

Eggplant Parmesan

Baked, crispy eggplant layered with herbed crumbs, tomato sauce, and cheeses; finished with fresh basil.

Overview

A lighter, baked take on the classic: panko + Parmesan–crusted eggplant rounds are oven–crisped (not fried), then layered with marinara and fresh mozzarella and baked until bubbling.

At a Glance

Yield	Serves 6–8
Prep Time	20 minutes
Cook Time	40 minutes
Total Time	1 hour
Method	Bake breaded eggplant; layer with sauces/cheeses; bake and broil to finish

Ingredients

Main

- 2 large eggplants, cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch–thick rounds
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup almond milk
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups panko breadcrumbs
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fine sea salt, plus more for sprinkling
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling
- 28 ounces marinara sauce (homemade or good-quality jarred)
- 2 large fresh mozzarella balls, thinly sliced
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup fresh basil leaves, for topping

Equipment

2 rimmed baking sheets; parchment paper; 8×12 - or 9×13 -inch baking dish; 2 shallow dishes; tongs.

Instructions

1. **Heat oven.** Preheat to 400°F (200°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment.¹

¹If your oven has convection, use it here for extra browning and crunch.

2. **Set up dredge.** In one shallow dish, whisk eggs with almond milk. In another, combine panko, 1 cup Parmesan, oregano, thyme, red pepper flakes, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, and several grinds of pepper.
3. **Bread eggplant.** Working one slice at a time, dip eggplant into egg mixture (allow excess to drip), then press into the panko mixture to coat well on all sides. Arrange in a single layer on the prepared sheets.
4. **Bake until crisp.** Drizzle the tops lightly with olive oil. Bake 16–18 minutes, until tender and golden brown, rotating sheets once.
5. **Layer.** Spread $\frac{1}{2}$ cup marinara in the bottom of an 8×12 - or 9×13 -inch baking dish. Add half of the baked eggplant in an even layer. Spoon over 1 cup marinara, then half the mozzarella slices. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Repeat with remaining eggplant, remaining marinara, and remaining mozzarella. Sprinkle with the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Parmesan and a light drizzle of olive oil; add a few pinches of sea salt.
6. **Bake & broil.** Bake at 400°F for about 20 minutes, until bubbling. Switch to broil for 2–4 minutes to brown the cheese in spots (watch closely).
7. **Finish.** Let rest 5–10 minutes. Top with torn basil leaves, slice, and serve.

Pro Tips

- **Even slices** ensure even cooking; aim for consistent $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch rounds and uniform mozzarella thickness.
- **Grate your Parmesan** for best flavor (Parmigiano Reggiano or pecorino).
- **Don't skimp on crumbs:** a generous panko / Parmesan / herb coating drives texture and flavor.
- **Olive oil matters:** a light drizzle before baking promotes deep golden, crisp results.
- **Season between layers** (a pinch of salt and pepper over sauces/cheeses) for a well-seasoned final bake.

Serving Suggestions

Hearty enough to stand alone, or pair with pasta (or zucchini noodles/spaghetti squash), crusty bread, and simple veggie sides like roasted broccoli/cauliflower/tomatoes, grilled zucchini, or a bright salad (Caprese, chopped Italian, Caesar, or panzanella).

Make-ahead: Bake eggplant rounds up to 1 day in advance; cool, refrigerate, and assemble/bake just before serving.