

Eggplant Parmesan (Gluten Free)

My wife picked a beautiful eggplant from our garden this week, and I decided to put it to good use—Eggplant Parmesan is a lovely and delicious dish! This recipe takes time to prepare, but the steps are easy to follow, and the amazing results are worth the effort. This recipe can be assembled in advance, the final baking time is just 25-30 minutes, making this dish easy to serve and allowing you to spend time with your guests instead of working in the kitchen.

Classic eggplant parmigiana uses a ton of breadcrumbs, adding both gluten and a huge sugar load, and it is doused and fried in olive oil, making it very rich. In contrast, this modified recipe uses nut flour and nut meal adding a touch of crunchy texture with a similar lovely flavor. Although the use of lots of extra-virgin olive oil can be healthy, baking the eggplant instead of frying it makes this recipe lighter without sacrificing flavor.

For those wishing to try the classic version, I mention below how to use gluten-free breadcrumbs. However, in a taste testing competition at my home, the nut version was rated better.

When selecting an eggplant in the market or store, look for an eggplant that is firm to the touch, shiny, and without wrinkles on the skin. The eggplant should not have any brown spots. As they get old and soften, they become filled with seeds and bitter— features I want to avoid. Unless you are growing eggplant in your own garden and can pick them large, firm, and shiny when they are at their peak, large eggplant in stores are often seedy, so better to play it safe and pick medium or medium-small eggplant for better quality.

You can serve this dish as a main course or use it as the first course (primi piatti) and serve a protein and vegetable dish as the main course (secondi piatti).

Prep Time: 1 hour

Baking Time: 1 hour

Serves: Six

Ingredients:

- 2 medium eggplants, sliced crosswise into ¼ to ½ inch thick slices, creating at least 12 slices
- 1 cup almond flour (finely ground)
- 3-4 organic, pasture-raised eggs, whisked
- 1-2 cups nuts ground into a meal about the size of breadcrumbs (I use a mixture of 50% filberts and 50% almonds processed in a food processor); alternatively, you can use gluten-free breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 24 ounces marinara sauce
- 2 eight-ounce fresh mozzarella cheese balls; slice each ball into 6 thin similar sized slices
- 4 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated into ~ ¾ of a cup
- 1 tablespoon fresh oregano, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped

(Eggplant Parmesan cont.)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375° F.

Spread eggplant on a baking sheet(s), salt lightly and let sit for about ten minutes to let the eggplant sweat and release excess water. Meanwhile set up the remaining ingredients. Add almond flour, whisked eggs, and ground nuts (or breadcrumbs) into three different bowls.

Pat eggplant dry with a paper towel and return to the baking sheet(s).

Dip sweated eggplant slices into the flour, next dip with whisked eggs, then dip in the bowl with ground nuts (or breadcrumbs) until coated on both sides; replace ground nuts as they get soggy from the eggs. Place nut-coated eggplant on a baking sheet and transfer to a middle shelf in the oven and bake for 25-30 minutes until coated eggplant slices are just slightly browned. Remove from the oven and maintain oven heat.

In a large ovenproof baking dish, brush olive oil over the bottom of the dish. Next, add a light coating of marinara sauce to the pan. The goal is to create six towers of eggplant, marinara sauce, cheese, and herbs.

First place six slices of eggplant into the baking dish. Second, add 1 slice of mozzarella cheese. Next, add 1.5 tablespoons of marinara sauce over mozzarella cheese. Then add 1 tablespoon of parmesan cheese. Repeat the process by adding another layer of sliced eggplant, a slice of mozzarella cheese, 1.5 tablespoons of marinara sauce, 1 tablespoon of parmesan, and then add half the fresh herbs divided over each stack of eggplant.

Place in the oven and bake for 30 minutes at 375° F.

Remove from the oven and serve on individual plates. Garnish with remaining fresh herbs.

Enjoy,

Steven Masley, MD