

Stuffed aubergine with lamb & pine nuts

4 medium aubergines
 (about 1.2kg), halved
 lengthways
6 tbsp olive oil
1½ tsp ground cumin
1½ tbsp sweet paprika
1 tbsp ground cinnamon
2 medium onions (340g in
total), finely chopped
500g minced lamb
50g pine nuts
20g flat-leaf parsley,
chopped
2 tsp tomato purée
3 tsp caster sugar
150ml water
1½ tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp tamarind paste
4 cinnamon sticks
salt and black pepper

These are deliciously hearty and best served with some bread or simple rice (SEE BASMATI RICE AND ORZO, PAGE 103) and some pickles on the side (SEE PICKLED TURNIP AND BEETROOT, PAGE 307).

Preheat the oven to 220°C/200°C Fan/Gas Mark 7.

Place the aubergine halves, skin-side down, in a roasting tin large enough to accommodate them snugly. Brush the flesh with 4 tablespoons of the olive oil and season with 1 teaspoon of 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 aubergines are cooking, you can start making the stuffing by heating up the remaining 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 onion. Cook on a medium-high heat for about 8 minutes, stirring often, before adding the lamb, pine nuts, parsley, tomato purée, 1 teaspoon of the sugar, 1 teaspoon of 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, remaining sugar, cinnamon sticks and ½ teaspoon of salt; mix well.

Reduce the oven temperature to 195°C/175°C Fan/Gas Mark 5½. Pour the spice mix into the bottom of the aubergine roasting tin. Spoon the lamb mixture on top of each aubergine. Cover the tin tightly with foil, return to the oven and roast for 1 hour 30 minutes, by which point the aubergines should be completely soft and the sauce thick; twice through the cooking, remove the foil and baste the aubergines with the sauce, adding some water if the sauce dries out. Serve warm, not hot, or at room temperature.