
Eggplant 101

Discover the possibilities.



FOUR TYPES OF EGGPLANT



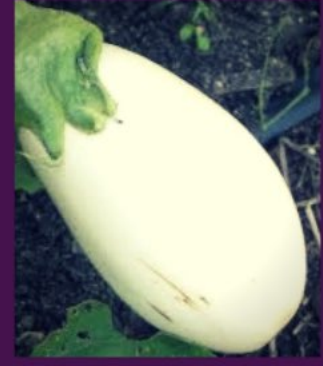
Rosa Bianca
Heirloom



Oriental
Asian cooking



Standard Globe



Ghost White

Eggplant is a close relative of tomatoes, peppers and potatoes. There are so many different varieties. The most common is the large, dark purple variety, which is good for when you want large chunks or slices for grilling. The skinny lavender Asian eggplant works well for stir fries.

How to store:

Store unrefrigerated at a cool room temperature. Use within a week and it should still be fresh and mild. Eggplant is highly sensitive to ethylene, a natural gas that causes certain foods to ripen (and eventually spoil) very quickly. So it's best to keep eggplant stored separately from bananas, tomatoes, and melons, which are all high ethylene producers.

Best Uses:

Roasted

Grilled

Stir-fry

Sauteed with Miso

Dip

Breaded/Fried/Fritters

Eggplant Parmesan

Eggplant Fries

Soup (Pureed)

Pizza Bites

Moussaka (Eggplant Beef Bake)

Ratatouille

Lasagna/Pasta

Stuffed

Eggplant Burger

Salads

Substitutes:

Mushrooms

Pairs well with:

Basil, tomatoes, onions, curry, garlic, tahini, lemon juice, cheese, yogurt, soy sauce, miso

Choosing your Eggplant:

Smaller eggplant contain fewer seeds and will be less bitter. Look for firm flesh with no brown spots. The color of the stem will hint at its freshness. The greener the stem, the fresher they are.

Preparing your Eggplant:

Rinse eggplant in cool water and cut off the stem. Eggplant is usually peeled, but it doesn't need to be. The flesh will brown when exposed to air. To prevent browning, coat in lemon juice or keep submerged in water.

The shape of the eggplant determines how to prepare it: cut straight narrow eggplant into strips for grilling or broiling, and cut a bulbous eggplant into cubes for stews and stir-fries or thick steaks for roasting.

How to Freeze:

Begin the process with washing and peeling the eggplant. Slice peeled eggplants into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Peel and slice enough eggplants for one blanching batch at a time. Work quickly! Eggplant starts to turn brown if the slices are exposed to air for more than 20 minutes.

For blanching, add one-half cup of lemon juice to one gallon of water, and bring it to a boil. Blanch the eggplant slices for 4 minutes, cool, and package in freezer bags. Remove as much air as possible before sealing bags.

To Salt or Not to Salt?

You may have heard the myth that eggplant must be salted before cooking to remove bitterness. Modern eggplant has been bred to have less bitterness, and so salting is *not required*. Still, some swear that an eggplant must be salted before frying, while others suggest that salting improves texture. *One benefit of salting is that it helps prevent eggplant from absorbing too much oil.*



How to Roast Eggplant:

Step 1: Cube the eggplant. Slice the stem end off of the eggplant; peel. Cut into 1-inch cubes. Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and heat oven to 400 F.

Step 2: Salt the eggplant: Place eggplant cubes in a colander or salad spinner and sprinkle with salt. Toss to combine, then let the eggplant sit for 30 minutes. If you're using a colander, place it in a sink as it will release a lot of water.

Step 3: Rinse and dry. Rinse the eggplant under cool water and dry thoroughly. Lay the rinsed eggplant cubes out on a few layers of paper towels and pat dry.

Step 4: Toss with olive oil. Transfer eggplant to baking sheet and spread out into a single layer. Drizzle with oil and toss to coat.

Step 5: Roast eggplant for 20 minutes. Flip and roast until golden brown and tender 10-20 minutes more.

