THE JOUKOWSKY INSTITUTE COOKBOOK II

Compiled by
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Waraq 'Einab / “Aate” / Dolma: Edible Vines with Ancient Roots
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Grape leaves stuffed with rice is one of the most recognizable culinary exports from the Mediterranean. Being such a healthy, vegetarian option that can be eaten on the go (sometimes called “Lebanese sushi”), many people who have gobbled down the tasty treat may not realize that it is an ideal “East meets West” kind of food. The grape vine was first domesticated in the Levant firmly by the fourth millennium BC (Stager 1985; McGovern 2019: 66). While rice was first cultivated in the Yangtze and Ganges Valleys around 7000 BC and 3000 BC respectively (Gutaker et al. 2020), the grain did not spread to the Levant until the late first millennium BC at the earliest, but only gained in popularity in West Asia in the past few centuries (Spengler et al. 2021). We may not know when this tasty combination was first plated, but the Silk Road-style unification of staples is now popular all over the Mediterranean and beyond. In Lebanon, the dish is called Waraq ‘Einab (literally “grape leaf”) in Arabic, also referred to as Mehshi Waraq ‘Einab (“stuffed grape leaves”), but is further broken down into two varieties. The first, Waraq ‘Einab, is traditionally served with meat. The second variety, called “Aate”, a variant of the Arabic قاطع, a root also attested in Syriac/Aramaic and Hebrew, literally meaning “cutter” or “reducer”, connotes that the meat is to be left out or “banned” making “Aate” a sought-after dish by Near Eastern Christians during Lent. It is the latter, “Aate”, that is translated to Greek with the name most familiar to Western consumers — Dolma. Indeed, Greeks in Lebanon also call it dolma, as do Syrian Christians. Whatever you call it, make sure to thank a Phoenician.

“I” “Aate” / Dolma

INGREDIENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 jar of Californian grape leaves</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 C split chickpeas</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 C rice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1½ tsp salt</td>
<td>1½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ tsp pepper</td>
<td>½</td>
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<tr>
<td>½ tsp cinnamon</td>
<td>½</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 C squeezed lemon juice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 sliced potato (to line the bottom of your Dutch oven or any other cooking pot)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DIRECTIONS

In a large container, combine the mixture of rice, salt, pepper, chickpeas, cinnamon, and a couple of tablespoons of lemon juice.

Carefully line the insides of your grape leaves with your mixture one by one, rolling carefully and tightly like a cigar (cigar rolling experience not necessary).

Line your cooking pot with the sliced potatoes. Cover them with one or two (unstuffed) grape leaves, then line your stuffed grape leaves in the pot in a circular style until filled three-quarters of the way. Put the remaining lemon juice into the cooking pot on top of the stuffed leaves.

Sprinkle with a dash of salt and a tablespoon of EVOO. Fill to just cover the grape leaves with water. Put a heat-proof plate over the leaves to weigh them down. Cover the pot, bring to a boil, adjust the flavors (adding lemon and/or salt) to taste, then simmer for about 15-20 minutes.

To serve: enjoy in pita, or dipped in Greek yogurt, and always wash down with a cold beer.
(II) Waraq ’Einab

INGREDIENTS
As for “Aate” / Dolma, but substituting 1 lb ground meat (lamb or sirloin) in place of the 1 C split chickpeas.

DIRECTIONS
Follow the same steps as in making “Aate” / Dolma.

References

Editors’ note: For a slightly different take on the meatless version, check out Jen Thum’s “Vegetarian Stuffed Grape Leaves” in JIC I, pp. 48-49.]