

EGGPLANT PARMESAN

(YIELD: 4 SERVINGS)



INGREDIENTS

1. 1 ¼ lb medium eggplants (about 2), cut crosswise into 1/3-inch-thick rounds
2. 1 ½ teaspoons salt
3. 32 oz. tomato puree
4. ½ cup plus 1 ½ tablespoons olive oil
5. 1 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
6. 10 fresh basil leaves, torn in half
7. ¼ tsp black pepper
8. ⅛ tsp dried hot red pepper flakes
9. ½ cup all-purpose flour
10. 3 eggs
11. 1 ½ cups Panko (Japanese bread crumbs)
12. 1 oz grated parmesan
13. 8 oz chilled fresh mozzarella (not unsalted), thinly sliced

PREPARATION

1. Toss eggplant with 2 tsp salt in a colander set over a bowl, then let drain 30 minutes.
2. Heat 1 ½ tablespoons oil in a heavy pot over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking, then add garlic and sauté, stirring, until golden, about 30 seconds. Add tomato purée, basil, ½ tsp salt, ¼ tsp pepper, and red pepper flakes and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened, 25 to 30 minutes.
3. Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 375°F.
4. Stir together flour, remaining salt and pepper in a shallow bowl. Lightly beat eggs in a second shallow bowl, then stir together panko and ½ oz parmesan in a third shallow bowl.
5. Working with 1 slice at a time, dredge eggplant in flour, shaking off excess, then dip in egg, letting excess drip off, and dredge in panko until evenly coated. Transfer eggplant to sheets of wax paper, arranging slices in 1 layer.
6. Heat remaining oil in a deep nonstick skillet over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking, then fry eggplant 2 slices at a time, turning over once, until golden brown, 5 to 6 minutes per batch. Transfer with tongs to paper towels to drain.
7. Spread ½ cup tomato sauce in bottom of a rectangular baking dish. Arrange about one third of eggplant slices in 1 layer over sauce, overlapping slightly if necessary. Cover eggplant with about one third of remaining sauce and one third of mozzarella. Continue layering with remaining eggplant, sauce, and mozzarella. Sprinkle top with remaining parmesan.
8. Bake, uncovered, until cheese is melted and golden and sauce is bubbling, 35 to 40 minutes.