

MELANZANE RIPIENE AL FORNO (stuffed and baked eggplant)

For two medium eggplant-to serve 8 people quartered.

Approximately a quart of a favorite tomato sauce, Note, I use a lot of sauce and always have it around for this dish, and keep a pot on the stove while preparing the eggplants.

For stuffing:

1 cup of breadcrumbs (herbed or plain-your preference)

1 cup of browned ground meat of choice, Optional, and can be omitted for a vegetarian dish

1&1/2 cup of shredded mozzarella

1 cup of Romano or Romano/ parmesan blend

1 cup of minced onions

1/4 cup of minced parsley

1 egg

herbs of choice I use a quarter teaspoon of oregano, basil and red pepper, salt and pepper to taste

olive oil for prep

PREPARATION:

About a quart of tomato sauce pre-made.

If you desire a meat base, a cup of pre browned ground meat (for this recipe I used ground turkey)

Once sauce and meat done, cut in half 2 eggplants, and scoop out core with a scooper. I use a melon ball scooper, leaving an eggplant shell.

Mince eggplant pulp, and sauté with olive oil and diced onions until tender, 6 minutes. When done, add a cup and a half of tomato sauce, ground browned meat, and simmer for 5 minutes. Let rest for about 5 minutes, and while warm mix in breadcrumbs, Half of the shredded mozzarella, a cup of grated Romano/parmesan cheese, and a beaten egg. Add spices of preference and half of minced parsley.,

Mix the ingredients into a filling,

Place eggplants in a baking pan that has about a cup of sauce in the pan. I like using a pyrex baking dish.

Brush inside and outside of eggplant with olive oil, then stuff with the filling mixture, sprinkle with the remaining shredded mozzarella, and add a cup of additional sauce, so that there is about an inch or so of sauce surrounding the eggplant shell and stuffing.

Bake in a 350-degree oven until the eggplant shells are tender, which is about 50 minutes to an hour. The sauce by then should be slightly boiling in the pan, which helps tenderize the outside eggplant shells. Note, I test the shell with a knife and the eggplant should be somewhat tender to the cut. For larger eggplants it may take more than the noted time, you just have to watch the baking at that point.

Before serving I garnish with the remaining minced parsley, cut in half and dust with some Romano cheese, and serve. Nice to serve with a grain such as rice or couscous, or even a pasta alongside the eggplant.

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