



COOKING PASSION SINCE 1877

Food Memories

Dimitris's Soutzoukakia from Smyrna



Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

450 g minced meat (150 g from beef, 150 g from lamb, 150 g from pork)
1 large onion, very finely cut in the blender
2 **eggs**
2 garlic cloves crushed
120 g **breadcrumbs**
1 tsp olive oil
1 tbsp dried mint
4 tsp ground cumin
salt, pepper
2 cups of **flour**
300-500 ml olive oil for frying

For the sauce:

1 small onion finely cut
2-3 tbsp olive oil
500 g tomato puree
½ tsp sugar
1 tbsp ground cumin
½ - 1 tsp pepperoncino
salt, pepper

For the side:

200 g long grain rice
50 g **risoni pasta**
1 onion
50 g **butter**
Chicken stock

ALLERGENS HIGHLIGHTED
IN BOLD

PREPARATION

Mix and knead all the soutzoukakia ingredients together in a large bowl, either by hand or in your food processor.

Put the mixture into the fridge to firm up for 30 minutes, if needed. Put the flour for breading into a shallow pan or dish.

Dampen your hands with water and begin to shape the mixture into bite-sized cylindrical shaped meatballs of approximately 25-30 g each. Once you have made all of them, and just before it's time to cook them, roll them in flour one by one and set them aside.

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan and carefully place the soutzoukakia to fry one by one. After 2 minutes, turn the soutzoukakia over and after a total of 4 minutes, remove them from the frying pan.

Place the cooked soutzoukakia onto a large plate lined with kitchen paper.

Prepare the side by heating olive oil in a pan and sautéing the risoni pasta until it takes a dark colour. Add half a chopped onion and rice and sauté for a minute, then add chicken stock. Boil slowly until the rice is cooked, then add salt and pepper. Once the pilaf rice is complete, add the butter and stir.

Prepare the sauce by sautéing the onion, pepperoncino and cumin in olive oil in a large pot in medium heat and after five minutes add the tomato and sugar. Let it boil for 3-4 minutes and then add the cooked soutzoukakia for another two minutes. Your Smyrna soutzoukakia are ready to taste!

DIMITRIS'S FOOD MEMORY

Smyrna, now Izmir in Turkey, has been one of the cradles of Eastern Mediterranean cuisine in the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. One of the most famous recipes originating from Smyrna is Soutzoukakia, cylindrical-shaped meatballs made with garlic and cumin and cooked in a tomato sauce; quite spicy but not hot. As my grandmother was from Smyrna and she was an excellent cook, she would cook this dish quite often. The memory I have of her doing soutzoukakia is focused on the intense smell of cumin that filled the house when she was preparing them, rather than the taste of the food. Unfortunately her family recipe was not passed on to me through my mother, so I had to go on a rediscovery journey.

A few years ago, I found an original Smyrnian soutzoukakia recipe from the early 20th century within a Smyrnian housewives' recipe book. However this recipe was quite simplistic and unsophisticated, much unlike the elegant Smyrnian food that my grandma used to make. I decided to recreate this dish in the same way that my grandma would have made it and I developed my own version of Smyrnian soutzoukakia. Since then, soutzoukakia has gradually become part of the repertoire of recipes that I regularly make at home and all my three daughters love it as the ultimate comfort food.

I chose to replace the minced meat from the original recipe with a mix of three types of minced meat: beef, pork and lamb. I also added mint, egg and finely-cut onion to the stale bread, garlic and cumin of the original recipe. These tweaks give the recipe an exceptional texture and flavour, but still keep the punch of ground cumin and garlic.