

Eggplant (many shapes and sizes)

HOW TO CHOOSE AND STORE

Look for firm, shiny, bright colored fruit. Store in a dry, cool, dark area, not the fridge (this may affect color and flavor). To slow spoilage, store away from ethylene-producing food like apples, avocados or tomatoes as they will increase the speed of spoilage for the eggplant. Grill or cook before freezing.



HOW TO USE AND EAT

Eggplant can be used in many ways (baked, roasted, grilled, sautéed) It is rich and can substitute for meat. If roasting a whole eggplant prick its skin beforehand otherwise it may explode in the oven. Eggplant contains a lot of water. Sprinkle slices with salt and let them sit for 20 minutes to release the water. Blot the slices dry before dipping them in flour or batter and then roasting or frying them.

EGGPLANT DIP (Salata de vinete)

- 4 large eggplants
 - ¼ cup sunflower oil or any mildly flavored vegetable oil, not olive oil
 - ½ small onion roughly chopped (garlic also optional)
 - ½ teaspoon salt or to taste
 - Optional: add mayonnaise for creamier dip.
 - Roast eggplant at 375 F on a baking sheet. IMPORTANT: poke hole in the eggplant to prevent them exploding in the oven. Cook until very soft (up to 45 minutes, depends on the size of the eggplant). Turn every 10-15 minutes, cool.
 - Once cool, peel them removing all peel, then transfer to a colander and allow to drain around 20 minutes.
 - Blend remaining ingredients with the eggplant in a food processor. Chill 30 minutes before serving.
- <https://www.jocooks.com/recipes/eggplant-salad-salata-de-vinete/>

BAKED EGGPLANT

- 1 eggplant
 - 1 TBSP salt
 - 2 tablespoons cooking oil of choice or spray
 - Optional toppings: chopped tomatoes/ onions/ basil/ etc
- Preheat oven to 375 F. Cut eggplant into slices or preferred shape discarding the stem and end. Dissolve salt in about 1/2 cup warm water. Once dissolved, add 4 to 6 cups of cool water, mixing well. Soak the eggplant in the salt water. Keep the pieces under water with a small plate, etc. After 30 minutes, drain and pat the pieces dry. Lay the eggplant on baking sheets, evenly spaced, do not overlap. Lightly brush or spray with preferred oil. Turn all the pieces over and repeat on the other side. Bake until the bottom of the slices is browned (10 to 15 min), turn over and repeat until the other side is browned (10 min). Serve as is, sprinkle with salt or top with desired toppings, drizzle with dressing or balsamic vinegar. Try using garlic infused oil to brush the eggplant before baking.

WHY PRESOAK EGGPLANT IN SALT WATER?

Brining Eggplant: using salt water to soak your eggplant uses helps prepare the eggplant for cooking and seasons the vegetable at the same time. Brined eggplant will keep its shape and texture better than unsalted where it becomes mushy.