

Vegetable of the Month

Eggplant



Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (84g)
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving

Calories 20 **Calories from Fat 0**
% Daily Value*

Total Fat 0g **0%**

Saturated Fat 0g **0%**

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 0mg **0%**

Total Carbohydrate 5g **2%**

Dietary Fiber 2g **8%**

Sugars 3g

Protein 1g

Vitamin A 2% • Vitamin C 2%

Calcium 0% • Iron 2%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

		Calories: 2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Eggplant is a member of the nightshade family and is native to India. The early varieties were bitter, but cultivation and crossbreeding have greatly improved the flavor. Eggplant is related to potatoes, tomatoes, and peppers.

Eggplant isn't a particularly popular vegetable in the United States, but it's a favorite in many areas of the South. Thomas Jefferson, who experimented with many varieties of plants in his Virginia garden, is credited with introducing eggplant to North America.

In various parts of Europe, people suspected that eating eggplant caused madness, not to mention leprosy, cancer, and bad breath, which is why eggplant was used mostly for decoration in England and the United States nearly up to the 20th century.

Florida produces the bulk of the domestic harvest, and New Jersey is a major supplier during the summer months.

The dark purple eggplants are the most common type sold commercially in the United States. They weigh about 1 to 5 pounds each and come in two shapes: oval and elongated. The elongated variety is often referred to as the Japanese or oriental eggplant.

Specialty varieties include miniature eggplants that come in a variety of colors and shapes.

- Deep purple, round or oval eggplants are often nicknamed Italian or baby eggplants.
- Pale violet eggplant, usually slim and light, is nicknamed Chinese eggplant.
- Violet-white are Italian rosa biancos
- Japanese eggplants are younger versions of the large commercial purple type.

Availability

Eggplants are available all year. Their peak growing season in the United States is from July to October.

Selection

Look for a symmetrical eggplant with smooth, uniformly colored skin. Tan patches, scars, or bruises indicate decay. Also avoid eggplants with wrinkled or flabby-looking skin. Oversized purple eggplants, usually over 6 inches in diameter, may be tough and bitter.

When you press gently on an eggplant, the finger mark will disappear quickly if the eggplant is fresh. Eggplant should feel heavy; one that feels light for its size may not have a good flavor. The stem and cap should be bright green.

Storage

Both cold and warm temperatures can damage eggplant. It is best to store eggplant uncut and unwashed in a plastic bag in the cooler section of the refrigerator. Do not force the eggplant into the crisper if it is too big, as this will bruise the vegetable. Eggplant may be blanched or steamed then frozen for up to 6 months.

Preparation

Wash the eggplant just before using it, and cut off the cap and stem. Use a stainless steel knife because carbon blades will discolor the eggplant. Eggplant should not be eaten raw. Eggplant may be cooked with or without its skin. However, large eggplant and most white varieties have thick, tough skin and should be peeled prior to cooking with a vegetable peeler.

Unlike many vegetables, eggplant is not harmed by long cooking. An undercooked eggplant can have a chewy texture; but overcooked eggplant is just very soft. Do not cook in an aluminum pot because the eggplant will become discolored.

Spices that enhance its flavor include allspice, basil, bay leaves, garlic, chili powder, oregano, sage, thyme, marjoram, and parsley. Eggplant is most often paired with tomatoes or onions.

Word to the Wise

According to an Australian study, eggplant absorbs more fat in cooking than any other vegetable. When researchers deep-fried a serving of eggplant, they found that it absorbed 83 grams of fat in just 70 seconds—four times as much as an equal portion of potatoes—adding more than 700 calories. Try one of the many other cooking options instead of frying or sautéing. (Wellness Encyclopedia of Food and Nutrition).

Baking: To bake a whole eggplant, pierce the skin with a fork several times, and cook it at 400°F for 30 to 40 minutes. Baking whole eggplants produces a soft flesh that is easy to mash or puree.

