



Italian Baked Eggplant

Makes 4 servings ~ \$19.66 (\$4.92 per serving)

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons olive oil, plus ¼ cup for eggplant
- 2 pounds plum tomatoes (or a 28 ounce can plum tomatoes, puree)
- 2 cloves garlic
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 pounds medium eggplants (about 2), with skin, cut into ½-inch slices
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 10 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, drained and sliced
- ½ cup fresh basil leaves (about 20)
- ½ cup grated Parmesan-Reggiano cheese

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Grease an 8 x 8 inch baking dish generously with olive oil.
2. To blanch tomatoes: Bring water to a boil in a large pot of water. Put tomatoes in boiling water and blanch for one minute until skin begins to pull away. Drain tomatoes in a colander. Let cool before handling. (Rinsing under cold water quickens cooling).
3. Peel tomatoes when cool enough to handle. Blend in a blender with garlic cloves, salt and red pepper flakes until smooth.
4. Heat olive oil in a medium saucepan over medium high heat. Add tomato sauce to saucepan and cook for 15 minutes until reduced a little and it becomes a slightly darker color. Taste for salt and pepper.
5. Grill eggplant while tomato sauce is cooking. Brush each eggplant slice with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill eggplant on an oiled grill until lightly browned on each side. Transfer to a plate while finishing all of the slices. To cook under a broiler, grease a baking sheet with olive oil. Place eggplants in a single layer on baking sheet and broil until lightly browned on each side about 10 minutes.
6. Assemble eggplant dish. Put one-half of eggplant slices in the prepared dish. Cover with one-half tomato sauce, one-half mozzarella cheese and one half of whole basil leaves. Repeat process. Finish with sprinkling the top with Parmesan cheese.
7. Bake uncovered for 30 minutes or until cheese is melted and sauce is bubbling.
8. Let it stand 10 minutes before serving.

Variation:

Use zucchini, sliced diagonally (about 8) or use fried eggplant slices

Recipe courtesy of Sharon Crayton

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