Suggested Recipes

Grilled or Broiled Eggplant

By Mark Bittman

Ingredients:

2 medium or 1 large eggplant (1.5 pounds)

1 t. minced garlic (optional)

4-6 T. extra virgin olive oil

salt and pepper

Directions:

Peel the eggplant if the skin is thick or the eggplant is less than perfectly firm; cut it into 1/2 inch thick slices; if time allows, salt it for 30 minutes and then rinse and pat dry to remove moisture. Heat a charcoal or gas grill to medium-high heat and put the rack about 4 inches from the heat source. Or heat the broiler and put the rack 4 to 6 inches from the heat source.

If you like stir the garlic into the olive oil, then brush one side of the eggplant slices with the oil. Put oiled side down, on a baking sheet or directly on the grill. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Then brush with more oil.

Grill or broil until browned on both sides, about 10 minutes total, turning once or twice, brushing with more oil if the eggplant looks dry. Adjust the pan as necessary to keep it from burning.

Variation: Grilled or broiled Eggplant with Soy or Sesame Glaze. In the last few minutes of cooking brush the slices with the following sauce.

Put 2 T. sesame oil and 2 T. peanut oil in small saucepan over medium heat. When the oil is warm add 1 T. minced onion, garlic, or ginger along with 1 T. sesame seeds, and cook, stirring occasionally, until it softens a minute or two. Stir in 2 T. of water and 2 T. of soy sauce. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and maintain the heat so it bubbles gently for a minute or two.

Grilled or Roasted Baba Ghanoush (Eggplant Dip)

Adapted from Mark Bittman

Ingredients:

1 pound eggplant

1/2 cup pine nuts, toasted

1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

1 t. minced garlic

1/3 c. tahini

salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

Heat a charcoal or gas grill to medium high heat, or heat the oven to 500 F. Pierce the eggplant in several places with a thick knife. Grill or roast it, turning occasionally, until the eggplant collapse and their skins blacken, 15-30 minutes. Remove and cool.

When cool enough to handle, part the skin, scoop out the flesh, and process it in a food processor with the pine nuts, lemon juice, garlic, pepper and tahini. Process until very smooth, adding a few teaspoons of water or live oil if necessary. Taste and add more salt or lemon juice or garlic to taste. Garnish with parsley. Serve with bread or crackers.

Corinna's Eggplant Bake

This is the dish that made me love eggplant.

Ingredients:

2 eggplants, sliced thinly and chopped into 1-inch pieces

1 onion, chopped

1 pint of cherry tomatoes, halved (or use other tomatoes that you chop)

Mozzarella cheese — maybe 1 1/2 cups

3 T. fresh basil, minced

extra virgin olive oil

Salt and Pepper

Directions:

Spray a 13" x 9" pan with cooking spray. Then layer eggplant, followed by onions, followed by tomatoes in the casserole dish.

Sprinkle mozzarella cheese over the top, and add a bit of salt and pepper. Drizzle a bit more olive oil over the top.

Bake in a 400 degree oven for about 30 minutes. (When the cheese looks like it's starting to brown a bit). Sprinkle the basil in the last 5 minutes.

Skinny Eggplant Rollatini

Adapted from NotEnoughCinnamon.com

Ingredients:

2 large eggplants

1 cup (9 oz jar) reduced fat ricotta

1 1/2 cups shredded light mozzarella, divided in 1/2 cup and 1 cup

1/2 cup shredded parmesan

9 oz frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed to remove as much liquid as possible

1 egg

1 garlic clove, germ removed, minced

salt and pepper to taste

1 cup tomato marinara

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400F.

Remove eggplants' ends and slice them thinly lengthwise. Spray a baking sheet with olive oil and place 12 eggplant slices on it. (You may need to use two baking sheet or bake eggplant in two batches depending on the size of your oven). Bake for 10 minutes, remove from the oven and let cool.

While eggplants are cooking, prepare ricotta/spinach mixture. In a bowl, combine ricotta, mozzarella (1/2 cup), parmesan, spinach, egg and garlic. Mix well and season to taste.

