with calves' liver and apples. This is the creation of Deacon William Gardiner-Scott, who, in the 1970s, was head of St. Andrew's, the only Presbyterian church in Jerusalem. The church was erected in 1927 to commemorate the capture of Jerusalem by the British during the First World War. This is one of only a few culinary marks the Brits have left behind.

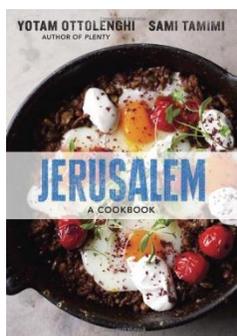
Preheat the oven to 425°F / 220°C.

Place the eggplant halves, skin side down, in a roasting pan large enough to accommodate them snugly. Brush the flesh with 4 tablespoons of the olive oil and season with 1 teaspoon salt and plenty of black pepper. Roast for about 20 minutes, until golden brown. Remove from the oven and allow to cool slightly.

While the eggplants are cooking, you can start making the stuffing by heating the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large frying pan. Mix together the cumin, paprika, and ground cinnamon and add half of this spice mix to the pan, along with the onions. Cook over medium-high heat for about 8 minutes, stirring often, before adding the lamb, pine nuts, parsley, tomato paste, 1 teaspoon of the sugar, 1 teaspoon salt, and some black pepper. Continue to cook and stir for another 8 minutes, until the meat is cooked.

Place the remaining spice mix in a bowl and add the water, lemon juice, tamarind, the remaining 2 teaspoons sugar, the cinnamon sticks, and ½ teaspoon salt; mix well.

Reduce the oven temperature to 375°F / 195°C. Pour the spice mix into the bottom of the eggplant roasting pan. Spoon the lamb mixture on top of each eggplant. Cover the pan tightly with aluminum foil, return to the oven, and roast for 1½ hours, by which point the eggplants should be completely soft and the sauce thick; twice during the cooking, remove the foil and baste the eggplants with the sauce, adding some water if the sauce dries out. Serve warm, not hot, or at room temperature.



***Jerusalem: A Cookbook*** by Yotam Ottolenghi and Sami Tamimi;  
Hardcover, 320 pages. Ten Speed Press (October 16, 2012),  
ISBN-10: 1607743949.