



EGGPLANT AND "TZATZIKI"



5–6



Grill rack,
tweezer tongs

SERVES 2

- 3 baby cucumbers
- 1 tsp. salt flakes
- 1 clove elephant garlic
- olive oil
- lemon juice
- ½ cup (100 ml) Greek yogurt
- 3 small eggplants (or 1 large)
- 1 handful mint leaves

As a child of the 1980s, I experienced many unfortunate moussakas and a great many inept versions of Greek salad that colored my view of Greek cuisine. A fair number of vacation packages to the Greek islands didn't help to change my perception, of an unbalanced and indifferent food culture. But when Eva and I visited the country as foodies, a completely different universe was revealed to us, a boundlessly breathtaking, produce-focused cuisine. This dish is a loose interpretation, but it comes with an apology and a declaration of love for Greece.

Light the fire and let it burn to embers, then position the grill rack about 10 inches (25 cm) above them. Grill the cucumbers until they are lightly charred all over. Cut into ½-inch (1-cm)-thick slices and sprinkle with the salt. Let stand for at least 1 hour.

Finely grate the garlic, mix with 1 tbsp. of olive oil, and work into a paste. Flavor the yogurt with this paste and lemon juice—the result should be tangy.

Halve the eggplants lengthwise and grill them, cut side down, until well colored. Turn over and grill for a few minutes on the skin side. The eggplants should not be cooked until soft, so remove them from the fire while they still have some bite. Season the eggplants with salt and drizzle with olive oil and lemon juice.

Spread the yogurt sauce over the bottom of a dish and top with the cucumbers and mint leaves. Arrange the eggplants on one side.