Spread 1/2 cup tomato sauce on the bottom of a large baking dish.

Generously spread ricotta/spinach mixture on an eggplant slice (about two heaped tablespoons), roll it and arrange in prepared dish, seam side down. Continue with remaining eggplant.

Top with remaining tomato sauce (1/2 cup) and sprinkle with remaining mozzarella (1 cup). Cover with foil, reduce oven to 350F and bake for 45 minutes. Remove foil and bake another 15 minutes or until cheese is golden brown. Remove from the oven and serve.

Breaded Fried Eggplant

Ingredients:

2 pounds of eggplant, trimmed

salt

1 cup all-purpose flour for dredging

3 cups bread crumbs (or panko), for dredging

3 eggs, beaten

freshly ground black pepper

extra virgin olive oil, grapeseed or corn oil, as needed

lemon wedges for serving

Directions:

Cut the eggplant into 1/2 inch slices; salt the slices if you're using large eggplant and let sit for 30 minutes, drain and pat dry. Set out the flour, bread crumbs, and beaten eggs on plates or shallow bowls next to each other on your counter and have a baking sheet and stack of wax paper ready; add salt and pepper to the eggs.

Rinse and dry the eggplant. Dredge the slices, one at a time, in the flour, then dip in the egg, then dredge in the bread crumbs. Stack the eggplant on the baking sheet between layers of wax paper and, when it's all breaded, transfer the stack to chill in the fridge for at least 10 minutes and up to 3 hours.

Put about 1/2 inch oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, put in a few of the eggplant slices; cook in batches as necessary, making sure not to crowd the pan and adding additional oil as needed. Use a spatula, tongs, or slotted spoon to turn the eggplant slices as soon as they're browned, then cook the other side; total cooking time will be 5 minutes or so. As each piece is done, remove and drain on paper towel.

Julia Child's Eggplant Pizzas

Adapted from KalynsKitchen.com

Ingredients:

1 globe eggplant, about 8 ounces and 9-10 inches long
about 1 T salt, for drawing water out of eggplant
about 2 T olive oil, for brushing eggplant before roasting
about 2 tsp. dried Italian seasoning, for sprinkling on eggplant before roasting
10 large basil leaves, cut in chiffonade strips (optional)
1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan
1/3 cup finely grated low-fat mozzarella blend
hot red pepper flakes for sprinkling finished pizza (optional)

Sauce Ingredients:

2-3 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
3 large garlic cloves, very finely chopped
1 can (14.5 oz.) good quality petite diced tomatoes with liquid (or use 2 cups peeled and diced fresh tomatoes)
1/2 tsp. dried Italian seasoning blend
1/4 tsp. dried oregano

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 F. Cut off both ends of the eggplant; then cut it into 3/4 inch thick slices. Put the eggplant pieces on a double layer of paper towels and sprinkle both sides generously with salt. Let the eggplant sit with the salt on it for about 30 minutes to draw out the liquid.

Make the sauce. Heat 2-3 tsp. olive oil and saute the finely chopped garlic just until it becomes fragrant. Add the petite diced tomatoes, dried Italian seasoning, and dried oregano and let the sauce cook at a low simmer until it's thickened, breaking up the tomatoes with a fork as it cooks.

After 30 minutes, wipe the eggplant dry with paper towels. Spray a roasting sheet with olive oil or non-stick spray, lay eggplant slices on, brush the tops of the eggplant with olive oil, and sprinkle with dried Italian seasoning. Roast the eggplant about 25 minutes.

While the eggplant roasts, thinly slice the fresh basil leaves. Combine freshly grated Parmesan and low-fat mozzarella cheese together in bowl. After 25 minutes or when eggplant pieces are done, remove eggplant from the oven and turn oven setting to broil. Spread a few tablespoons of sauce on the top of each eggplant slice, sprinkle with thin basil slices (if using) and top with a generous amount of cheese. Put pizzas under the broiler until the cheese is melted and slightly browned. Serve hot, with red pepper flakes to sprinkle on pizza if desired.