

Macaroni and Meat Bake

Macaron reynado de karne

This appetizing Sephardic version of the Greek meat bake *pastitsio*, is baked in an earthenware ovenproof dish and brought straight to the table. This dish, known as *macaron reynado de karne*, makes an excellent meal eaten hot or at room temperature for brunches, mezes, picnics and children's packed lunches. This bake is delicious with a tasty homemade tomato sauce and a green salad.

For the macaroni and meat bake:

3 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for brushing

6 spring onions (scallions), finely sliced

500g (1 pound) minced (ground) beef or veal

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon finely ground white pepper

1½ cups hot chicken stock

½ cup chopped canned tomatoes

2 tablespoons roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley (use leaves and tender stems)

1 tablespoon roughly chopped fresh dill

500g (1lb 2oz) macaroni, tubular pasta or pasta shells

9 eggs, well beaten

Brush a 35x25cm (14x10in) and 6.25cm (2½in) deep earthenware ovenproof dish lightly with olive oil.

Heat the oil in a large, heavy-based pan over a medium-high heat. Add the spring onions and cook for 2 minutes, stirring frequently, until softened. Add the meat and salt and pepper and stir for 5 minutes. Crushing the meat with a fork, stir until it changes to a light brown colour.

Add 1 cup hot chicken stock and the tomatoes. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, until the sauce has reduced but is still moist. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Toss in the parsley and dill and transfer to a large bowl.

Bring a large pot of generously salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and stir frequently as the water returns to a boil. Cook the pasta according to packet instruction until just tender but retaining some bite. Drain well.

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F) and heat the oiled dish in the oven for 5 minutes.

Add the pasta to the meat mixture and pour in the beaten eggs. Mix well.

Remove the heated dish from the oven and immediately pour the mixture into it, evenly distributing the meat and pasta. Smooth the surface with the back of a spoon. Bake in the centre of the oven for 30 minutes or until

the top is crusty and golden. Switch off the oven. Pour the remaining ½ cup of hot chicken stock over the baked pasta and return to the still warm oven until the stock has been absorbed.

Cut into squares and serve hot or at room temperature.