

## GREEK PASTITSIO

(Adapted from "Cook's Illustrated, Nov/Dec 19")

Serves: 6



### Meat Sauce

3/4 tsp	salt
1/4 tsp	baking soda
1 Tbsp + 1/2 c	water, divided
8 oz	lean ground beef *
1 Tbsp	vegetable oil
1/2 cup	finely chopped onion
3	cloves garlic, minced
1-1/4 tsp	ground cinnamon
1 tsp	dried oregano
1 tsp	dried mint
1 tsp	paprika
1/8 tsp	red pepper flakes
1/8 tsp	pepper
1/4 cup	red wine
1/3 cup	tomato paste

### Béchamel & Pasta

2 Tbsp	unsalted butter
2 Tbsp	all-purpose flour
1	garlic clove, minced
1/2 tsp	salt
1/4 tsp	grated nutmeg
1/8 tsp	pepper
4 cups	whole milk (can substitute 2%)
8 oz (2-1/2 cups)	ziti pasta (can substitute rigatoni pasta)
4 oz	kasseri, shredded (1 cup), divided (can substitute: 1-1/2 oz (3/4 cup) grated Pecorino Romano & 3 oz (3/4 cup) shredded Provolone)
1	large egg, lightly beaten

1. **For the Meat Sauce:** Mix salt, baking soda and 1 Tbsp water in water. Add beef and toss until thoroughly combined. Set aside.
2. Heat oil in medium saucepan over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, about 3 minutes. Stir in garlic, cinnamon, oregano, mint, paprika, pepper flakes, and pepper and cook until fragrant, 1-2 minutes. Add wine and cook, stirring occasionally, until mixture is thickened, 2-3 minutes. Add tomato paste, beef mixture, and remaining 1/2 cup water and cook, breaking up meat pieces with wooden spoon, until beef has just lost its pink colour, 3-5 minutes. Bring to simmer, cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Off heat, season with salt to taste. (Meat sauce can be refrigerated in airtight container for up to 3 days. Heat through before proceeding with Step 3).
3. **For the Béchamel and Pasta:** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat over to 375°. Spray 8" square baking dish\*\* with cooking oil and place on rimmed baking sheet. Melt butter in large saucepan over medium. Add flour, garlic, salt, nutmeg, and pepper and cook, stirring constantly, until golden and fragrant, about 1 minute. Slowly whisk in milk and bring to boil. Add pasta and return to simmer, stirring frequently to prevent sticking. When mixture reaches simmer, cover and let stand off heat, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes (pasta will not be fully cooked).
4. Using spider skimmer (or slotted spoon), transfer pasta to prepared dish, leaving excess béchamel in saucepan. Sprinkle 1/3 cup kasseri (or 1/2 cup other cheese) over pasta and stir to combine. Using spatula, gently press pasta into even layer. Add 1/3 cup kasseri (or 1/2 cup other cheese) to béchamel and whisk to combine. Whisk egg into béchamel. Spread meat sauce over pasta and, using spatula, spread into even layer. Top with béchamel. Sprinkle with remaining 1/3 cup kasseri (or 1/2 cup other cheese) over béchamel. Bake until top of pastitsio is puffed and spotty brown, about 40-60 minutes. Let cool for 20 minutes. Serve.

### Notes:

\* Don't use ground beef that's less than 93% lean or the dish will be greasy.

\*\* Use baking dish at least 2-1/4" high to accommodate all ingredients.