

## Lesson Plan: Making Koupepia (Cypriot Stuffed Grape Leaves)

**Subject:** Culinary Arts / International Cuisine

**Grade Level:** High School Culinary Students

**Duration:** Approximately 3 hours (can be adjusted based on class schedule)

**YouTube Video Link:** [Watch the Koupepia Recipe Demonstration](#)

### Objectives

- **Knowledge:** Understand the cultural significance of Koupepia in Cypriot cuisine.
- **Skills:** Learn and apply techniques for preparing stuffed grape leaves, including making the filling and rolling the leaves.
- **Attitudes:** Develop an appreciation for traditional cooking methods and international culinary diversity.

### Materials Needed

#### Ingredients

- **For the Filling:**
  - 500g minced lamb or chicken
  - 2 cups uncooked short-grain rice
  - 1 large onion, finely chopped
  - 2-3 ripe tomatoes, grated
  - 1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
  - 1/4 cup fresh mint, chopped
  - 1/4 cup fresh dill, chopped
  - 1 teaspoon ground cumin
  - 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
  - 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
  - Salt and pepper to taste
- **For Assembly and Cooking:**
  - 1 jar (approx. 200g) grape leaves, drained and rinsed
  - 1/4 cup olive oil
  - Juice of 2 lemons
  - Water, as needed

## Equipment

- Large mixing bowl
- Cutting board and knife
- Grater
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Large pot with lid
- Plate (to fit inside the pot)
- Stove or cooking range
- Serving platters
- Sanitized workspace and utensils

## Lesson Outline

### 1. Introduction (15 minutes)

- **Discussion Starter:**
  - Ask students if they have tried stuffed grape leaves before and share experiences.
- **Cultural Context:**
  - Introduce Koupepia as a traditional Cypriot dish.
  - Discuss the role of stuffed dishes in various cultures (e.g., Dolma in Middle Eastern cuisine).
- **Lesson Objectives:**
  - Outline what students will learn and achieve during the lesson.

### 2. Safety and Sanitation Briefing (10 minutes)

- **Key Points:**
  - Emphasize proper handling of raw meat and fresh herbs.
  - Demonstrate correct knife safety techniques.
  - Importance of cleanliness to prevent cross-contamination.

### 3. Ingredients and Flavor Profile (10 minutes)

- **Presentation:**
  - Review each ingredient and its role in the dish.
  - Discuss the flavor contributions of herbs and spices used.

## 4. Cooking Activity

### a. Preparing the Filling (20 minutes)

- **Instructions:**
  - In a large mixing bowl, combine minced meat, uncooked rice, chopped onion, grated tomatoes, parsley, mint, dill, cumin, cinnamon, allspice, salt, and pepper.
  - Mix thoroughly until all ingredients are well incorporated.
- **Discussion:**
  - The importance of evenly mixing ingredients for consistent flavor.
  - The role of spices in Mediterranean cuisine.

#### **b. Preparing the Grape Leaves (10 minutes)**

- **Instructions:**
  - Carefully remove grape leaves from the jar.
  - Rinse them under cold water to remove excess brine.
  - Pat dry with paper towels.
- **Tips:**
  - Handle grape leaves gently to prevent tearing.
  - If leaves are tough, blanch them in hot water for a few seconds.

#### **c. Stuffing and Rolling the Grape Leaves (40 minutes)**

- **Demonstration:**
  - Show how to place the leaf shiny side down.
  - Place a tablespoon of filling near the stem end.
  - Fold sides over the filling and roll tightly into a cigar shape.
- **Student Activity:**
  - Have students practice rolling with guidance.
  - Encourage consistency in size for even cooking.
- **Discussion:**
  - Techniques for efficient rolling.
  - Cultural significance of family gatherings to make Koupepia.

#### **d. Arranging and Cooking (15 minutes)**

- **Instructions:**
  - Line the bottom of the pot with leftover or torn grape leaves to prevent sticking.
  - Arrange stuffed leaves seam side down in the pot, tightly packed in layers.
  - Drizzle olive oil and lemon juice over the top.
  - Add enough water to just cover the Koupepia.

- Place a plate on top to keep them from unraveling.

- **Explanation:**

- The weight of the plate helps maintain the shape during cooking.
- The layering technique ensures even cooking.

**e. Simmering the Koupepia (50 minutes)**

- **Instructions:**

- Cover the pot with a lid.
- Bring to a gentle simmer over low heat.
- Cook for about 40-50 minutes until the rice and meat are cooked, and the leaves are tender.

- **Activity During Simmering:**

- Clean up workstations.
- Prepare garnishes or accompaniments (e.g., lemon wedges).
- Optional: Prepare a simple yogurt sauce.

**f. Serving and Tasting (20 minutes)**

- **Instructions:**

- Carefully remove Koupepia from the pot using tongs or a slotted spoon.
- Let them cool slightly before serving.
- Arrange on serving platters.

- **Tasting:**

- Encourage students to taste their creations.
- Discuss the flavors and textures experienced.

- **Discussion:**

- How the ingredients melded together during cooking.
- Potential variations or accompaniments.

**Assessment**

- **Observation:**

- Monitor student participation and adherence to safety protocols.
- Evaluate techniques in mixing, rolling, and cooking.

- **Questions and Answers:**

- Ask students about the steps and why they are important.

- **Reflection:**
  - Have students write a brief summary of what they learned and any challenges they faced.

### Closure (10 minutes)

- **Recap:**
  - Summarize key takeaways from the lesson.
  - Reiterate the cultural significance of Koupepia.
- **Student Feedback:**
  - Invite students to share their thoughts on the process and outcome.
- **Encouragement:**
  - Suggest trying the recipe at home or exploring other stuffed dishes.

### Extensions

- **Homework Assignment:**
  - Research another traditional Cypriot dish and prepare a short presentation.
- **Culinary Exploration:**
  - Experiment with different fillings or alternative leaves (e.g., cabbage).

### Resources

- **Handouts:**
  - Detailed recipe with step-by-step instructions and pictures.
  - Glossary of terms (e.g., Koupepia, Dolma, brine).
- **Recommended Reading:**
  - Articles on Cypriot cuisine and Mediterranean diets.
  - Videos demonstrating rolling techniques.

### Notes for the Instructor

- **Preparation:**
  - Soak grape leaves if they are too salty.
  - Ensure all ingredients are pre-measured for time efficiency.

- **Safety Considerations:**
  - Be vigilant about raw meat handling.
  - Remind students about the hot surfaces and liquids.
- **Adaptations:**
  - For dietary restrictions, offer vegetarian fillings using mushrooms or legumes.
  - If time is limited, pre-prepare the filling for students to focus on assembly.