

WILLIAMS-SONOMA

Baked Eggplant Rolls

These tender eggplant rolls have a savory stuffing of bell pepper, pecorino cheese and bread crumbs. Serve them before a pasta with tomato sauce.

Ingredients:

2 eggplant, about 1 lb. each

1 1/2 tsp. salt, plus salt, to taste

2 red bell peppers

1/4 cup lightly toasted fine fresh bread crumbs

3/4 cup grated pecorino cheese

1 Tbs. pine nuts

4 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

2 garlic cloves, minced

Freshly ground pepper, to taste

About 16 fresh basil leaves

White wine vinegar, to taste

1 Tbs. minced fresh flat-leaf parsley

Directions:

Trim the eggplant, then cut lengthwise into slices 1/3 inch thick. You should have 10 to 12 slices. Use only the 8 largest slices (reserve the others for another use). Arrange them on a rack. Using the 1 1/2 tsp. salt, sprinkle the tops of the slices. Let stand for 2 hours. The slices will exude moisture. Pat dry with paper towels.

Bring a large pot three-fourths full of salted water to a boil. Working in batches, add the eggplant slices and cook until supple enough to roll easily, 5 to 6 minutes. Using tongs, transfer to a kitchen towel to drain.

Meanwhile, preheat a broiler. Cut the bell peppers in half lengthwise and remove the seeds. Place, cut sides down, on a baking sheet. Broil until the skins blacken and blister. Remove from the broiler, cover the peppers loosely with aluminum foil and let cool for 10 minutes. Peel away the skins and chop the peppers finely.

In a small bowl, combine the bell peppers, bread crumbs, 1/4 cup of the pecorino cheese, pine nuts and 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. Stir to mix well. In a small fry pan over medium-low heat, warm 1 Tbs. of the remaining olive oil. Add the garlic and sauté for 1 minute. Add to the bell pepper mixture. Season generously with salt and pepper.

Preheat an oven to 375°F. Oil a baking dish large enough to accommodate the eggplant rolls in a single layer.

Arrange the eggplant slices on a work surface. Divide the bread crumb stuffing evenly among the slices, spreading it in a thin layer. Tear the basil leaves into small pieces and scatter evenly over the stuffing. Roll up each slice into a neat cylinder, then arrange, seam sides down, in the prepared dish. Drizzle the rolls evenly with the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil and sprinkle lightly with vinegar.

Bake until the eggplant is completely tender when pierced, about 1 hour. Remove from the oven and sprinkle evenly with the remaining 1/2 cup pecorino cheese and with the parsley. Serve hot or warm.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Lifestyles Series, *Classic Pasta at Home*, by Janet Fletcher (Time-Life Books, 1998).