

Winter Cooking in New Bedford: Fried Eggplant Parmesan Recipe



Wow the family with some mouth-watering Eggplant Parmesan! (Flickr.com user "Blue Lotus")

by Jennifer Hollie Bowles

My cooking mentor in the South was my mom's boss lady, Mrs. Dominick. She owned a Kennel, where I got to play with everything from standard poodles and Siamese cats to peacocks and pet squirrels. She threw me in the kitchen at about age 9 and had me cook lunch for everyone, which was about five or six people, depending on the day.

Mrs. Dominick would tell me to cook something specific like lasagna or country fried steak and gravy, but that's all she should say—no advice, ingredients, temperature settings, nothing! If I had trouble, she flew in like a whirlwind and

finished-up. I learned a lot by watching, yet always felt that I had the freedom to be creative in the kitchen. She never used a recipe, and I still don't unless I'm making my own! I think of cooking to be a sort of alchemy, where I alter ingredients into ultimate yumminess!

Since moving to New Bedford, I've found that Price Rite has the most economical prices on most foods, as well as a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. The past few weeks they've had an excellent selection of eggplant. Eggplant is one of my favorite foods ever, and I've even converted my meat-loving husband to have a veggie night with this recipe, which is a unique combination of multi-cultural flare!

Fried Eggplant Parmesan

Preparation Time: ~1 Hour

Ingredients:

- 1 Eggplant
- 1 Jar Plain Spaghetti Sauce (preferably homemade, but store bought will do)
- 1 lb. Spaghetti (wheat spaghetti works great!)
- 1 Onion
- 1 Green Pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Cup Vodka (for the sauce!)
- 1 cup flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Cup Bread Crumbs
- 3 Eggs
- Olive Oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Cup Mozzarella
- Grated Parmesan Cheese
- Salt, Pepper, Oregano, Basil, Minced Garlic, Garlic Powder, Onion Powder, Turmeric

Step 1: Slice-up the onion and green pepper. Put the slices in a big pan with one or two tablespoons of minced garlic. Saute them in olive oil (on medium-low heat) for a couple of

minutes, until onion is golden. Add oregano and basil: don't be shy! Add the spaghetti sauce. Cook on medium/medium-high heat.

Step 2: Put flour in a medium sized bowl. Add bread crumbs. Mix in spices—about $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon per spice (a little less with the turmeric), but get creative and add more of the spices you love most! Beat three eggs in another medium sized bowl (I like to add garlic and oregano to the egg mixture as well!). These will be used for dipping your eggplant slices.

Step 3: Put water in a big pot for your spaghetti. Turn on high.

Step 4: Cut the eggplant in slices (thicker for extra density and flavor, smaller for crispier).

Step 5: Cover a big frying pan in olive oil and place on the stove at medium heat. Your spaghetti sauce should be boiling at this point. Slowly add the vodka to the sauce, stirring well. Turn the temperature to simmer and cover with a lid.

Step 6: Take a slice of eggplant and dip it into the egg mixture. Coat well, but let the excess drip off. Then put the slice into the flour/bread crumb mixture. Coat well on both sides. Place eggplant slice into the frying pan. Continue until the pan is full. Let each side of the eggplant cook about two to three minutes, until brown and crispy but not too brown! Place fried eggplant slices on a towel-covered plate and sprinkle a little Parmesan Cheese on them. You may have to fill the pan with eggplant several times! The spaghetti water should be boiling about half-way through this process, and when it does, add your spaghetti!

Step 7: By the time you drain your spaghetti, your last round of eggplant slices should be almost done. I like to add extra Parmesan cheese directly to the spaghetti. To serve, generously top spaghetti and lightly top eggplant with your wonderful homemade vodka sauce. Top with Parmesan cheese and a

good helping of shredded mozzarella cheese. To make sure the cheese is good and melted and the dish is popping hot, stick in the microwave for about thirty seconds just prior to eating!
