

Benefits of Eggplant



WHAT IS EGGPLANT?

Eggplant is one of the few purple foods we consume that tends to be less familiar to the typical US shopper than other vegetables. In fact, eggplant is not a vegetable, but is actually a fruit, sometimes called a “flowering vegetable.” Like the tomato, it grows on vines and is a member of the nightshade family. In addition to the deep purple variety, eggplant is also found in a range of colors from green and lavender to orange and yellow. They can also range in size from that of a small tomato to a large zucchini.

Eggplant is a glossy, deep purple gem rich in color and nutrition. This culinary delight boasts a meaty center, edible seeds in a conical pattern and mild flavor. Maligned for its mildly bitter taste, the compounds responsible are among the most beneficial to our health.

WHAT MAKES EGGPLANT GREAT?

Eggplant is a rich source of antioxidants that protect our cells from oxidative damage, reducing our risk for heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

For example:

- ◆ *Anthocyanins* are compounds responsible for the rich, purple color and are some of the most powerful antioxidants. These help fight free radicals and prevent cancer cell growth. They also lower cholesterol and strengthen heart function
- ◆ *Nasunin*, found in eggplant skin, has been shown to protect brain cell membranes, fighting memory loss and dementia. This compound also helps to remove excess iron that can be toxic to cells
- ◆ *Lutein* and *Zeaxanthin* protect our eyes and prevent age-related macular degeneration
- ◆ Vitamins E and C also protect against free radicals, aging and chronic disease

Besides powerful antioxidants, eggplant also contains several other notable protective compounds:

- ◆ *Solasodine rhamnosyl glycosides* (SRGs) found in eggplant are being studied for their antiangiogenic properties. Anticancer therapies using SRGs are being developed are especially promising for skin cancer
- ◆ *Chlorogenic acid*, also found in peaches, prunes, bamboo and coffee beans, has strong antimicrobial and antiviral properties. It helps develop lignin, a protective dietary fiber and prebiotic, protects the lining of our arteries and has been shown to lower blood pressure. Studies suggest consumption may be protective against diabetes, Parkinson’s and liver disease

HOW TO SHOP FOR EGGPLANT

When shopping for eggplant, chose heavy, firm bulbs with smooth, shiny skin and bright green stem. Skin that springs back after gentle pressure indicates ripeness. Select unwaxed and organic when possible since you can consume the skins.

Eggplants are very perishable so store unwashed, uncut and unwrapped in the refrigerator. Before using, wash and remove both ends using a stainless steel knife.



stephanie.polizzi@oregonstate.edu
631 Alder Street, Myrtle Point, OR 97458
541-572-5263 ext 25291
<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/coos>



TO SWEAT OR NOT TO SWEAT

Sweating eggplant is a technique used to remove excess moisture before cooking. It entails sprinkling cut eggplant with salt and allowing it to rest 30 minutes. Droplets of water will form on the top of the slices giving the appearance of sweat. Then rinse off salt, press out excess water and dry with towel before cooking.

Sweating may reduce any residual bitterness and tenderizes the texture of the eggplant flesh. Sweating may lessen the amount of oil absorbed during cooking.

There are 3 things to keep in mind when considering to sweat or not:

1. **Are you salt-sensitive?** If you have high blood pressure or bloating, inflammation or swelling, you may want to avoid salting your eggplant
2. **Are you cooking with oil?** If so, sweating may be marginally helpful. It might be healthier, however, to lower or eliminate use of oil and then you would not have to worry about absorption
3. **How are you using eggplant?** Tossing raw in salads or slicing it thin for use in pasta salads or as lasagna noodles would not require salting. However, some say salting is beneficial when frying or grilling

CAUTIONS

Eggplant, as do potatoes and tomatoes, contain small amounts of solanine, a toxin which can be poisonous. It would take at least 36 raw eggplant to deliver a harmful dose.

However, eggplant found growing in the wild can have dangerously high levels of solanine, especially if they have been long on the bush and are dull in color.

REFERENCES

Health.harvard.edu Ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
 Medicalj-center.info Nutritionfacts.org
 OhSheGlows.com Snaped.fns.usda.gov

Eggplant Parmesan

Oh She Glows Everyday
Angela Liddon

Ingredients:

1 large eggplant	1 tsp dried oregano
1/2 tsp sea salt	1 tsp dried basil
1 cup unsweetened almond milk	Parmesan cheese*
3/4 cu white or whole-grain spelt flour	Cooked pasta
1 tsp apple cider vinegar	Marinara sauce
Freshly ground black pepper	

Directions:

1. Slice eggplant into rounds 1/2" thick and sweat 15-30 minutes. Rinse, press out excess water, and dry.
2. Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together milk, flour, vinegar, salt, pepper oregano and basil. Place parmesan in shallow dish.
4. Dip dry eggplant slices in milk mixture and tap off excess. Then press into parmesan and coat both sides. Set 2" apart in baking dish.
5. Bake 16-22 minutes, flipping halfway through.
6. Serve over cooked pasta with marinara sauce.

***Healthy Plant-based Parmesan**

1 1/2 cup raw cashews or raw pumpkin seeds
 1/4 cup plus 2 Tbsp nutritional yeast
 3/4 to 1 1/2 tsp fine sea salt
 3 cloves garlic or 3/4 tsp garlic powder
 Process in blender until a coarse meal forms.