

Cathy Camper's Warak Enab (Stuffed Grape Leaves)

Ingredients

- 50-60 grape leaves, plus extra, in case some tear, and for the bottom of the pot. Buy them packed in brine, in jars at Middle Eastern food stores
- 1 teaspoon salt
- juice of 2 lemons

Stuffing

- 1 cup white rice
- 1 lb. ground lamb or beef
- Big pot to cook them in

You'll also need a plate that is slightly smaller than the pot, to put on top of the grape leaves as they cook.

Directions

Rinse the grape leaves in cold water to remove the brine. Lay them on dishtowels to absorb any extra water. If there are big, tough stem ends on any of the leaves, remove them. And if the leaves seem tough, you can soak them in hot water for about 10 minutes to soften them.

Mix the 3 stuffing ingredients with your hands, in a bowl. To stuff the grape leaves, take about a spoonful of stuffing and put it in the center of the leaf. Fold the grape leaves as shown in my book: first fold the sides in, then tuck the bottom in, and then roll the grape leaf up, from the bottom to the top. It should make a nice, tight roll.

Put some plain grape leaves (torn or damaged ones are good for this) in the bottom of the pot, which will keep the stuffed grape leaves from sticking or burning. You can also add a few chicken wings or lamb bones in the bottom of the pot, if you have them, for added flavor, but I usually don't. Arrange the rolled grape leaves in the pot, alternating the direction of each layer as you go. Sprinkle the salt over the leaves.

Put the upside-down plate on top—this weighs them down while they cook so they don't fall apart and keeps them underwater. Then fill the pot with water until it reaches the level of the plate.

Cover the pot and cook on low heat for about 35 minutes, until cooked and tender. Add the lemon juice at the last 10 minutes of cooking.