

Eggplant Caponata

Authentic Sicilian Eggplant Caponata recipe with sweet and sour flavors. Perfect appetizer with tomatoes, olives, capers, and Mediterranean herbs.

45 min

PREP

30 min

COOK

1h 15min

TOTAL

4

SERVINGS

Easy

DIFFICULTY

Ingredients

- 1 eggplant
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion
- 2 clove garlic
- 1 bell pepper
- 2 tomato
- 2 tbsp caper (caparis)
- 1 cup green olive
- 2 tbsp pine nut
- 1 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp granulated sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 2 tbsp basil

Instructions

1 Prepare the eggplant

Cut 1 large eggplant into 1-inch cubes. Sprinkle generously with salt and place in a colander. Let drain for 30 minutes to remove bitterness, then rinse thoroughly and pat completely dry with paper towels.

2 Prepare the vegetables

Dice 1 medium onion into ½-inch pieces. Mince 2 cloves garlic. Cut 2 celery stalks into ½-inch pieces. Dice 1

cup canned crushed tomatoes if using whole tomatoes.

3 **Cook the aromatics**

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat (160°C/320°F). Add the diced onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft and translucent, about 5-6 minutes. Add minced garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

4 Add the celery pieces to the skillet and cook, stirring occasionally, until they begin to soften but still have some bite, about 4-5 minutes.

5 Add the dried eggplant cubes to the skillet and cook, stirring frequently, until golden brown and tender when pierced with a fork, about 10-12 minutes.

6 Stir in 1 cup crushed tomatoes and 2 tablespoons capers. Cook until the tomatoes break down and the mixture begins to thicken, about 5-7 minutes.

7 **Add the sweet and sour elements**

Add 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar, 1 tablespoon sugar, and 1 teaspoon each salt and black pepper. Stir until the sugar completely dissolves, about 1 minute.

8 Reduce heat to low and simmer the caponata, stirring occasionally, until the liquid has mostly evaporated and the mixture holds together when stirred, about 15-20 minutes.

9 Stir in 2 tablespoons pine nuts and remove from heat. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional salt, pepper, or vinegar as needed.

10 Transfer to a serving bowl and let cool to room temperature, about 1 hour. Serve with crusty bread or crackers.

Tips

Salt the Eggplant: Always salt diced eggplant and let it drain for 30 minutes before cooking. This removes bitterness and prevents the eggplant from absorbing too much oil during cooking.

Cook Vegetables Separately: For best results, sauté the eggplant separately from other vegetables initially. This ensures even cooking and prevents mushy textures.

Balance Sweet and Sour: Taste and adjust the vinegar-sugar mixture to your preference. Some like it more tangy, others prefer it sweeter - find your perfect balance.

Use Quality Ingredients: Since caponata has few ingredients, each one matters. Use good olive oil, quality vinegar, and the best tomatoes you can find.

Don't Rush the Simmering: Allow the mixture to simmer slowly for the full time. This helps flavors meld and the liquid reduce to the proper consistency.

Make It Ahead: Caponata tastes better the next day, so make it a day ahead of serving for best flavor development.

Room Temperature Serving: Remove caponata from the refrigerator 30 minutes before serving to bring out the full spectrum of flavors.

Storage Tip: Store in glass containers rather than plastic to prevent the acidic ingredients from affecting the taste.