

Eggplant Lasagna Roman Style or Mellanzani Ala Romano

Elena Mantini taught me how to cook this in Rome when I was only 12 years old. This is a superb dish and always amazing to guest who especially have never had eggplant. It has the “WOW factor”. I prefer it to regular Lasagna. This dish, however, resembles lasagna in the eating without all the carbohydrates. Sometimes something called “Eggplant Parmigiano” is served in the United States that is cut thick, undercooked, tough, bitter and unappealing. Do not confuse that with this. This is very delicate. Mellanzani is like very tender lasagna. Five cheeses and Elena’s sauce (see recipe [sauce_elenas_spagetti.doc](#)) make this recipe very simply one of the very best. The alternative way of preparing the eggplant is the traditional Roman way and is a bit more work but uses a bit more oil.

Preheat oven to 375 F.

- 5 medium young egg plants, sliced very thin (1/16th of an inch)
- 1 pound grated mozzarella cheese
- 16 ounces ricotta cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Romano cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Reggiano Parmigiano cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Asiago cheese
- Resplendid freshest unfiltered cold pressed extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup seasoned Italian bread crumbs made with olive oil, garlic and stale Italian Bread
- 4~5 cups of Elena’s Sugo de Pomodori e Guanciale - Red Tomato Sauce (Elena Rich Spicy Marinara Sauce) (substitute Marinara Sauce)

Use the most firm young eggplants you can find. The younger eggplants have fewer seeds and are less bitter. Cut off the top stem section of the eggplants and, optionally, peel them to make a more tender lasagna.



The eggplant is cooked twice: First, in the oven by itself, and secondly as a casserole, hence, there is no reason to peel off the skin. Cut the egg plants into thin even slices about ¼ to 1/16th inch thick. Lay the slices out flat, not overlapping, on parchment paper atop cooking sheet pans without overlapping. Place in hot oven (375 F) to cook and drive off the moisture. After 10-15 minutes or so, turn the slices over. Salt would help draw out moisture from the eggplant but it is not recommended as the cheese is also salty. When the eggplant is ready, it will be limp and almost completely dry. Some slices may be slightly brownish as shown. This is fine.

When cutting the parchment paper, make them the size of the pan. Excessive paper could smoke a bit.

In a large steep wall glass or ceramic oven proof dish, assemble, as in the case of lasagna, layers of ingredients. Add a layer of sauce to the bottom of the dish, followed by eggplant, followed by dollops of ricotta, sprinklings of mozzarella cheese, and some of the other cheeses. The repeat, sauce, eggplant, etc. The last layer ends sauce, bread crumbs, Romano and Parmigiano cheese and a slight drizzle of olive oil.

“E una cosa fantastico” – a fantastic thing!

I have found out recently that I can pre-cook the eggplant in much greater quantities by using the BBQ gas grill and at slightly high temperatures. In this case, I handle the eggplant with long thongs.

Winter egg plant is usually available in larger pieces but is abundant with seed and a little bitter. Japanese eggplant work fine but buy plenty of them.

Alternative Preparation Ingredient

- Olive oil
- Salt
- 8 eggs, beaten
- 2~3 cups all purpose flour
- Plenty of paper towels

Alternative Way of Preparing Eggplant Slices

Peel and slice as above. Salt one side of all the eggplant slices, place salted side on paper towels to draw off bitter fluids for ten minutes. Salt other side; turn over slices and place salt side down on new stack of dry paper towels for another 15 minutes. Wash eggplant in plenty of cold water to leach off excess salt, and pat dry. Allow to dry out on paper towels for twenty minutes. Meanwhile, preheat a Teflon coated grill until 400F. Beat 8 eggs until creamy yellow. Place in bowl for dipping. Get out a plate or shallow bowl and put two cups of all purpose flour. Dredge eggplant slices in flour, knock off excess flour. Dip slices in beaten eggs, shake off excess then cook each slices of eggplant on lightly oil grill until golden brown on each side. Drain on paper towels. Continue until all slices are done