LAUREN STEPHENS AND FREDERICK MORA

Avgolemono, two ways (Greece/Australia)

Melbourne is considered to have the largest Greek population of any city outside Athens; by this brilliant virtue, we have found ourselves garrisoned among many Hellenes. One who has my affections is my partner Leon. The other is our dear friend Coco. As a matter of ongoing survival within these relationships, we sought the wisdom of their yiayias. Each matriarch offered a different approach yet the same dish: avgolemono. A tart soupa seasoned with lemon and thickened with eggs. Olimpia’s kotosoupa uses a whole chicken with the meat stripped to serve, whereas Lefkoula’s yuvarlakia uses veal meatballs as the centrepiece. The life lesson? Choose your preferred style then tenderly apply to sickness, heartache, and inclement weather.

INGREDIENTS

For Olimpia’s kotosoupa
1 whole chicken, skinned
1 carrot, skin on
1 stick celery, whole
1 onion, whole
5 peppercorns, whole
10 cups water
To serve: cracked pepper, lemon juice, and shredded chicken

For Lefkoula’s yuvarlakia
5kg veal mince
1/2 cup long-grain rice, rinsed
2 eggs
8 cups water
1 handful mint, ripped
1 glug olive oil
To serve: chilli flakes and a side of rakomelo

For the avgolemono
3 eggs, beaten
1 cup long-grain rice, rinsed
2 lemons, juiced

Serves XX

METHOD
For Olimpia’s kotosoupa, cook chicken in a large pot for 2 hours+ with peppercorns, celery, carrot, and water, skimming intermittently. Discard vegetables, cool chicken, then remove and shred meat. Strain chicken stock, add the 1 cup of rice for the avgolemono, and season. Simmer rice for 15–20 minutes, until cooked. Remove soupa from heat. If you go with Lefkoula’s yuvarlakia instead, combine oil, mince, rice, mint, pepper, salt, and eggs in a bowl, use hands to combine for around 5 minutes, then transfer to the fridge for 30 minutes. Next, apply olive oil to hands to roll 3–4mm meatballs. Heat some oil in a frying pan and seal the meatballs for 2 minutes or less. Prepare a large pot with meatballs and 8 cups water, bring to boil, add the 1 cup of rice for the avgolemono, lower heat, and cook until rice is soft. Remove soupa from heat. To finish off either version, place eggs and lemon into a bowl and whisk until foamy. While whisking, add a few ladles of soupa. Slowly increase the temperature of the egg mixture to meet the soupa. Continue to whisk as you slowly transfer back to the pot. Note: leftovers should be reheated gently so as not to curdle the egg.