

Stuffed Chard, Collard or Grape Leaves

I have made a few small changes to Linda Sawaya's recipe for Vegetarian Stuffed Grape leaves or Chard Leaves from "Alice's Kitchen : Traditional Lebanese Cooking". This version adds walnuts and chard stems, leaves out tomatoes because it's still spring, uses cooked rice and warms the stuffed leaves in the oven rather than simmering in a pot. Thank you Linda for the recipe and for the love always coming from your kitchen. Check out her cookbook website <http://www.aliceskitchencookbook.com> where you can order a copy.

Ingredients

16 large chard leaves, or 16 large collard leaves or 32 medium grape leaves
2 Tablespoons olive oil
1 bunch scallions, (2/3 cup minced)
stems from chard leaves, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 cup cooked brown rice
1 bunch parsley , finely chopped
1/2 bunch spearmint, finely chopped
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/2 cup walnuts, finely chopped
1/4 cup lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black or white pepper, freshly ground
FOR THE BAKING PAN
4 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 cup lemon juice
2 Tablespoons olive oil

Method

1. In a large bowl, add scallions, parsley, spearmint, salt, pepper, cayenne and walnuts to cooked brown rice. Add lemon juice and olive oil and mix well. Taste and adjust seasoning to your taste.
2. If using chard or collards, trim off any thick mid-vein with a small paring knife or even remove the thickest end piece of the vein to allow for smoother rolling. Then blanch each leaf in boiling water, 1 or 2 at a time, for about a minute to soften them. Lift them carefully with tongs and place on a plate for rolling. If you are adept, the blanching and rolling will take about

the same time so you can set up a little production line next to the stove. If it's your first time, you may want to blanch all the leaves before starting to roll. If using fresh or frozen grape leaves, leave in warm water for a few minutes to wilt them or leave them out for a few hours to wilt without water. If using canned grape leaves, they are ready to roll.

3. Preheat the oven to 350F.

4. Now comes the playful and beautiful part. Lay out one leaf with the veins facing up and the stem end toward you. Place about 2 Tablespoons of stuffing across the width of the leaf and toward the stem end of the leaf. Fold in the stem end over the stuffing then fold in the sides and roll the leaf up snugly like a carpet or a yoga mat. For smaller leaves, use proportionally less stuffing. You will quickly get the hang of it and can always unroll and remove some of the stuffing if bulging.

5. Place each rolled leaf into a glass or ceramic baking dish (9 X 13 should work for this batch). Drizzle the garlic, lemon juice, olive oil mixture gently over the leaves. Heat for about 20 minutes, until the rolled leaves are steaming. Lift gently with a spatula or tongs.

Notes



For this April class, swiss chard or collard leaves are at their peak after wintering over. Rhubarb chard with the red veins or several varieties of Rainbow chard with yellow, white, green or red veins make attractive wrappings. Grape leaves come later (starting around early June) and can be used when around palm size or larger, as long as still tender. Be flexible with your leaves - savoy cabbage similarly blanched or sturdy romaine lettuce also make good wraps.

These are a wonderful snack the next day, reheated or at room temperature. Any leftover stuffing is delicious added to spring greens and chickpeas for a salad.

I have experimented with using other fresh herbs (sorrel, dill, chives), chickpeas, dried fruit (currants, diced dried apricots) and nuts (pistachios, pine nuts). Let your creative juices flow with your recipe concept. A thin tomato sauce in the baking pan under the rolled leaves and drizzled on top is also a delicious variation.

My friend Linda Sawaya, artist, gardener and cookbook author, has an excellent demo on everything to know about grape leaves -
<http://www.golocalpdx.com/food/how-to-pick-and-roll-grape-leaves-for-the->

summer

Source: Mary Scott, inspired by Alice's Kitchen : Traditional Lebanese Cooking by Linda Dalal Sawaya (Servings: 8 | Yield: 16 stuffed chard or collard or 32 stuffed grape leaves)