



## Eggplant

**Scientific name:** Solanaceae melongena.

**Family:** Solanaceae aka nightshade family. Related to peppers, tomatoes, and potatoes

**Fun fact:** in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, wealthy women in China created a dye from the skins of eggplant to stain their teeth black. Once polished, their teeth took on a silver hue.

**Varieties: recommended for Missouri and Midwest states.**

Black beauty (deep purple, heirloom)

Casper (long, white fruit and ripens early)

Ichiban (long, slender fruit and prolific)

Rosa Bianca (round, violet and white fruit)

**Varieties we have at Earthdance:**

‘Galine’, ‘Ping Tung Long’, Rosa Bianca

**Planting:** This warm season crop’s seeds are typically started eight to ten weeks prior to the anticipated frost-free date. Spacing should be 18inch between plants, depending on cultivar and 24inch to 36inch between rows, depending on the type of cultivation.

Planting depth is ¼ inch deep. Outdoor soil temperature should be at least 55 to 60 degrees before transplanting. Other wise they become stunted, turn yellow, and will be slow to bear fruit. Plan on an average of two plants per three people.

**Soil:**

A heavy feeder, eggplant likes rich soil, made porous by the addition of humus to promote quick growth and good drainage. Apply manure water or tea every 2 weeks.

**Pest and Diseases:**

Aphids, Colorado potato beetle, cucumber beetle, cutworm, flea beetle, harlequin bug, lace bug, leafhopper, mite, nematodes, tomato hornworm, whitefly.

Anthraxnose, bacterial wilt, botrytis fruit rot, blight, tobacco mosaic, vertically wilt

**Companions:**

All beans and peppers

**Harvest:**

Pick when fruit is no more then 3"-5" long or 4" diameter and before the skin loses its luster. Cut the fruit with a small amount of stem. Fruit should be light colored. Brown seeds indicate the fruit has ripened too long. Eggplant vines are spiny, so be careful to avoid pricking yourself.

**Nutrients in Eggplant:**

Eggplant is an excellent source of dietary fiber. It's a very good source of vitamins B1, B6, and potassium. It's a good source of copper, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, niacin, and folic acid. Nasunin, an anthocyanin from eggplant peels, is a potent antioxidant and free-radical scavenger and has protective activity against lipid peroxidation.

## **Recipe**

### **Buttermilk Pomegranate Eggplant**



## Ingredients

- 2 large and long eggplants
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1-1/2 teaspoons lemon thyme leaves (regular thyme will do), plus a few whole sprigs to garnish
- Sea salt and black pepper
- 1 pomegranate
- 1 teaspoon za'atar

## Sauce

- 9 table spoons buttermilk
- ½ cup Greek yogurt
- 1 ½ tablespoons olive oil, plus a drizzle to finish
- 1 small garlic clove, crushed
- 1 pinch of salt

## Preparation

- Preheat the oven to 350°F. Cut the eggplants in half lengthways, cutting straight through the green stalk (the stalk is for the look; don't eat it). Use a small sharp knife to make three or four parallel incisions in the cut side of each eggplant half, without cutting through to the skin. Repeat at a 45-degree angle to get a diamond-shaped pattern.
- Place the eggplant halves, cut-side up, on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Brush them with olive oil—keep on brushing until all of the oil has been absorbed by the flesh. Sprinkle with the lemon thyme leaves and some salt and pepper. Roast for 35 to 40 minutes, at which point the flesh should be soft, flavorful, and nicely browned. Remove from the oven and let cool completely.
- While the eggplants are in the oven, cut the pomegranate into two horizontally. Hold one half over a bowl, with the cut side against your palm, and use the back of a wooden spoon or a rolling pin to gently knock on the pomegranate skin.

Continue beating with increasing power until the seeds start coming out naturally and falling through your fingers into the bowl. Once all are there, sift through the seeds and remove any bits of white skin or membrane.

- To make the sauce, whisk together all of the ingredients. Taste for seasoning, then keep cold until needed.
- To serve, spoon plenty of buttermilk sauce over the eggplant halves without covering the stalks. Sprinkle za'atar and plenty of pomegranate seeds on top and garnish with lemon thyme. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil.