Cooking with Eggplant



Eggplant, a nightshade that is closely related to the tomato and potato, is native to India, and is actually a fruit, not a vegetable. Although eggplant has been shown in some studies, to be a promising antidote in the treatment of high blood cholesterol, research, is still ongoing in this area. It is known, however, that eggplant helps to block the formation of free radicals that are know to cause damage at the cellular level. In addition, eggplant is also a source of two crucial nutrients, folic acid and potassium. Eggplant can be challenging to prepare, but starting out by marinating it can be an easy way to get familiar with this unique-tasting, and versatile, fruit.

# Marinated Eggplant

[Adapted from a recipe by Gina Marie Miraglia Eriquez , that appeared in Gourmet, January 2009 issue]

2 pound eggplant, peeled and cut into 3- by 1/4-inch sticks

3 cups water

1 1/2 cups white-wine vinegar

4 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped

1 tablespoon finely chopped oregano

1 1/2 cups olive oil, divided

1. Toss eggplant with 1/4 cup salt and drain in a covered colander placed in the sink, at room temperature, for about 4 hours. (Eggplant will turn brown.)

2. Discard liquid that drains into bowl.Gently squeeze handfuls of eggplant and allow any additional liquid to drain into the colander.

3. Bring water and vinegar to a gentle boil in a medium pot. Add eggplant and boil, stirring occasionally, until tender - about 2 to 3 minutes.

4. Drain in colander, then set colander over a bowl and cover eggplant with a plate and a weight (such as a large heavy can).

5. Continue to drain, covered and chilled, 8 to 12 hours.

6. Discard liquid in bowl. Gently squeeze handfuls of eggplant to remove excess liquid, then pat dry.

7. Stir together eggplant, garlic, oregano, 1/2 teaspoon pepper, and 1 cup oil in a bowl.

8. Transfer to a 1-quart jar or other container with a tight-fitting lid and add just enough olive oil to cover eggplant.

9. Marinate eggplant, covered and chilled, at least 4 hours, the serve with crusty Italian bread, at room temperature.

**Yields 12 servings.**