

Baked Eggplant Parm

Eggplant

- 2 lbs globe eggplant, cut crosswise into 1/4-in thick rounds
- 1 tbsp kosher salt
- 2 cups bread crumbs
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 eggs
- 6 tbsp vegetable oil

Tomato Sauce

- 3 (14.5 oz) cans diced tomatoes
- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced or pressed with garlic press
- 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, chopped
- salt and ground black pepper

- 4 oz shredded mozzarella
- 1 ball fresh mozzarella, sliced
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 10 fresh basil leaves, torn for garnish

1. For the eggplant: Toss the eggplant with kosher salt in a colander set in the sink or over a bowl/plate. Let stand until eggplant releases liquid, about 30-45 min. Arrange eggplant slices on triple layer paper towels; cover with another triple layer and firmly press each slices to remove as much liquid as possible, then wipe off excess salt

2. Adjust oven racks to upper and lower middle positions. Place rimmed baking sheet on each rack. Heat oven to 425 degrees.

3. Combine flour and 1 tsp black pepper in a large zip-lock bag, shake to combine. Beat eggs in pie plate, set aside. Place bread crumbs on large dinner plate. Place 8-10 eggplant slices in bag with flour; seal bag and shake to coat eggplant. Remove slices, shaking off excess flour, dip in eggs, then coat evenly with bread crumbs. Set breaded slices on wire rack and repeat with remaining eggplant.

4. Remove preheated baking sheets from oven, add 3 tbsp oil to each and tilt sheet to coat evenly with oil. Place breaded eggplant on each sheet in single layer. Bake until well browned and crisp, about 30 min - switching and rotating sheets after 10 min, flipping eggplant after 20 min. Leave oven on.

5. For sauce: while eggplant bakes, process 2 cans diced tomatoes in food processor until almost smooth. Heat olive oil in large saucepan over medium-high heat, add garlic and red pepper flakes. Saute for 1-2 min until fragrant and garlic is light golden. Stir in processed tomatoes and remaining 1 can. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened and reduced, about 15 min. Stir in basil and season with salt and pepper.

6. To assemble: spread 1 cup tomato sauce in bottom of 13×9-in baking dish. Layer in eggplant slices in single layer. Spoon over sauce, top each slice with 1 or 1/2 slice of fresh mozzarella, sprinkle with shredded mozzarella. Top each slice with another slice of eggplant (to build little columns) and repeat with sauce and cheese. For top layer, dot with sauce, leaving majority of eggplant exposed so it will remain crisp; sprinkle with 1/2 cup parmesan and remaining shredded mozzarella.

7. Bake until bubbling and cheese is browned, about 13-15 min. Cool 10 min, scatter basil over top and serve.