

# Chigirtma

Traditional Azerbaijani Chigirtma with eggplant, tomatoes, and peppers. A flavorful vegetarian appetizer that 'screams' with delicious sounds while cooking.

15 min

PREP

20 min

COOK

35 min

TOTAL

4

SERVINGS

Easy

DIFFICULTY

## Ingredients

- 4 eggplant
- 4 green pepper
- 4 tomato
- 4 clove garlic
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp salt
- 6 cup sunflower oil

## Instructions

### 1 Prepare the eggplant

Peel the eggplant in alternating strips lengthwise, leaving some skin for structure. Cut into 1/2-inch thick lengthwise slices. Sprinkle lightly with salt and let sit for 15 minutes to draw out bitterness.

### 2 Heat the oil

Heat oil in a heavy-bottomed pan over medium-high heat (180°C/350°F) until it shimmers but doesn't smoke.

### 3 Fry the eggplant

Pat the eggplant slices dry with paper towels. Fry the eggplant slices in batches until golden brown and tender, about 3-4 minutes per side. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate.

### 4 In the same oil, fry the peppers until softened and lightly charred in spots, about 5-6 minutes, turning occasionally. Remove and set aside with the eggplant.

### 5 Prepare the aromatics

Remove excess oil from the pan, leaving about 2 tablespoons. Reduce heat to medium-low. Add the 4 cloves

of minced garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

#### 6 **Add tomatoes and seasonings**

Add the chopped tomatoes, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1 teaspoon ground spices to the pan. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tomatoes break down and form a sauce, about 5-7 minutes.

#### 7 **Combine and simmer**

Gently return the fried eggplant and peppers to the pan, folding them into the tomato mixture without breaking the vegetables. Add 6 cups of water or enough to barely cover the vegetables.

#### 8 **Final cooking**

Bring to a gentle simmer, then reduce heat to low. Cover and cook for 15-20 minutes, stirring gently once or twice, until vegetables are very tender and flavors are well combined.

#### 9 **Rest and serve**

Remove from heat and let the chigirtma cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional salt if needed before serving.

## Tips

Salt the sliced eggplant and let it sit for 30 minutes before cooking to remove any bitterness and reduce oil absorption.

Use a heavy-bottomed pan or Dutch oven to ensure even heat distribution and prevent burning.

Don't overcrowd the pan when frying vegetables - cook in batches if necessary for proper browning.

Choose ripe but firm tomatoes for the best texture and flavor balance in the final dish.

Let the dish rest at room temperature for at least 30 minutes before serving to allow flavors to meld.

Taste and adjust salt levels at the end of cooking, as the vegetables release moisture during the cooking process.

Use a wooden spoon to gently stir ingredients to avoid breaking up the tender eggplant pieces.

For extra depth of flavor, char the peppers slightly over an open flame before adding to the dish.