

Eggcellent Eggplant Salad

2 firm purple eggplants, scrubbed and patted dry, cut into thick rounds
2 plump cloves of garlic, smashed with the flat of a knife, peeled and thinly sliced
small bunch of parsley, washed, dried and chopped roughly
small peeled, chopped onion
5 big (or 10 small) mushrooms, washed, patted dry and chopped
small slice of lemon, squeezed for about a teaspoon of lemon juice
pickles in brine, about 6 either chopped into chunks or chopped into finer smaller pieces, as you prefer, and some pickle juice
cherry or grape tomatoes, washed and sliced into medium slices ***OR*** one small tomato, washed, sliced and chopped
olive oil
olive oil spray or vegetable oil spray
salt

Directions:

Preheat your oven to 425 F/220 C degrees.

Take a sheet pan and put down a sheet of parchment paper. Take the washed, dried eggplant cut rounds and salt on both sides, leaving the salt to draw out the bitterness for 20-30 minutes and rinse and pat dry and put tightly next to each other to cover the sheet pan (see pic above). Take the oil spray and spray the eggplant in a sweeping motion till the eggplant glistens. Pop into the hot oven and time it for fifteen minutes. Remove from oven and flip to other side with spatula. Oil spray in sweeping motion on unbaked side till it too glistens. Pop back into oven and roast for an additional 15 or so minutes or until totally cooked (check with toothpick for doneness) and browned but not dark brown (or it gets a bitter flavor). Let cool.

Meanwhile, while cooling, take chopped onion and sautee in a tablespoon or two of oil till light brown and throw in chopped mushrooms and cook till just wilted a bit.

Take a big enough bowl to hold all the ingredients and start to layer the salad. Put in eggplant, chopped parsley, chopped pickles, sauteed onion and mushrooms, sliced garlic, lemon juice and sliced tomatoes. Toss well and add about 3 tablespoons of olive oil (preferably olive but if none, you can use mild veggie oil) a teaspoon of salt and some pickle juice both for flavor and additional liquid for dressing the salad. Toss, toss and toss again till the whole mixture is nicely coated with the pickle juice and oil. Taste just to see if you need some more oil or pickle juice and let rest for about an hour (or longer). While the eggplant will absorb some of the liquid, it will not be too much since it's already cooked. Taste and adjust oil or pickle juice and salt if need be. It should be bold with flavor but lighter, and really delicious. Enjoy every bite!