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The Mad Apple

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The Mad Apple

Of all the produce springing out of farms and gardens at this glorious time of the year, eggplants are truly among the most beautiful and varied. We've all seen the glossy purple types, or maybe you've seen them in pale ivory, perhaps demurely blushed with pink. The common ones are also usually big, some monstrously so! Some well-grown eggplants can reach three pounds or more, and if these fruit more literally lived up to their name, I can only see problems for the poor chickens that had to lay these “eggs!”

But that is only a small fraction of the amazing assortment of eggplants in the world. There are in fact egg-sized fruits among them, but what's more amazing are the colors. In addition to the more familiar purples and whites, they can come in pale apple green, deep forest green, wine red, flaming orange, shocking pink, and lemon yellow. In southeast Asia, where the eggplant was first cultivated, some types are boldly marked with veins in contrasting colors, and in others, hues intergrade together like subtly blended pastels. The colors mark the surface of a variety of shapes, from teardrop to pumpkin, banana to pea. With all that variation, it seems a bit funny that someone could see these fruits and think of eggs at all!

As a veggie of international popularity, it is known by many names. In India, near it's origins, “brinjal” is sometimes known as the king of vegetables, and plays an irreplaceable part of Indian cuisine in the form of curries, dips, and in lentil stews. It then spread to the Arab and Chinese; the earliest record of cultivation is found in an ancient Chinese work on agriculture from the sixth century, and from then on it traveled in many directions, from Japan in the far East, the Arabian peninsula to the Northwest, and all the way West to northern Africa and Spain.

It reached Europe relatively late in the game, when much of the world was already enjoying the unique properties of this beautiful vegetable. The people were skeptical; many of them were all too familiar with the related nightshades native to vast areas of Europe, which were well known for their poisonous berries. The name “mad apple” reflects the mistaken belief that eggplants themselves were poison, and I imagine that the large size, in contrast to the small berries of the nightshade, made them particularly ominous to the suspicious.

But people obviously got over their initial fear. The French dish ratatouille, Turkish moussaka, and Italian eggplant parmesan make for delicious evidence. The primary reason eggplant is useful is because of it’s changeable nature. Not only does it absorb the flavors and oils around it, it also has a subtle richness all it’s own that provides a nice backbone to many dishes. It’s almost mushroomy, with traces of sweetness and bitterness that add complexity without much fuss. Perhaps the important thing to remember is to save the cutting until right before cooking for some recipes. Eggplant rapidly browns after opening, and if you want to cut back on bitterness, give the slices a quick bath in salty water.

Happy Cooking!  
Andrew Croft
Ratatouille

From the variety of recipes that I have been able to provide to the newsletter so far, you probably have figured out that I enjoy cooking. I like to experiment with new ingredients and flavors. I get along with most ingredients, with one major exception...the eggplant. Whether soggy, burnt, bitter or simply falling apart if there is a way to botch an eggplant I have found it. That is why this recipe exists. So if you are new to cooking an eggplant or eggplant happens to be your nemesis try cooking this Ratatouille. The recipe is about a foolproof as they comes.

Serves: 4         Ready in: 30 mins

Ingredients
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon sea salt
2 cloves garlic
1 large onion
1 eggplant
1 small zucchini
1 bell pepper
4 medium tomatoes
½ cup basil leaves

Directions
1. Wash the onion, eggplant, zucchini, and tomatoes.
2. Chop the washed vegetables into strips.
3. Mince the garlic and basil.
4. Place olive oil into a large skillet and warm over medium heat.
5. Put the garlic and onion in the skillet and cook until the onions are soft. Be sure to stir every few minutes.
6. Add the eggplant to the skillet and cook for 8 minutes (or until the eggplant is also soft), stir occasionally.
7. Add zucchini, pepper, tomato, and salt and cook for 6 minutes, stir occasionally.
8. Remove from heat and stir in basil.
9. Serve and enjoy!

recipe by Shannon Babb

On the Farm News

Welcome to a beautiful new harvest week full of fresh vegetables. I must tell you all how deeply grateful we are for the opportunity you (our members) have given us to prepare these harvests. By participating in our CSA this season you have supported our dreams. I know you all know what CSA means, but do you know (apart from your essential memberships) what goes into making the CSA work? Well I have the answer; it is Cami Lowder, who at some time or another, you have all been in contact with. Cami is our CSA Manager and without her hard work and dedication we at the farm, would have been chickens without heads.

Cami has been working as CSA manager for a year now and she has been an essential part of the farm. When getting this farm started, her drive and dedication has provided us with this internship. She organized and secured all you members of whom without your contributions this farm may not have been possible this year. Cami’s goals have been to try and make the farm a bit more interesting and exciting. She has produced this season’s newsletters, providing useful and interesting on-farm information like informative plant, crop, and pest information, great food recipes, and a better overall understanding of our CSA. She has been in charge of our budget, finance planning, bill balances, receipts, record keeping, and in the planning and preparation for our future interns.

Cami has gained much strength in management and has worked hard to overcome difficulties in communication, delegating responsibility, and even overall people management. Always communicating in a professional and friendly way, Cami you are on your way to own your own business one day. Cami sends a huge thanks to Jennifer for her support and drive, the other interns for their hard work and friendship, and to all the relationships developed with CSA members all summer long, she said, “you make it all worth it.” As well we thank you so very much Cami, you have done so much and are a beautiful inspiration to us all.

Eric Manrique

Announcements

Saturday pickup
Thank you all for making the switch to Saturday pickup with us. It will help us out a lot as students and it will give us the time to ensure you are still getting quality service from us while school is in session. This has been a wonderful season and we have you to thank for it! We are so happy we get to spend the next few weeks of the season with you.

*Remember if you need to switch days to email a week in advance to let us know.

Cami peeking out of the beautiful corn.

What you might see in your next box

cucumber
tomatoes
zucchini
corn
peppers
beans
tomatillos
kale

soon to come:
melons
raspberries

carrots
chard
turnips
leeks
basil
dill
sage
potatoes
celery