



## Chapter Seven

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# ROASTED EGGPLANT WITH BASIL AND FETA



**Gordon Ramsay Teaches Cooking II: Restaurant Recipes at Home**

## ROASTED EGGPLANT WITH BASIL AND FETA

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This is my favorite way to cook eggplant, one of those rare vegetables that stands out on its own.

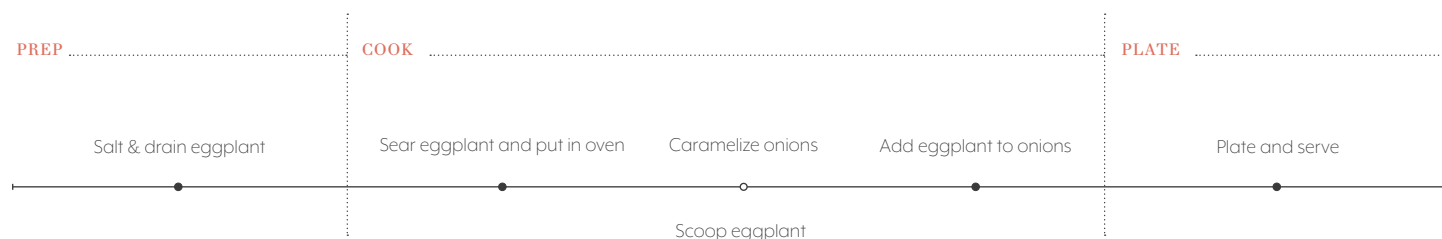
*Chapter Review*

Cooking eggplant is a labor of love but the results are worth the effort. When eggplant is cooked to the point that the flesh can be scooped out of its skin, chefs call it “caviar.”

Eggplant has a natural bitterness that has to be removed before cooking. Slice and salt the flesh then give the salt time to pull out the bitter moisture. Sear the eggplant in a hot pan to get color on the flesh and then bake in the oven. They will shrink during cooking as moisture evaporates in the oven, leaving behind a concentrated eggplant flavor. After the eggplant comes out of the oven it could be served as-is, but for this dish Gordon wants to take flavor to the next level.

Start building flavor into the dish with the spiced, caramelized onions. When dicing the onion, don't worry about speed. Get your technique down and you will gradually get faster. Gordon uses white onion because it can stand up to the caramelization process better than a more delicate variety like spring onions or shallots. Then, grate fresh ginger into the hot eggplant and watch as it melts into the pan. Tap the microplane on the side of the pan to get every last bit of ginger into the eggplant. At this point, the dish has the earthiness of the eggplant, spice from the onions, and slight heat from the ginger. Gordon adds puréed tomatoes to balance out the flavor profile with their natural sweetness. Finish the dish with basil, feta, and olive oil and have it on toast the next day.

## RECIPE TIMELINE



## ROASTED EGGPLANT WITH BASIL AND FETA

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### *Prep*

- This dish that can be made 3 to 4 days in advance leaving out the basil. Warm the finished product back up in a nonstick sauté pan, add basil, and garnish with feta and micro sorrel.
- The eggplant and canned tomatoes can be drained a day ahead.

### *Ingredient Notes*

- San Marzano tomatoes are the best for this dish because of their sweeter flavor but other types of canned tomatoes will work in place of San Marzanos if you can't find them.

### *Dietary Restrictions*

- This dish is gluten-free, vegetarian, and can be made vegan by omitting the feta cheese.

### *Beverage Pairing*

- Gordon recommends you pair this dish with a light red wine like pinot noir.

## Roasted Turkish Spiced Eggplant With Fresh Basil and Feta Cheese

*Serves 8*

2 medium Italian eggplants  
8-10 garlic cloves, sliced in half lengthwise  
6 tablespoons olive oil  
1 large white onion, small dice  
1 tablespoon cracked black pepper  
2 teaspoons fresh ginger, grated  
4 teaspoons cumin, ground  
3 teaspoons coriander, ground  
1 teaspoon cardamom, ground  
1 small knob peeled ginger for grating  
2 28-ounce cans crushed San Marzano tomatoes  
10 fresh basil leaves  
Salt and fresh cracked black pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350°F. Pour the canned tomatoes into a sieve over a large bowl and allow to drain for a minimum of 30 minutes.

