

Eggplant

Eggplant is the fruit of a flowering plant in the nightshade family (Solanaceae). It's believed to have originated in India, where a wild variety still grows today. These beautiful veggies are consumed world wide, and are particularly common in Mediterranean, Asian, Middle Eastern, and African cuisines. Eggplant is so named because in its earlier forms, the fruit was white or yellowish, and was the size of an egg!

CULINARY TIPS

Although there is a lot of debate around this, fresh eggplant does not need to be salted before cooking. When shopping for eggplant choose the ones that are firm, shiny, and unblemished. You can eat the whole eggplant, but the skin should be removed if you plan to puree it.

Roast or grill whole eggplant, then scoop out the insides to make delicious spreads like Baba Ganoush. You can also use it as an addition to hummus.

HOW TO STORE EGGPLANT

Eggplant does not store very well so try to consume them quickly. They can be kept at cool room temperature for a night, otherwise store in the warmest part of the refrigerator (top shelf) for 2-3 days.

3 WAYS TO PREPARE EGGPLANT

- Grill it! Slice eggplant in circles or lengthwise—brush with olive oil, season with salt and pepper, grill on med-high heat until browned and tender. Serve on it's own, add it to pasta, top your pizza with it, or stuff it with seasoned ricotta cheese and fresh herbs.
- Roast it! Roast whole eggplant at 350° until exterior is wrinkled and eggplant is very soft (do not pierce it to test) this will take about 40-45 min. Remove from the oven, let cool, then slice open and scoop out inside. Use the cooked eggplant for spreads, as a side dish-drizzle with olive oil, lemon, and spice or herb of your choice, or freeze for later use.
- Sauté it! Cube eggplant and sauté with your favorite seasonings: garlic, hot pepper flakes, ginger, scallions, soy, sesame...

BABA GANOUSH

Ingredients:

2 pounds Italian eggplants (about 2 small-to-medium eggplants)
2 medium cloves of garlic, pressed or minced
2 tablespoons lemon juice, more if necessary
¼ cup tahini
⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for brushing the eggplant and for garnish
2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, plus extra for garnish
¾ teaspoon salt, to taste

Instructions:

Roast whole eggplant at 350° until completely soft.
When eggplant is cool enough to handle, cut in half and scoop out flesh.
Mix or blend all ingredients together until well blended.
Season to taste with additional salt.
Optional seasoning: smoked paprika, cumin, sumac, za'atar