

# Moussaka in a Zucchini Boat - from Karen H.



1 fat, long zucchini (whatever size will fit your baking pan)  
Cut the zucchini in 1/2 lengthwise. Scoop out seeds and some flesh, saving the flesh. Lay zucchini halves, cut side up, in a large baking pan. With heavy-duty aluminum foil, make a "boat" around, but about 4" taller than, each zucchini half. Fold/roll the tops of the foil halfway down towards the zucchini, to make it stronger; it should still be taller than the zucchini by maybe 2 inches. Fold the ends together well, to prevent leakage while baking.

## Moussaka Filling:

1/3 - 1/2 cup olive oil  
1 cup finely chopped onions  
1 1/2 to 2 lbs. lean ground beef  
3 med. tomatoes, peeled, seeded, finely chopped -- or 1 cup chopped canned tomatoes, drained  
1 cup canned tomato puree  
1 tsp. finely chopped garlic  
"some" of the zucchini pulp  
1 Tblsp. fresh oregano or 1 tsp. crumbled dried oregano  
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon  
1 tsp. salt  
Freshly ground black pepper to taste  
Optional: 1 beaten egg, to help the filling hold together

Heat the olive oil in a pan. Add onions and cook, stirring, for 8-10 minutes, until lightly browned. Stir in ground beef, mashing to break up any lumps. Cook until no pink remains. Add tomatoes, tomato puree, some reserved zucchini pulp, garlic, oregano, cinnamon, 1 tsp. salt, pepper. Bring to boil over fairly high heat, stirring frequently, until most of the liquid evaporates. Taste and correct seasonings. Stir in beaten egg, if using one, which I recommend.

## Bechamel Topping:

2 cups milk  
1 Tblsp. butter  
3 eggs  
1/4 cup flour  
1/2 tsp. salt  
Note: If you like grated cheese in bechamel sauce, parmesan is recommended.

Heat 1.5 cups of milk and butter in a small pan until bubbles begin to appear around the rim. Remove from the heat. In a heavy saucepan (2-3 quart size), beat eggs, remaining 1/2 cup of milk, flour, and salt together until smooth. Place this saucepan over moderate heat, stirring constantly with whisk or large spoon. Slowly add the milk and melted butter mixture in a thin stream. Stir in grated cheese, if you're using it. Still stirring, cook until sauce comes to a boil and thickens heavily. Remove from heat and set aside.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Fill zucchini halves with the meat mixture. Pour the bechamel sauce evenly over the top, spreading with a rubber spatula if needed. Pour a little water around the outsides of the foil-covered zucchini halves. Bake in center of oven for 30 minutes, then increase heat to 400 and bake for 15-20 minutes longer, until top is golden brown. Remove pan from oven and let it rest at room temperature for 5-10 minutes before serving.

To serve: Remove foil from one end of one zucchini boat and cut, top to bottom, into serving-sized slices. Seal the end back, to hold the rest together. When completely cool, zucchini boats may be sliced and the individual slices wrapped and frozen for future eating.