Broiling: Cut the eggplant into thick lengthwise slices, and score them lightly with a sharp knife. Place the slices on a broiler pan or grill; brush them lightly with oil. Broil about 5 inches from the heat, and turn slices when they begin to brown. Eggplant should be cooked for approximately 5 minutes per side.

Eggplant may also be microwaved whole, cubed, or sliced. Cooking times vary from 6 to 8 minutes for a whole eggplant to 3 or 4 minutes for a pound of cubed eggplant.

Stewed eggplant is called ratatouille. For this dish, eggplant may be stewed alone, or with other vegetables. Simmer, covered with a liquid such as tomato juice, until the eggplant is tender. The cooking time is usually 20 to 25 minutes.

Make Eggplant Part of Your 5 A Day Plan



- Sprinkle minced garlic and herbs over eggplant slices before grilling for extra taste.
- Add eggplant to lasagna to add color, taste, and texture.
- Blend eggplant to spinach dips or other vegetable dips.
- Add eggplant to vegetable soups to for a heartier texture.
- Grill eggplant, and add it to your favorite sandwich.
- Try eggplant seasoned and mashed or pureed as a dip with pita bread.

Recipes

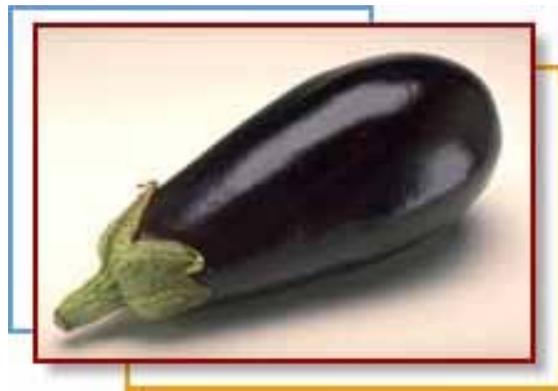
Bow Tie Pasta With Roasted Garlic And Eggplant

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals five 5 A Day servings

Source: The Garlic Cookbook

- 1 bulb garlic, roasted
- 6 cups eggplant, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 1/4 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp fresh ground pepper
- 3 cups (about 3 medium) chopped tomatoes
- 1 package (12 ounces) dried large bow tie pasta
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese



Separate roasted garlic cloves, peel, and set aside. In a medium bowl, combine eggplant, vinegar, 3 Tbsp olive oil, oregano, and pepper. Mix thoroughly and marinate in the refrigerator for 1 hour. Place eggplant mixture, with liquid, on a baking pan. Bake in a preheated 425°F oven for 25 minutes. Stir every 5 to 6 minutes. About 10 minutes before eggplant is completely cooked, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet. Add tomatoes and garlic. Sauté for 5 minutes. At the same time, cook pasta in a pot of boiling water according to package instructions. Drain and divide cooked pasta on 4 serving plates. Cover pasta with roasted eggplant. Cover with equal portions of tomato-garlic mixture and top with parsley. Serve immediately sprinkled with Parmesan cheese.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 539, protein 16g, fat 17g, percent calories from fat 28%, cholesterol 5mg, carbohydrates 81g, fiber 6g, sodium 139mg

Baba Ghanoush (Eggplant Dip)

Makes 8 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

2 large eggplants (1 1/4 lbs)
2 level Tbsp tahini
4 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed with salt
3 Tbsp fresh lemon juice or more to taste
3 to 4 Tbsp cold water
1/4 tsp salt
Dash of freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp olive oil
1 cup tomato, chopped
1/2 cup onion, diced

Pierce the eggplants in several places with a toothpick. If you are cooking indoors, wrap the whole eggplant in aluminum foil and set it over a gas grill to cook on all sides until it collapses and begins to release a great deal of steam. If you are cooking over coals, grill the eggplant until blackened, collapsed, and cooked through.

Dump the eggplant into a basin of cold water; peel while it's still hot and allow it to drain in a colander until cool. Squeeze pulp to remove any bitter juices. Mash the eggplant to a puree.

