



100 Recipes
for
Meze, Entrées,
and Desserts

Modern Greek Cooking

PANO KARATASSOS

WRITTEN WITH JANE SIGAL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANCESCO TONELLI
FOREWORD BY THOMAS KELLER

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SPREADS

Grilled Eggplant Spread

In Athens, my thea Maria showed me how to cook eggplant for melitzanosalata by wrapping it in foil and cooking it on her electric stovetop until the flesh caves in. Then, when I was cooking at the French Laundry in Napa Valley, chef Thomas Keller taught me the additional refinement of draining the soft flesh in cheesecloth to remove any bitterness. For this recipe, I've taken inspiration from both teachers and added my own stamp—grilling the eggplants to soften the flesh and stirring in yogurt and red wine vinegar. It's smoky, tangy, and velvety. • **MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS (500 ML)**

Three 1-pound (500 g) eggplants
½ cup (125 ml) plus 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
Kosher salt
½ small red onion, finely chopped
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
¼ cup (30 g) shelled walnuts, finely chopped, optional
1½ tablespoons Greek yogurt, preferably homemade (page 223)
1¼ teaspoons Garlic Puree (page 219)
Freshly ground white pepper

1. Heat a grill or a grill pan. Arrange the eggplants in a large baking pan. Stab each in 12 places with a fork. Drizzle with ¼ cup (60 ml) of the oil and rub to coat. Season generously with salt. Grill the eggplants over medium-high heat, turning them occasionally, until the skin blackens and the flesh collapses, 25 to 35 minutes. Return them to the pan and let cool slightly.

2. Set a colander over a medium bowl. Cut the eggplants in half, peel them, and scoop the flesh into the colander. Let drain overnight in the refrigerator; discard the bitter liquid that accumulates. Transfer the eggplant to a food mill and pass into the same bowl; discard the seeds (see Notes).

3. In a small skillet, warm 1 teaspoon of the oil. Add the onion and a pinch of salt and cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until softened but not browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in 1 teaspoon of the vinegar, remove from the heat, and let cool.

4. Stir the onion into the eggplant. One ingredient at a time, stir in the walnuts, if desired, the yogurt, Garlic Puree, and remaining 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons of vinegar and ¼ cup (60 ml) of oil. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a serving bowl, drizzle with oil, and serve.

NOTES The grilled eggplant needs to drain overnight, so plan accordingly.

For a more refined version, tie the eggplant flesh in cheesecloth in Step 2, instead of draining it in a colander, and let it hang over a bowl in the refrigerator overnight. This drains the eggplant better, making it less watery.

For a more rustic spread, instead of using a food mill, puree the grilled eggplant in a food processor until smooth, then pulse in the remaining ingredients.

MAKE AHEAD The spread can be refrigerated for up to 5 days.

WINE Greek rosé with crisp acidity. Or fresh Assyrtiko from Santorini, Crete, or the mainland.