



sharing our Greek culinary heritage

KO's Stuffed Zucchini Flowers

For the stuffed zucchini flowers

- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 3 large brown onions
- 1/2 bunch parsley, washed
- 1/2 bunch mint, washed
- 1/2 bunch dill, washed
- 1 1/2 cups tomato passata or fresh tomato puree
- 3 cups medium grain rice, washed and drained
- 3 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons ground pepper
- 1/2 cup water
- 40-50 zucchini flowers, washed
- Additional extra virgin olive oil and salt
- Additional 1 1/2 cups water

Preparing the filling

Generously coat the base of a 3-4 litre pot with olive oil and heat on a medium-high flame.

Coarsely chop the onions, add them to the pot and sauté until they just start to brown.

Add the tomato passata and stir through (alternatively, for a lighter, fresher tomato flavour, substitute the passata with fresh tomato puree made from ripe tomatoes). Rinse the tomato passata / puree vessel with half a cup of water and add this to the pot. Stir through and cook for 1-2 minutes.

Add the salt and pepper.

Chop all the herbs, add them to the pot and stir them through.

Add the rice, stir through and cook for 1-2 minutes.

Set aside the pot with the filling mixture.

Preparing the flowers

Remove the stems, sepals and pistils from the zucchini flowers.

Filling the flowers

Lightly coat the base of a baking dish with olive oil.

Carefully hold a flower, drawing the petals away from the centre of the flower, and fill it with 1-2 spoonfuls of the filling mixture. Do not overfill the flower. Fold over each of the petals in turn to seal and hold the filling in place.

Place the stuffed flower in the baking dish, with the top of the flower resting against the side of the dish. Continue until a full row has been placed in the baking dish.

Arrange the next row of stuffed flowers so that the top of each flower rests against the base of a flower in the first row.

Continue until all the flowers have been filled and arranged in the baking dish.

Drizzle the stuffed flowers with a little more olive oil and season them with salt.

Add 1½ cups of water to the baking dish.

Baking the flowers

Place the baking dish in an oven preheated to 180°C.

Bake the flowers for half an hour.

Then carefully turn all the flowers over and add another cup of water to the baking dish. Bake the flowers for another half hour.

Serve and enjoy!

Preparing the leftovers

You can cook any leftover filling by using the rice absorption method.

Transfer any leftover filling to a smaller pot, add water (two parts water to one part filling) and bring to a boil. Then reduce to a simmer, place a vented lid on the pot and cook till all the water has been absorbed.

Notes on harvesting the flowers

If you are growing zucchinis in your garden, their flowers will not all bloom simultaneously, so you will need to harvest the zucchini flowers over a few days. The blooms need to be collected early in the morning, when they are open, otherwise they will be quite tricky to fill. The blooms are very delicate and need to be handled with care. When you collect the flowers, push the other foliage aside, so that the prickly leaves and stems of the zucchini plants do not damage the blooms as you cut them.

There may be ants in the blooms, so let the blooms sit in a cool place for a short while and the ants will find their way out. You can keep the flowers in the fridge for up to 5 days before use. Just remove the stems, sepals and pistils from the flowers and place one flower inside the other. Then put them in an airtight container lined with cling wrap. Cover the flowers with cling wrap too before placing the lid on the container.

Wash the flowers just before use.