

This delicious vegetarian Italian dish can sometimes be high in calories and fat, but this lightened version tastes fresh from the farm and is loaded with beneficial antioxidants and vitamins.

Healthy Eggplant Parmesan



Servings: 4

Ingredients:

- 2 ¼ lb. sm. eggplant (2-3), cut into ¼" slices
- ¼ c. + 1 ½ tsp olive oil
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 clove garlic, thinly sliced
- 2 lb. plum tomatoes, or 1 can (28 oz.) tomatoes, chopped
- 20 fresh basil leaves, (can substitute with dried)
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- ¾ c. freshly grated Parmesan

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 400 degrees F. Generously oil 2 non-stick baking sheets.
2. Put eggplant on pans and brush tops with ¼ cup of the oil. Sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon of the salt. Bake 30 minutes or until softened.
3. Heat remaining 1 ½ teaspoons oil in medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add garlic and cook, stirring frequently, 1 minute.
4. Add tomatoes, basil, pepper, and remaining ¾ teaspoon salt and cook until sauce is thickened and reduced to about 2 cups, about 15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Transfer tomato mixture to food processor and puree until nearly smooth.
6. Coat bottom of 8"x8" baking pan with ½ cup of the sauce. Add 1/3 of the eggplant, and top with another ½ cup of the sauce and 3 tablespoons of the cheese. Repeat twice (eggplant, sauce, cheese), ending with remaining 6 tablespoons cheese.
7. Bake until browned, about 30 minutes. Let rest 10 minutes before serving.

Nutrition: 300 Calories, 10 g. Protein, 24 g. Carbohydrate, 11 g. Fiber, 20.5 g. Fat, 5 g. Saturated Fat

October is **Vegetarian Awareness Month**. I often get asked if being on a vegetarian diet is necessary to be healthy. The answer is no, you don't have to be a vegetarian to eat healthfully, but vegetarian diets can fit into a healthy meal plan when meeting all the recommendations for nutrients. Another benefit of the vegetarian diet is that by eliminating meat in the diet, you are also eliminating some of the expenses

of your grocery bill. The key is to consume a variety of foods and the right amount of foods to meet your calorie needs.

Here are some tips on how one can follow a healthy vegetarian diet:

1. Don't forget about protein. With the lack of meat in the diet, it may seem that it can be hard to get enough protein, but a person's protein needs can easily be met by eating a variety of plant proteins such as beans, peas, nuts, and soy products. Lacto-ovo vegetarians also get protein from eggs and dairy foods.
2. While some vegetarians consume dairy products, others may not and may find it hard to get enough calcium in their diets. Non-dairy sources of calcium include calcium-fortified soymilk, tofu made with calcium sulfate, calcium-fortified breakfast cereals and orange juice, and some dark green leafy vegetables.
3. Make meals vegetarian. Many popular dishes can be made vegetarian such as pasta with marinara or pesto sauce, veggie pizza, vegetable lasagna, tofu-friendly stir-fry, and bean burritos.
4. Just because someone is a vegetarian, doesn't mean they can't enjoy a grill-out. For barbecues, try veggie or soy burgers, soy hot dogs, marinated tofu or tempeh, and fruit kabobs. Throw some veggies on the grill, too!
5. Ask for vegetarian-friendly options. Many restaurants provide meatless meals or you may just have to ask for substitutions such as tofu or beans instead of meat.
6. Be sure to get your B12. Vitamin B12 is naturally found only in animal products. Vegetarians should choose fortified foods such as cereals or soy products, or take a vitamin B12 supplement if they do not consume any animal products. Check the Nutrition Facts label for vitamin B12 in fortified products.