

EGGPLANT



Eggplant is in season from August through September.

Tips for selecting eggplant

The most common variety, American, is dark purple and football-shaped. Asian eggplant varieties are slender and elongated with thinner skin and fewer seeds. Look for a firm, smooth-skinned eggplant that feels heavy for its size that has glossy skin and flesh that bounces back when lightly pressed. Avoid eggplants with soft or brown spots.

Storage

Eggplant can become bitter with age and is very perishable. Store in a paper bag away from other fruits and vegetables in a cool place (50 to 54°F) for up to three days. Refrigeration is not ideal, but may be effective for a few days when placed in an unsealed, plastic bag in the crisper.

Preparation

- Cut surfaces will brown quickly when exposed to air, but will not affect flavor when cooked.
- To peel or not to peel—the choice is up to you. If the eggplant is very fresh, it will not need to be peeled, but as an eggplant ages, the skin tends to get tougher.

- Use in stews and stir-fries. Do not be tricked into using too much oil—eggplant is very porous and soaks up oil like a sponge, so beware when sautéing or stir-frying.

Key nutrient

- Fiber to prevent constipation (more fiber when peel is eaten)

Recipes

Stuffed eggplant

2 cups cooked rice
1 medium eggplant
2 tablespoons oil
1 small tomato, diced
1 medium green pepper, diced
1 small onion, minced
¼ teaspoon dried basil
Cut eggplant in half lengthwise, and scoop out the center from each half, leaving a ½ inch shell. Dice the eggplant meat. Place eggplant shells cut side down in a large skillet with about ½ inch boiling water. Cover and steam 3 minutes. Cook diced eggplant, tomatoes, green pepper and onion in oil until tender. Add rice and basil and stuff into the eggplant

shells. Bake at 350° f for 35 minutes or until eggplant shells are tender. Serves 2; 430 Cal; 15 g fat.

Peperonata (eggplant with fresh thyme)

1 cup eggplant, diced
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup each diced onion and red bell pepper
2 cups tomatoes, diced
1 tablespoon fresh garlic, chopped
2 cups cooked spaghetti or other pasta
2 tablespoons fresh thyme or 1 teaspoon dry
Lightly salt eggplant and place on a paper towel to drain. In a thick-bottomed saucepan, cook the onions in the olive oil until lightly browned. Add garlic and eggplant and cook for 5 minutes. Add peppers, tomatoes and thyme, and cook for 10 minutes more. Serve eggplant mixture over warm pasta. Serves 4; 180 Cal; 7.5 g fat.

