

EGGPLANT PARMESAN

WITH RICOTTA & FRESH BASIL

Eggplant

- 2 medium eggplants (about 2 pounds total)
- ⅓ cup mayonnaise
- ¾ cup dry bread crumbs

Sauce

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ½ cup minced onion
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed or minced
- 1½ cups tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons dry red wine
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh basil (or ½ teaspoon dried)
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon crushed dried red pepper
- salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Cheese, etc.

- 1 cup part-skim ricotta cheese
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ pound grated mozzarella cheese (about 2½ cups)
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh basil (or 1 teaspoon dried)

1. Cut eggplant into 1/2-inch-thick slices.
2. Using a pastry brush, thinly spread mayonnaise on both sides of each slice of eggplant, then dip slices in bread crumbs to coat both sides.
3. Place coated eggplant slices on a lightly greased baking sheet and broil until golden brown and tender (but not mushy); turn slices over and brown on other side; set aside to cool.
4. Heat oil in medium sauce pan over medium-high heat; add onion and saute until tender, about 3 to 5 minutes; add garlic and saute an additional 30 seconds; add remaining sauce ingredients, bring to boil, then reduce heat, cover and simmer slowly for about 15 minutes.
5. Mix together the ricotta and Parmesan cheeses; set aside.
6. Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.
7. Pour half the sauce into a lightly greased 12-inch x 7-inch x 2-inch or other 2½-quart baking dish or au gratin pan.
8. Cover sauce in pan with half the prepared eggplant slices; spread all of the ricotta-Parmesan mixture evenly over eggplant slices in pan; sprinkle half the mozzarella over ricotta; top with the 2 tablespoons of fresh basil; add remaining eggplant slices; spread remaining sauce over eggplant; top with remaining mozzarella.
9. Cover baking dish with aluminum foil; bake, covered, for 15 minutes; then remove foil and bake another 15 minutes or until hot and sauce is bubbling; finish under broiler to brown top, if desired.
10. Remove from oven and allow casserole to rest 10 minutes before cutting into portions and serving.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Note: To prepare in advance, follow instructions through step 8, cover with foil, and refrigerate for up to 8 hours; bring to room temperature before baking.