

AUTHENTIC SICILIAN CAPONATA

Sweet and Sour Eggplant Recipe

Servings: 6 **Prep:** 30 min **Cook:** 40 min **Rest:** 2 hr **Total:** about 3 hr 10 min

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large eggplants, about 2 lb total
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 3 celery stalks, sliced
- 1 can (14 oz) diced tomatoes
- 2/3 cup green olives, pitted and sliced
- 2 tablespoons capers, rinsed and drained
- 1/4 cup pine nuts, optional
- 3 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, roughly torn
- Extra virgin olive oil, as needed
- Vegetable or olive oil, for frying
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Fresh tomato option: Use about 14 oz ripe fresh tomatoes, peeled if desired and roughly chopped, in place of the canned diced tomatoes.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 **Prepare the eggplant.** Wash the eggplants and cut them into about 3/4-inch cubes. Place them in a colander, sprinkle lightly with salt, and let them sit for 20-30 minutes. Pat thoroughly dry with paper towels.
- 2 **Fry the eggplant.** Heat about 1/2 inch of frying oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Fry the eggplant in batches until tender and golden brown, about 4-6 minutes per batch. Do not overcrowd the pan. Transfer to paper towels to drain.
- 3 **Cook the celery.** Bring a small saucepan of lightly salted water to a boil. Add the sliced celery and cook for 3-4 minutes. Drain and set aside.
- 4 **Cook the onion.** Heat 2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and cook gently for 5-7 minutes, until soft and translucent.
- 5 **Add the tomatoes.** Stir in the diced tomatoes. Season lightly with salt and black pepper. Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes form a thick sauce.

- 6 **Add the celery, olives, and capers.** Add the cooked celery, olives, capers, and pine nuts if using. Stir and simmer for another 5 minutes.
- 7 **Make the agrodolce.** Stir the white wine vinegar and sugar together in a small bowl until the sugar begins to dissolve. Pour into the skillet and cook for 2-3 minutes, stirring well.
- 8 **Add the eggplant.** Gently fold the fried eggplant into the sauce. Cook over low heat for 3-5 minutes, stirring carefully so the eggplant keeps its shape.
- 9 **Finish and rest.** Turn off the heat and add the fresh basil. Let the caponata cool completely, then rest for at least 2 hours before serving. For even better flavor, refrigerate overnight and bring to room temperature before serving.

STORAGE

Store leftover caponata in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Let it sit at room temperature for about 20-30 minutes before serving.