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## Ingredients

Serves 6-8

- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) preserved or 100g (3½ oz) fresh vine leaves
- 1–2 tomatoes, sliced

### Stuffing

- 220 g (7 ¾oz/1 cup) medium-grain rice
- 2 tablespoons mint, finely chopped
- ½ bunch handful flat-leaf (Italian) parsley, finely chopped (reserve the stems)
- 1 kg (2lb 4 oz) soft cooking tomatoes, finely diced, reserving any juices
- 4 onions, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon chilli powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon finely ground Lebanese black pepper
- Juice of 2 lemons
- 4 tablespoons olive oil

## Whispers from a Lebanese Kitchen

### *Waraq Inab – Stuffed vine leaves*

In Lebanese culture we celebrate life through food, not just by eating together but by coming together and producing it. Lebanese women will gather together to create this traditional dish and serve it either on its own or as an accompaniment. Sahtayn!

If you are using preserved leaves, wash them. If you are using fresh ones, blanch them in hot water until softened and dark green. Remove from the water and cut off the stems.

For the stuffing, soak the rice in hot water for up to 5 minutes. Strain and wash. Combine all of the ingredients in a strainer over a bowl. The liquid collected in the bowl will be used to cook the vine leaf rolls.

Cover the base of a saucepan with the sliced tomato and then the reserved parsley stems.

Spread out each leaf, smooth-side down. Depending on the size of the leaf, place 2 teaspoons to one tablespoon of the stuffing towards the base of the leaf. Bring the left and right sides of the leaf in first, then roll up tightly to make a finger. Place in the saucepan. Repeat with the remaining leaves and filling. Stack the rolls tightly side by side and build layers of rolls.

Measure the liquid from the stuffing and add enough hot water to make 500ml (17 fl oz/2 cups) of liquid. Add to the pan and season with salt. Lay a plate face down over the layers to keep them in place. Bring to the boil over a high heat. Reduce the heat to low and cover with a lid. Simmer for about 1½ hours.

Serve the vine leaves warm or cold the next day.



### Whispers from a Lebanese Kitchen by Nouha Taouk

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