



AUBERGINE (Eggplant)

The aubergine is a typical summer vegetable, that doesn't grow at a temperature below 12° degrees Celsius. Native to India, where the plant grew spontaneously 4.000 years ago, it was introduced in Europe by the Arabs in the 15th century.

The raw fruit can have a bitter taste and this is the reason why the fruit was believed to be dangerous and had to be cooked before eating.



The aubergine is very rich in potassium and low in calcium and phosphor. Like many other plants it has a high content of fibres, that are very useful in relieving constipation. Along with the nutritional content the aubergine has detoxifying and light laxative effects; it regulates and stimulates liver activity.

The aubergine is low in calories, fat, protein and sugar and therefore recommended in weight loss diets.

The aubergine contains the vitamins A, B, C, folic acid, potassium, tannins, phosphor, sodium and calcium. It contains also some bitter substances similar to those found in the leaves of artichokes, that increase bile production and lower cholesterol, caffeic acid and chlorogenic acid (antibacterial). Furthermore it stimulates the diuresis.

These properties have positive effects and help to detoxify and purify the human organism. Therefore they are indicated for gout, atherosclerosis, urinary tract infection, hepatitis and constipation.

For cosmetic purposes the pulp can be used to prepare nourishing masks. The mask is obtained by mashing the aubergine pulp with a fork. Apply on the face, simple or mixed with a yogurt, for about twenty minutes.

There are different varieties of aubergine. The most famous in Italy are:

the round-shaped Violetta of Florence; the oblong and much tasty Violetta of Neaples; the Larga Morada hell coloured with violet stripes and delicate taste; the giant aubergine of New York, violet and enormous; the Violetta of Palermo dark violet coloured and oblong.



CURIOSITY: some researchers think that drinking "aubergine water" (infusion of aubergines cut in small pieces) can act like an antihypertensive drug and lower the blood pressure.

Here the recipes of our Chef Franco for the most tasting preparations.

FILLED AUBERGINES

Ingredients (for 4): 1 kg aubergines, 50 gr black olives, 20 gr capers, 15 little tomatoes, 50 gr Parmesan cheese, 1 egg, 50 gr mozzarella, oil, basil, bread crumbs, salt and pepper to taste.

Remove caps, wash and cut aubergines in halves lengthwise. Scoop out the inside and put in a bowl 3/4 of the pulp, cut in small dices. Add to the aubergine pulp the stoned black olives, capers, sliced tomatoes and the mozzarella cut in dices. Mix. Season with salt and pepper, add basil, beaten egg, Parmesan cheese, a little olive oil and mix. Put the scooped aubergine halves in a Pyrex backing pan with a little water on the ground (to maintain the humidity). Stuff the aubergines with the prepared mixture. Powder with Parmesan cheese, bread crumbs and pour a little oil on it. Put in the oven (180°) for about 30 minutes. Finish the preparation by cooking au gratin. Serve the aubergines lukewarm.



RABBIT WITH AUBERGINES

Ingredients (for 4): 1 rabbit, 1 small bunch of sage, 300 g aubergines, 1 glass red wine, 500 ml tomato puree, 2 cloves garlic, red pepper, extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper.

Cut the rabbit into small pieces. Put it in a pan with 3 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil, some sage leaves, 2 cloves of garlic. Put a cover on the pan and cook over a low heat for about 40 minutes. Add little hot water or broth to keep it humid. Season with salt and pepper to taste.



In the meantime fry the aubergines cut in dices and keep aside. Lift the cover away, turn the heat up, add red wine and let it evaporate. Cover with the tomato puree, let thicken for about 15 minutes, than add the fried aubergines and the red pepper at will. Continue the cooking for 10 minutes. Serve lukewarm.

AUBERGINES LASAGNA, BASIL AND QUARTIROLO CHEESE

Ingredients (for 4), 300 g aubergines, 60 g Quartirolo cheese, 50 g grated Grana cheese, 6-7 in oven dried tomatoes (or ready to use), extra virgin olive oil, 1 clove of garlic, salt and pepper, 4 tablespoons tomato sauce, 1 fresh lasagna sheet (30 cm).



First cut the aubergines in cubes, sprinkle them with salt and put them aside for about one hour to lose their water. Prepare the tomato sauce: peel two or three tomatoes (for example San Marzano), take away the seeds and whip with a tablespoon oil, salt and pepper. Boil the fresh lasagna sheet (about 30 cm) und let it cool down. Squeeze dry the aubergines and cook them in a nonstick pan with little oil and a clove of garlic (to take out after coking). Pass through a vegetable masher or mix for a very short time in the mixer.

Lay down the lasagna sheet, spread the aubergines mix and top it with grated cheese and tomatoes.

Roll up the sheet and cut it into 12 rings. Steam-heat. Dispose three rings on a plate, decorate by spreading around a tablespoon of tomato sauce (ambient temperature). If you want, top the lasagna with a basil leave.

For people who want to taste aubergines also out of season:



AUBERGINES IN OIL

Ingredients: 1/2 kg small oblong aubergines, 750 ml white wine vinegar, salt to taste, vegetable oil, oregano, 2 cloves of garlic, red pepper

Wash, remove caps and cut aubergines in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch slices. Add salt and pepper and let purge overnight in a colander. Next morning boil the vinegar and when it boils high, put the aubergines in and let them cook for not more then 2-3 minutes.

Drain and let the aubergines dry on a clean towel for 12 hours. Bestrew with oregano, the sliced cloves of garlic and the red pepper in pieces.

Put the aubergines in glass jars, fitting them quite snugly together, top up with oil and seal the jars. After a few days check the oil level. If necessary add more oil. Keep the jars in a cool, dark place and wait one month before tasting