In a food processor, mix the tahini with the garlic, onion, tomato, and lemon juice until the mixture contracts. Thin with the water. With the machine running, add the eggplant and the salt, pepper, and olive oil. Spread out in a shallow dish and garnish with pepper, parsley, and tomatoes.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 76, protein 2g, fat 2g, percent calories from fat 24%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 12g, fiber 4g, sodium 84mg

Stuffed Eggplant

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals four 5 A Day servings

1 1/2 cups bread crumbs
2 eggplants
2 tomatoes, diced
1/2 cup green bell pepper, diced
1/2 cup onion, diced
1/3 cup celery, diced
1/8 Tbsp salt
1/4 Tbsp black pepper
2 Tbsp fresh parsley, minced
2 Tbsp parmesan cheese
Vegetable cooking spray

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Cut eggplants in half lengthwise. Scoop out and save the flesh, leaving the shells 3/8-inch thick. If necessary, trim a small piece off the bottom of each shell so it won't tip over. Set aside.

Coat large skillet with vegetable cooking spray. Chop up reserved eggplant and add to skillet. Add tomato, bell pepper, onion, celery, salt, and black pepper. Place skillet over medium heat; cover and cook about 5 minutes, until vegetables are tender.

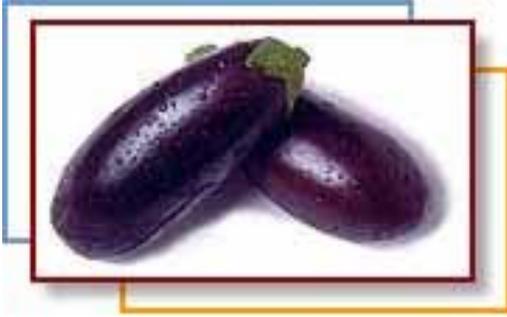
Remove skillet from heat. Stir in bread crumbs and parsley. Spoon mixture into the hollow eggplant shells. Arrange stuffed shells in a shallow baking dish coated with vegetable spray. Sprinkle 1 1/2 tsps Parmesan on top of each shell. Bake for 25 minutes, until filling heats through and top is golden brown.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 269, protein 9g, fat 3g, percent calories from fat 10%, cholesterol 1mg, carbohydrates 52g, fiber 9g, sodium 419mg

Eggplant Parmesan

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals four 5 A Day servings



2 egg whites
2 1/2 lbs eggplant, peeled and cut
crosswise into 1/4"-thick slices
1/2 cup plain dried bread crumbs
Olive oil spray
1 cup tomatoes, chopped with their
juice
1/4 cup chopped fresh basil or 1 tsp
dried
1/2 tsp black pepper
1 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella
cheese (about 4 oz)
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
4 cloves garlic
1/2 cup onion, chopped

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Line baking sheet with foil. Spray foil with nonstick cooking spray.

In a shallow dish, beat the egg whites and 2 Tbsps of water until foamy. Dip eggplant into egg whites, then into bread crumbs, pressing crumbs into eggplant. Place eggplant on prepared baking sheet and spray oil over eggplant slices. Bake 30 minutes, turning eggplant over after 20 minutes, until golden brown and cooked through.

Sauté the onions and garlic with oil spray. In a medium bowl, stir together tomatoes and their juice, basil, salt, pepper, garlic, and onions. Spoon 3 Tbsps of tomato mixture into bottom of 9" square glass baking dish. Place half of eggplant over sauce; spoon half of remaining tomato mixture over eggplant; and sprinkle half of mozzarella on top. Repeat with remaining eggplant, tomato mixture, and mozzarella. Sprinkle Parmesan on top and bake for 20 minutes, or until eggplant is piping hot and sauce is bubbly.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 274, protein 18g, fat 6g, percent calories from fat 20%, cholesterol 20mg, carbohydrates 35g, fiber 8g, sodium 427mg