

Eggplant Recipe Ideas

Eggplant is a member of the nightshade family, related to the potato and tomato and native to India. It is a good source of dietary fiber, is naturally low in calories, and is free of fat, cholesterol and sodium. Eggplant is both heart healthy and diabetic friendly. There are hundreds of ways to prepare it: stuffed, as a pizza topping, microwaved, in ratatouille (see recipe below), lasagna, Greek moussaka, stir-fried with other veggies, or as a dip like Baba Ganoush. For those unfamiliar with how to prepare eggplant and include it in their meals, here is a primer:

Eggplant Varieties: Eggplants come in a variety of colors, including deep purple, pale violet, violet-white, red, and green. In the U.S. there are two main types of eggplant: oval and elongated (long and thin). The elongated type is usually called the Japanese or oriental eggplant. Peak growing season is between July and October.

Selection and Storage: For the best tasting eggplant, choose one that has a bright green stem, is less than 6 inches in diameter and feels heavy. Avoid eggplants that have bruises, wrinkled skin, uneven color or scars. Smaller eggplants are more tender and mild with fewer seeds. Store eggplant uncut, unwashed in the frig and use within 5-7 days. Once cut, eggplant flesh will begin to darken with exposure to air. A saltwater bath or a brushing of lemon juice will keep the flesh light. When baking a whole eggplant, puncture the skin in several places first.

Preparation tips: Wash just before using, then cut off the cap and stem. Eggplant should not be eaten raw. It may be cooked with or without its skin. (Leaving the skin on increases the amount of fiber). However, large eggplant and most white varieties have thick, tough skin and should be peeled prior to cooking. When baking, to avoid a chewy texture, fully cook eggplant under a hot, dry heat to draw out the moisture. Cubes or slices lose moisture and shrink to half their size when cooked. Eggplant goes well with bold flavors such as garlic, cumin, chili powder, onion, basil, thyme, and oregano. For recipes, see www.foodnetwork.com and www.allrecipes.com.

Salting eggplant: Many recipes call for salting eggplant to draw extra water from it, which also helps remove any bitter flavor, absorb less oil when fried and exude less liquid in the final dish. **Tip:** Slice into 1/4" thick rounds. Sprinkle slices liberally with salt and layer them in a colander. Drain for about 60 minutes with a saucer on top and something heavy to press down on it. Rinse off salt and pat slices dry. See www.homecooking.about.com.

Ratatouille (rat-a-TOO-ee) *A savory stew made with eggplant, zucchini, peppers, onion & tomato sauce*

- 1 onion, peeled and diced
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 medium eggplant, diced (peeling optional)
- 2 zucchini, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, cored and diced
- 2 cups diced tomatoes
- 1/2 tsp dried thyme
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 3/4 tsp salt

Nutrition Facts: Calories 110, Fat 5 gm, Saturated Fat 1 gm, Sodium 310 mg, Carbohydrate 14 gm, Fiber 4 gm, Protein 3 gm

Makes 6 servings

Recipe source: www.chopchopmag.org

Directions: Preheat oven to 450° F. Put the onion, garlic, eggplant, zucchini, bell pepper, and tomatoes in the bowl and mix well. Add the thyme, oil, and salt, and mix again. Tip the mixing bowl onto the baking sheet and let vegetable mixture slide onto the baking sheet. Spread out the vegetables into a single layer. Put the baking sheet in the oven and bake until all the vegetables are softened (especially the eggplant) about 45 minutes. Stir it once after 25 minutes. Recommended toppings: 1 Tbsp grated parmesan cheese and a few fresh basil leaves. Serve hot, or cover and refrigerate up to 4 days. **Serve alone, or use it to top pizza, pasta, rice, burgers, chicken or fish.**

(SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR MORE RECIPES)

Eggplant Parmesan

Adapted from www.eatingwell.com

Serves 6

- 2 eggplants (optional peeled or skin on)
- 3 egg whites
- 3 Tbsp water
- 1 cup fine dry breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup parmesan cheese, divided in half
- 1/2 tsp salt and 1/2 tsp freshly ground pepper

- 1/4 cup basil leaves or 1 Tbsp dried basil
- 2 1/2 cups tomato sauce
- 3/4 cup grated part-skim mozzarella cheese

Nutrition Facts: *Calories 203, Total Fat 6 gm, Sodium 563 mg, Carbs 29 gm, Fiber 8 gm, Protein 12 gm*

Directions: Preheat oven to 400° F. Coat 2 baking sheets with cooking spray. Cut eggplants crosswise into 1/4 inch thick slices. Whisk egg whites and water in a shallow dish until frothy. Combine breadcrumbs, 1/4 cup of the parm cheese, salt and pepper in another shallow dish. Dip the eggplant slices into egg white mixture, then coat with breadcrumb mixture. Arrange the eggplant slices in a single layer on the prepared baking sheets. Bake for 15 minutes, turn the eggplant slices over, and bake until crisp and golden, about 15 minutes longer. Stir basil into tomato sauce. Spread about 1/2 cup of the sauce in the bottom of a 9 X 9 inch baking dish. Arrange half of the eggplant slices over the sauce, overlapping slightly. Spoon 1 cup of remaining sauce over eggplant and sprinkle with 1/2 of the mozzarella cheese. Add a layer of the remaining eggplant slices and top with the remaining sauce, mozzarella and parmesan. Bake, uncovered, until the sauce bubbles and the top is golden, 15 to 20 minutes.

Sicilian Eggplant and Chickpeas

www.NutritionAction.com

Serves 4

- 2 eggplants (about 3/4 pound)
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 3 Tbsp tomato paste
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup water

- 2-15oz cans no-salt-added chickpeas
- 1/2 tsp salt (kosher if available)
- 3 Tbsp fresh mint, chopped (optional)

Nutrition Facts: *Calories 340, Total Fat 12 gm, Saturated Fat 1.5 gm, Sodium 300 mg, Carbs 46 gm, Fiber 12 gm, Protein 13 gm*

Directions: Dice eggplants into 1/2 - inch pieces. Sauté in a large non-stick skillet in the oil until golden brown, 5-7 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste, garlic, and red pepper flakes and cook, stirring often, for 2 minutes. Stir in the water and chickpeas and heat through. Season with up to 1/2 tsp salt. Remove from heat and stir in the mint.

Grilled Eggplant with Tomatoes and Melted Cheddar

www.cabotcheese.coop

Serves 6

- 2 garlic cloves
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 Tbsp minced fresh oregano (or thyme)
- 1/4 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 large eggplant

- 4 oz sharp cheddar cheese, grated (about 1 cup)
- 1 cup tomatoes, diced

Nutrition Facts: *Calories 189, Total Fat 15 gm, Sat Fat 4 gm, Sodium 321 mg, Carbs 8 gm, Fiber 3 gm, Protein 6 gm (use light cheese to reduce fat and calories)*

Directions: Chop garlic; sprinkle with salt and mash into puree with blade of knife held sideways. Scrape garlic-salt mixture into small bowl. Add oil, oregano and pepper and stir until garlic-salt mixture is well blended. Preheat grill to medium. Cut off and discard thin lengthwise slice from each side of eggplant; cut remaining eggplant lengthwise into about six slices, each about 1/2 inch thick. Brush both sides of slices with some of the oil mixture, scooping up solids and using it all. Grill until browned on both sides and very tender all the way to center, 5 to 8 minutes per side. Sprinkle half of eggplant slices with some cheese, then tomato; top each with another eggplant slice, pressing into place. Transfer to serving dish with metal spatula; cut each slice in half crosswise. Serve warm.