Slice eggplants in half lengthwise. Use the tip of a paring knife to score the cut side of the eggplant on a bias, moving diagonally across the flesh. Repeat the process slicing in the opposite direction to create a crosshatched pattern.

Generously season the scored side of the eggplants with salt. Face the eggplants cut side down onto a sheet tray with a wire rack to drain for at least 10 minutes. This will allow the excess water to leach out from the eggplants to remove moisture and bitterness. Pat off the excess water with a paper towel. Poke 4 to 6 garlic clove halves into the score marks. Drizzle one tablespoon of olive oil over each half. Finish seasoning with 3 to 4 twists of fresh black pepper.

Heat two large cast-iron pans on medium-high heat with one tablespoon of olive oil in each. When the oil is smoking, add the eggplants cut side down. Sear 3 to 5 minutes or until the eggplants turn a dark golden brown on the cut side. Roast for 20 to 30 minutes or until the flesh is tender and easy to remove from the skin and the eggplants have reduced in size. Remove from pans and rest for at least 5 minutes until the eggplant is cool enough to handle.

Use a large metal spoon to scoop the cooked eggplant from the skins. Place the flesh on the cutting board and mince the eggplant and roasted garlic to make a paste.

Add two tablespoons of olive oil to a large non-stick sauté pan over medium heat. Add diced onion and sweat for 2 to 3 minutes until translucent. Add one more tablespoon of olive oil if the onions seem dry or start to color. Season generously with salt and one tablespoon of cracked black pepper. Add the cumin, coriander, and cardamom and cook for 2 minutes, stirring frequently. The onions will change color due to the color of the spices.

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Add eggplant and use a wooden spoon to stir the eggplant and onions together. Lower the heat to medium-low and cook for 3 to 4 minutes. Add one tablespoon of fresh grated ginger and cook for two minutes. Adding tomatoes and cook over medium heat for 5 to 10 minutes or until a good amount of moisture has evaporated out. Season to taste with salt and pepper if needed.

Stack the basil leaves, roll the leaves into a tight log shape, and slice along the width to chiffonade. Turn basil 90° and slice through three times for a rough chop. Add basil and continue to cook over medium-low heat for one more minute before removing from heat.

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### Plate + Garnish

4 ounce feta cheese, crumbled  
2 pinches micro sorrel  
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
salt

Transfer the finished eggplant mixture to two 20 ounce serving bowls. Finish with a sprinkle of feta cheese and a drizzle of olive oil over. Garnish with micro sorrel.

## ROASTED EGGPLANT WITH BASIL AND FETA

*Take It Further*

- Refer to Chapter Six: Knife Skills of Gordon's first MasterClass for more on holding your knife, sharpening, and using the three-finger rule.
- Other ways to use the simple roasted eggplant: on toast or as a side dish with fish or lamb; or transform it into baba ganoush by following the recipe from Gordon Ramsay's *Healthy, Lean, & Fit* below.

**BABA GANOUSH**

From *Gordon Ramsay's Healthy, Lean, & Fit*,  
reproduced courtesy of the author and Hachette Book Group, USA.

*Serves 4-6*

2 large eggplants  
a little oil  
Juice of ½ lemon, or to taste  
1½ tablespoon tahini  
2 tablespoon yogurt  
2 large garlic cloves, peeled and crushed  
1 sprig thyme, leaves picked  
Salt and black pepper to taste  
Extra-virgin olive oil  
A few pinches of sumac or chopped flat leaf parsley

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Prick each eggplant several times with the tip of a sharp knife, then place both on a lightly oiled baking sheet. Roast for 45 to 60 minutes, turning them over halfway, until the skins are wrinkly and the eggplants feel soft when lightly pressed—they should almost collapse upon themselves.
2. Leave the eggplants until they are cool enough to handle, then peel away the blackened skins and put the flesh into a colander. Press with the back of a ladle to squeeze out as much liquid as possible. Tip the aubergine flesh onto a board and chop roughly (or blend for a smooth texture if preferred).
3. Put the chopped aubergine into a bowl and add the lemon juice, tahini, yogurt, garlic, thyme, and seasoning. Mix well, then taste and adjust the seasoning. Cover and chill if not serving immediately.
4. Spoon the baba ganoush into a serving bowl and drizzle extra-virgin olive oil over the surface. Sprinkle with sumac or chopped parsley to garnish, and serve with warm flatbread.