

Gemista - Γεμιστά (yemista)



Bell peppers or tomatoes stuffed with a mixture of rice, herbs, and sometimes ground meat. Gemista may also be prepared with minced meat, but this recipe is the rice and herb version.

SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	CUISINE
Serves 6	30 minutes	1 hour 15 minutes	1 hour 45 minutes	Greek

Ingredients

- 6 ripe medium tomatoes
- 6 medium bell peppers, tops kept intact and hollowed
- 2 medium onions, finely diced
- 3 garlic cloves, finely grated
- 100 ml (3½ fl oz) extra-virgin olive oil
- 400 g (14 oz) long-grain rice, rinsed
- 1 medium courgette, finely diced
- 1 medium aubergine, finely diced
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 1 small bunch flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped



- 1 small bunch dill, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp mint leaves, finely chopped
- 1 tsp caster sugar
- 1 ½ tsp fine sea salt
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 400 ml (14 fl oz) hot water or gluten-free vegetable stock
- 2 medium potatoes, cut into wedges

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C fan (200°C conventional/400°F/gas mark 6). Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and line a deep roasting tin or baking dish large enough to hold the vegetables snugly.
2. Slice a thin lid from each tomato and pepper, then set the lids aside. Scoop out the tomato flesh and seeds into a bowl, leaving the shells intact; remove the pepper cores and seeds. Finely chop the tomato pulp and reserve it for the filling.
3. Heat 60 ml (2 fl oz) of the olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onions and sweat for 6–8 minutes, stirring often, until soft and translucent but not browned.
4. Add the garlic, courgette and aubergine, then cook over medium heat for 6–8 minutes, stirring, until the vegetables are soft and any excess moisture has evaporated. Let them take a little colour: with no meat in the pan, this is where the depth of the filling now comes from.
5. Add the tomato purée and cook over medium heat for 1–2 minutes, stirring constantly, until it darkens slightly and smells sweet rather than raw.
6. Add the chopped tomato flesh, rice, oregano, parsley, dill, mint, sugar, salt and pepper. Stir well to combine, then cook over medium heat for 2 minutes so the rice is coated and the mixture smells fragrant.
7. Pour in the hot water or gluten-free vegetable stock and simmer over low-medium heat for 5–6 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the liquid is mostly absorbed but the rice is still undercooked; it should remain loose and spoonable. Remove from the heat and rest for 5 minutes.
8. Fill each tomato and pepper about three-quarters full with the rice mixture, then replace the lids. Pack the vegetables tightly into the roasting tin and tuck the potato wedges around them. Spoon any remaining filling into the gaps in the tin.
9. Drizzle the remaining olive oil over the vegetables and season lightly with a little extra salt. Pour 100–150 ml (3½–5 fl oz) water into the base of the tin to keep the vegetables moist during baking.



10. Bake for 55–65 minutes, until the vegetables are tender, the tops are lightly browned and the rice is fully cooked. If the tops colour too quickly, cover loosely with foil for the final 20 minutes.
11. Remove from the oven and rest for at least 15 minutes before serving, so the filling settles and the juices are absorbed. Serve warm or at room temperature.

To serve

Serve the gemista with the roasted potatoes and a spoonful of the pan juices, with crusty bread and a simple green salad alongside. A chilled white wine or a light rosé suits the dish well; finish with a little extra olive oil.

