

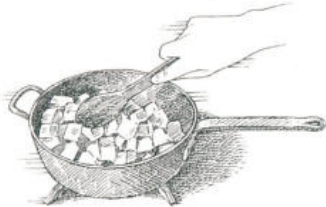
Purple Eggplant

IN SEASON

Although it's virtually fat-free and low in calories, when cooked in oil, eggplant absorbs fat like a sumo wrestler at an all-you-can-eat buffet. Which might explain why we find it so delicious. Its season is late summer through early fall, so you'll still find an abundance of smooth-skinned specimens at your neighborhood Greenmarket, from the slim, pale-purple Chinese eggplant to the short, squat heirloom Italian variety called Rosa Bianco. Tanoreen chef-owner Rawia Bishara (who is to fried eggplant what Joël Robuchon is to mashed potatoes) recommends the standard purple American variety known as Globe for her vegetarian musaka'a (not to be confused with the meat-and-béchamel-larded Greek moussaka). R.R. & R.P.



1.



2.



3.

RAWIA BISHARA'S EGGPLANT MUSAKA'A

- 4 large eggplants
- 1¼ cup olive oil
- 2 large Spanish onions, peeled and chopped
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled and diced
- 12 large plum tomatoes, cut into small cubes
- 1 cup canned chickpeas, drained
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- Salt as needed
- 1 teaspoon pepper

Peel and (1) cut the eggplant into two-inch cubes. Sprinkle them with salt to draw out moisture and let stand in colander for 30 minutes. Rinse eggplant to remove salt and then pat dry with paper towel. (2) In a large pan, fry eggplant in 1 cup of the olive oil over high heat for approximately 2–3 minutes on each side or until golden brown. The eggplant will absorb most of the oil. Remove from pan with a slotted spoon, set aside on paper towels to absorb excess oil, and discard any leftover oil. (As an alternative to frying, brush the eggplant with oil and bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes.) Add the remaining ¼ cup olive oil to the pan and add the onions. Sauté onions until caramelized, then stir in the jalapeño and garlic. Sauté for three minutes, then add cumin, coriander, ½ teaspoon salt, and pepper. Once you have smelled the aroma of the garlic and spices, add the tomatoes, chickpeas, lemon juice, and half a cup of water. Bring liquid to a boil and then simmer for three minutes. (3) Add eggplant and fold once into sauce. Bring mixture to boil and then simmer for 10 minutes at lowest temperature. Serve hot, at room temperature, or cold. Serves 8.

