

Keshi Yena (Aruban Stuffed Cheese Bake) — Weeknight Version

Main dish • Serves 4–6 • ~55–70 minutes • Sweden-friendly adaptation



Photo: courtesy of Lambros

Ingredients

- **Cheese shell (easy version):** 350–450 g sliced Gouda or Edam (mild, good melting cheese)
- **Filling:** 500 g minced chicken/beef/pork (or shredded cooked chicken)
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 2 tomatoes, chopped (or 150 g canned crushed tomatoes)
- 2 tbsp raisins (optional but traditional-ish sweet note)
- 8–10 green olives, chopped (optional)
- 1 tbsp capers (optional)
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- Salt + black pepper
- 2 tbsp oil

- 2 eggs, lightly beaten (to bind; optional but helpful)
- Optional: breadcrumbs (1–2 tbsp) if filling is wet

Steps

- 1 **Heat oven:** 180°C. Line a small loaf tin or oven dish with baking paper.
- 2 **Cook filling:** Sauté onion + pepper in oil 5 min; add garlic 30 sec. Add mince and cook until no longer pink.
- 3 Stir in tomato purée, tomatoes, paprika, cumin, salt and pepper. Simmer 5–8 min until thick (not watery).
- 4 Add raisins/olives/capers if using. Cool slightly, then mix in beaten eggs (and breadcrumbs if needed).
- 5 **Build the 'cheese shell':** Layer cheese slices in the dish so they cover the base and climb up the sides, overlapping well. Leave some for the top.
- 6 **Fill & close:** Add the filling. Fold over the cheese edges and cover with remaining cheese slices.
- 7 **Bake:** 20–30 min until melted and lightly golden. Rest 10 min before slicing.

Serve

- With rice, salad, or fried plantain
- A little hot sauce on the side works beautifully

Notes

Traditional Keshi Yena is often made in a whole cheese shell; this is the practical home version. If you prefer, use leftover roast chicken instead of mince.