

Italian Sausage Stuffed Sicilian Eggplant

Begin by preparing this **Simple Tomato Sauce**. You will have more sauce than you need for this recipe. You can freeze the remainder or enjoy it on pasta, chicken or fish.

Simple Tomato Sauce

- 1 red onion, chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/4 c chopped basil
- 1/2 c chopped parsley
- 2 T olive oil
- 1/4 c white wine
- 1 28 oz can tomatoes - pureed
- 1 24 oz jar Italian tomato sauce
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Heat the olive oil. Cook onion and garlic on medium low for several minutes to soften, then add wine, tomatoes and tomato sauce. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 75 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the basil and parsley, and cook 15 more minutes.

Italian Sausage Stuffed Sicilian Eggplant

- 9 Sicilian eggplant
- 4 Italian sausages, meat removed from the casing (mild or spicy)
- 2 slices whole wheat bread, cubed
- 4 oz grated asiago
- 4 oz grated mozzarella - 2 oz for stuffing, 2 oz for topping
- 3 oz grated parmesan
- 2 oz diced bocconcini
- 1 egg

- 3 c simple tomato sauce - 1/2 cup for stuffing, 1 cup to coat bottom of baking dish, 1 1/2 cups for topping
- 1/4 - 3/4 c homemade breadcrumbs - judge how much you need to get a good semi-solid feel to the stuffing
- 1/4 c chopped basil
- 1/2 c chopped parsley
- 4 oz chopped baby spinach
- bell peppers, large mushrooms and/or zucchini to accomodate extra stuffing

Trim and halve the eggplant: Wash the eggplant. Remove the dried leaves at the stem end and the bottom brown spot. Careful, they may be prickly. Slice off the stem, then slice in half from top to bottom. Score the central flesh, cutting into it with a knife, to make it easier to scoop-out the flesh with a spoon. Maintain half an inch thickness as a shell to hold the stuffing. Chop the scooped-out flesh to add to the stuffing, keeping it in a separate bowl.

Blanching the eggplant: Bring a large pot of water to boil. Blanch the **eggplant shells** for 4 minutes after the water comes back to a boil. Rotate them carefully as they are fragile. Remove them with a large strainer or a slotted spoon. Rinse them in cold water to halt the cooking process. Drain all the water off, drying them with a paper towel. Blanch the chopped **eggplant flesh** for 4 minutes. Strain it well, pressing slightly. The eggplant shells and flesh can be frozen at this stage.

Prepare the stuffing: Remove the sausage meat from the casing. Chop the meat a little. Cook the meat in a frying pan, adding some salt, pepper, parsley and basil. When cooked, mix in half the parmesan. In a large bowl, combine cubed bread, 1/2 cup of tomato sauce, 2 ounces of mozzarella, asiago, the remainder of the parmesan, bocconcini, 1/4 cup of breadcrumbs, 1 egg, the blanched eggplant pulp, salt, pepper and the spinach. Mix to

combine all the ingredients. Add more breadcrumbs as needed for a semi-firm stuffing. Stuff the shells, squeezing them slightly after filling to make an oval shape. Top each stuffed eggplant with a little tomato sauce and mozzarella. Bake, covered, at 350F for 30-40 minutes. Serves 8 - 10. Can be frozen.

If there is extra stuffing, use it to fill halved bell peppers, mushroom caps or hollowed-out zucchini. They will require an additional 15 minutes in the oven.

Birri at **Jean Talon Market**, is the place to go for **Sicilian eggplant**, unless you are inclined to pick your own at **Ferme Sauriol**. The Italian sausage is from **Capitol**.