



Holishkes

Holishkes, holoptshes, and geluptzes – Eastern European Jews have many names for stuffed cabbage leaves. In the Ukraine the dish is generally known as prakkes, derived from the Turkish word “yaprak”, or leaf.

These Romanian stuffed cabbage leaves can be eaten year round, though they are particularly popular for Sukkot, also known as the Feast of Booths. Stuffed foods are eaten to emphasize the opulence and festive nature of the holiday. Sukkot is celebrated to commemorate the wanderings of the Israelites through the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land. As a reminder that the Israelites did not have permanent dwellings, pious families today build a hut of plants and branches called a sukkah in their garden or on their balcony. Through the sukkah’s roof you can see the sun and the stars. Jews are commanded by the Torah to live in the hut during Sukkot, but nowadays, particularly in temperate climates, many of the faithful no longer sleep outdoors. Instead, families meet in the sukkah to eat and celebrate during the seven days of Sukkot.

For 8 servings:

1 ½ lbs (750 g) ground beef or lamb
¾ cup (200 g) long-grain rice
2 onions, finely chopped
2 Savoy or green cabbages
2–4 lemons
¾ cup (150 g) brown sugar
stock or water, for cooking
oil, for frying
salt and pepper



Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Mix the meat, rice, half the onion, salt, and pepper and set aside.

To loosen the cabbage leaves, first cut a deep cone into the core at the stem of each cabbage with a sharp knife. Then place the whole cabbages in a large pan of boiling salted water for 2–3 minutes. Peel the leaves from the cabbages and let them drain thoroughly. Cut out the thick rib from the center of each leaf. Should it be difficult to detach the leaves, plunge the head into boiling water again.

Lay the leaves on a board, one at a time. Place a spoonful of the meat mixture in the center and roll up, tucking in both sides like a parcel.

Brown the rest of the onion in a little oil in a fireproof casserole, then add the cabbage holishkes. Cover with any remaining cabbage leaves. Add enough stock or water to cover the cabbage, and season to taste. Cover with a tight-fitting lid and bake for at least 3 hours in the oven.

Now add the juice of 2 lemons and half a cup of brown sugar. Return the casserole to the oven for another hour and then taste to adjust the seasoning, adding more lemon juice and sugar as needed. The longer the holishkes cook, the better they taste.