

Stuffed Grape Leaves

18 rolls

These make a delicious snack any time of day. Fry some ground lamb to add to the filling if you'd like. Make extra and give some away.

1 T. extra virgin olive oil
1 cup white basmati rice, imported
(Tilda is my favorite brand)
3/4 tsp. salt
1 lemon, juiced
1 1/2 cups vegetable stock

2 T. minced fresh mint
2 T. minced parsley leaves
1/4 cup toasted pine nuts
1/4 cup currants
1 jar grape leaves
1 additional lemon, squeezed
1 T. olive oil additional

Heat the oil in a small pot over medium high heat. Add the rice and stir well. When the rice is sizzling and aromatic, stir in the salt and half of the lemon juice, sauté for a half minute, then add the stock. Turn heat to high, bring to a boil, place a tight-fitting lid on the pot, turn the heat to a low simmer, and cook for 18–20 minutes. Turn heat off and let rice rest for 5 minutes before fluffing.

Stir in the remaining lemon juice, mint, parsley, currants, and pine nuts. Taste and adjust the seasoning to suit your preferences. Place a grape leaf on the counter in front of you with the stem toward you; cut the nub of the stem off with a sharp knife. Place 1–2 T. of filling on the leaf, fold the stem end toward the top, pull it back toward the rice and snug the rice in, then fold the left and right sides in and roll away from you to make a fairly tight cylinder. Place seam-side down in a baking pan. Continue with the remaining leaves and filling, placing the rolls snugly next to each other. If you run out of room, you can place a second layer, also snugly placed, on top of the first. Drizzle the additional lemon juice and olive oil over the stuffed grape leaves, add enough water to just barely cover the leaves (push them firmly down into the liquid; add just enough water so that the middle of the top layer is submerged when you push down). Bake at 350° for 1 1/4 hours.

Eat chilled, garnished with lemon wedges and fresh mint. If I am looking to create a whole menu based on the grape leaves, I add assorted olives, pickled vegetables, hummus and/or baba ganouj, fresh baked pita or other flatbread, and marinated feta, all arranged beautifully on a platter.