

Eggplant Bolognese

By Kay Chun

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Bryan Gardner for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Greg Lofts.

Total Time 1¼ hours
Prep Time 20 minutes
Cook Time 55 minutes
Rating ★★★★★ (1,534)

Eggplant and mushrooms come together in place of ground beef in this hearty vegetarian pasta that delivers the depth of a more traditional Bolognese sauce. Use Italian eggplant, which is widely available and has silky, sweet flesh. Peeling the eggplant helps it brown and cook more quickly, and encourages it to partially melt into the sauce as it simmers. Earthy mushroom broth fortifies the vegetable-rich sauce with deeper savory flavor. Serve the pasta with a simple green salad and crusty bread.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 servings

Salt and pepper

6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 pound Italian eggplant, peeled and chopped into ¼-inch pieces (4 packed cups)

6 ounces cremini (or white button) mushrooms, finely chopped (2 cups)

½ cup finely chopped white onion

½ cup finely chopped carrot

3 garlic cloves, minced

2 tablespoons tomato paste



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PREPARATION

Step 1

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high.

Step 2

In a large Dutch oven or other heavy lidded pot, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium-high. Add half of the eggplant,

3 cups mushroom broth (or vegetable stock)
1 cup canned whole tomatoes, crushed with your hands
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 basil sprig, plus chopped basil for garnishing
1 pound rigatoni, fusilli or other short pasta
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
Freshly grated Parmesan, for serving

season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and lightly golden, 5 minutes. Transfer eggplant to a plate. Adjust heat to medium and repeat with 2 tablespoons of the oil and the remaining eggplant, transferring the eggplant to the plate.

Step 3

Add the remaining 2 tablespoons oil and the mushrooms to the pot. Season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally to scrape up any browned bits, until golden, 5 minutes. Add onion and carrot, season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is softened, 3 minutes. Adjust heat to low, add garlic and tomato paste and stir until caramelized, about 2 minutes.

Step 4

Stir in broth, tomatoes, oregano, basil sprig and the browned eggplant, then bring to a boil over medium-high. Cover, adjust heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until eggplant is very tender, 15 minutes. Uncover and cook, stirring and mashing half of the eggplant, until sauce is thickened, 2 minutes.

Step 5

While the sauce comes to a boil, drop pasta in the boiling water and cook according to package directions until al dente. Reserve 1 cup of the pasta water before draining.

Step 6

Add pasta, butter and ½ cup of the pasta water to the eggplant mixture and cook, stirring vigorously, until pasta is nicely coated and mixture is saucy, 2 to 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Step 7

Divide pasta among bowls. Top with chopped basil and cheese; serve warm.