

Cooking with the Club

by our own
Robert Larios

Photos by Ana Larios



Send Us Your Recipes!

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Magic Combo of Eggplant and Parmesan

DIRECTIONS:



Dice the carrots, celery, onion and jalapeño. Slice the eggplant in thin slices – there's no requirement to cut them in long or short pieces as long as you can use them to make layers much like you would with lasagna.



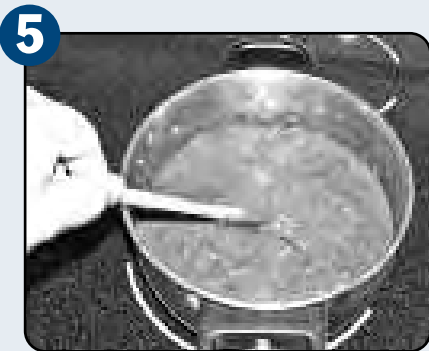
Important Note: I recommend that you sprinkle salt on the eggplant slices and then wash in water with a strainer about 15 minutes later. This will aid in reducing any residual bitterness of the eggplant that might be present.



Place your diced vegetables and garlic in a pot on medium high heat with extra virgin olive oil. This is a good time to add a pinch of salt and pepper. Stir for about three minutes.



Add one can of tomato paste. Stir into the paste so that it covers all the vegetables.



Add the three cans of spaghetti sauce and let simmer for one hour. Stir occasionally.



Grate the Parmesan cheese on a plate. Do the same for the mozzarella.



Use a pan that you would use for lasagna or meatloaf and generously spoon the spaghetti sauce that's been simmering for an hour so that it covers the bottom. This will help to keep the ingredients from sticking to the pan after it has been cooked. A large aluminum lasagna-baking container is best.



Have your egg whites in one plate and the breadcrumbs in another to begin the breading process.



Add the eggplant slices so that they are placed to appear as a layer. Add the mozzarella cheese, the grated Parmesan cheese, some basil and parsley. Then generously add another few spoonfuls of the spaghetti sauce. Repeat this layering process until near the top. Once at the top add any remainder mozzarella and Parmesan cheese and lightly drizzle olive oil over the entire surface.



Cover in aluminum foil and bake in the oven for one hour at 350 degree F. Let cool and serve. You may add some parsley as a garnish as I did. This stuff is good.



Serve and enjoy!

Years ago, when I was conducting my culinary research on the eggplant Parmesan recipes, I was amazed at the variety of recipes that existed. The most traditional recipes call for the very basic of ingredients including eggplant, eggs, tomato sauce, basil, olive oil and Parmesan. Others call for the addition of mozzarella cheese as well as the breading and frying of eggplant slices with breadcrumbs, flour and eggs.

My eggplant Parmesan has a lower fat and cholesterol content since I use low-fat mozzarella cheese and use only egg whites. Also, I've left out the pan-frying of the eggplant, which traditionally has been used to cling the breading to the eggplant. However, I found that the texture and flavor is still preserved even without the frying – so I've left it out.

I also like to intensify the existing flavor of the spaghetti sauce with carrot, celery and onion. This centuries-old combination is called *maripoix* in French cuisine. Yes, this is an Italian recipe, but the combinations of these three root vegetables have elevated the flavors of countless recipes worldwide and it's no different here. Tomato paste is another ingredient that I like to use to heighten the spaghetti sauce flavors and does a great job of thickening the sauce.

If you have the time to grow the ingredients used in the recipe, please go right ahead. But, my intention with all Cooking with the Club recipes is to make meals that are quick and easy. Making my Eggplant Parmesan di Larios will win you friends for a lifetime – or at least until you make it again!



The main ingredients in eggplant Parmesan are of course eggplant and Parmesan.

Eggplant Parmesan di Larios

6 to 10 servings

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 to 2 eggplants
- 16 ounces mozzarella cheese
- 2 carrots
- 2 celery sticks
- 1 small onion or shallot
- 1 jalapeño
(Chef Larios loves jalapeños!)
- 1 bag breadcrumbs
- 2 cloves of garlic
- Parmesan cheese
(to your preference)
- Sea salt and pepper
(to your preference)
- 1 small can of tomato paste
(ideally with Italian seasoning)
- 3 cans of tomato sauce
(spaghetti sauce preferably)
- 6 egg whites
- 1/2 cup of parsley
- 1/2 cup basil

