

MELANZANE PARMIGIANA

This lovely aubergine dish can be served as lunch with some crusty bread, or as a side dish to accompany some griddled chicken or a barbecue. There are many different recipes, and this is one that I have cobbled together from a mix of sources, with my own little tweaks added.

INGREDIENTS – SERVES 6 AS A SIDE DISH

2 large or 3 medium aubergines	1 tsp red wine vinegar*
2 tbsp olive oil	salt and pepper
1 onion chopped *	1 handful basil
1 clove garlic *	200 gm grated parmesan
2 tsp fresh oregano or 1 tsp dried *	500 gm mozzarella - buffalo if possible
2 400 gm tins tinned tomatoes *	Fresh breadcrumbs (optional)

- Items marked * can be replaced with a large jar of tomato pasta sauce

INSTRUCTIONS

Heat oven to 190 (fan)

IF YOU ARE MAKING YOUR OWN SAUCE - Put 1 tbsp olive oil into a saucepan and add the onion and garlic. Cook for about 10 minutes until onion is soft but not coloured. Add tomatoes and oregano and simmer for about 15 minutes until thickened. Chop tomatoes with a wooden spoon as they cook to make a sauce. Season the tomato sauce with plenty of black pepper and a little salt (the parmesan is salty – so beware). Add the red wine vinegar.

Slice aubergines about 1 cm thick. Get a griddle pan really hot and brush the aubergines lightly with oil. Grill the aubergines on both sides until charred (or use a barbecue).

Tear the mozzarella into strips.

Put a thin layer of the tomato sauce (from a jar, or the sauce you've made) on the bottom of a ceramic dish measuring about 30 x 30 (or equivalent oblong), followed by a layer of aubergines, dot with a little more sauce, scatter with mozzarella, then some torn basil leaves, then scatter thickly with parmesan. Continue until all used up, finishing with the mozzarella, basil and parmesan.

If you would like a crispy top, add a scattering of fresh breadcrumbs. You can also add some additional fresh oregano and salt and pepper to the crumbs.

Cook for about 30 - 40 minutes. The top should be golden. Leave for about 10 minutes before eating (unless you want to burn your tongue!).