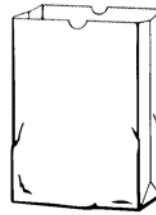


IN THE BAG
Potomac Vegetable Farms
July 22, 2008



Mini: summer squash, sweet onions, tomatoes, potatoes, parsley, carrots or cabbage, basil or oregano

Regular: sweet onions, summer squash, garlic, tomatoes, swiss chard or celery, eggplant, potatoes

Robust: garlic, onions, summer squash, garlic chives, tomatoes, cabbage, beets, swiss chard, eggplant, celery, potatoes, oregano, basil

Eggplant is one of the more beautiful vegetables. Though they come in green and white varieties, they are striking in their classic purple-black form. The eggplant – also called aubergine and brinjal – is native to India and came to Western cuisine around the year 1500. Eggplant is a boon for vegetarians – it adds richness and heft to meatless dishes. It's also attractive to the taste buds. Eggplant is a staple in key dishes from many cultures – such as ratatouille in France, moussaka in Greece, baingan bartha in India, melanzane alla parmigiana in Italy, and baba ghanouj across the Middle East. Some of you may have learned to salt your eggplant and then rinse it to rid it of its bitter taste – but this eggplant, from our friend Heinz in Maryland, is fresh enough that it probably doesn't need it.

Eggplant, tomatoes, and potatoes are all members of the Solanaceae family – the same family as deadly nightshade. Some of you are getting all three in your bags this week. Because of their poisonous sibling, all three of these plants have been considered poisonous at some degree or another. It took a long time for the general populace to embrace these vegetables – especially tomatoes. Legend has it that in 1820 a man bent on convincing his distrustful neighbors in Salem, New Jersey that tomatoes were *not* poisonous ate an entire basket of them on the courthouse steps while a huge crowd of 2,000 people watched in fascination. They had gathered to watch him die, and were somewhat surprised when he didn't.

It is possible that this week we will begin to receive unsprayed sweet corn from our friend Steven Cox, who grows vegetables in Lucketts, VA. If so, some of you may find a couple of ears of bicolor corn in your share. But because it is unsprayed, this corn may also have a few worms in it. They are harmless. Just cut out the damaged parts and boil the corn for about three minutes. We used to grow acres and acres of corn, but we gave that up when we began to grow intensive gardens without any chemical inputs. We know just what it takes to grow sweet corn – a lot of nutrients, plenty of water, good luck, and the hard work of harvesting. We are glad to pay Steven to grow the corn, and hope that you will savor every bite.

Sautéed Eggplant with Parsley and Pine Nuts
(adapted from *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone*)

Though we think these eggplant will taste just fine without being salted, some cooks also like to salt their eggplant to make their resulting dish less watery – with varying degrees of success. If you don't have 30 minutes to kill, you can probably skip the salting mentioned below.

2 medium-sized **eggplant**
Salt and pepper
½ cup olive oil
¼ cup chopped **parsley**
1 large **garlic clove**
2 tbsp. toasted pine nuts

Cut the eggplant into ½-inch rounds, then into ½-inch cubes. Sprinkle with salt and set aside for 30 minutes, then blot dry. Heat the oil in a large skillet until nearly smoking. Add the eggplant and stir immediately to coat.

Lower the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until the eggplant is golden and soft, about 15 minutes. Taste, then season with salt and pepper. Chop the parsley and garlic together and toss with the eggplant along with the pine nuts.

Baba Ghanouj

(adapted from Farmer John's Cookbook)

This is a traditional Middle Eastern spread – to be used as a dip for pita bread or vegetables. It also goes well on sandwiches and wraps.

3 tbsp. olive oil, divided
2 medium **eggplants**
¼ - ½ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
1/3 cup tahini
1-2 cloves **garlic**, minced
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp cayenne pepper
1 tsp cumin (optional)
¼ cup pine nuts (garnish)
3 tbsp. chopped **parsley** (garnish)

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Rub 1 tablespoon of the oil over both whole eggplants and place them on a baking sheet. Roast, turning once or twice, until very soft, 30-45 minutes depending on size. Let cool.

Meanwhile, toast the pine nuts in a dry, heavy skillet over high heat until they start to brown in spots and become fragrant. (Be careful not to overtoast – they burn very quickly). Immediately transfer the nuts to a dish to cool.

Cut the eggplants in half and scoop out the flesh. Puree the eggplant in a food processor or finely chop it on a cutting board. Transfer to a bowl.

Add the lemon juice, tahini, garlic, cumin, salt, cayenne, and the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Mix until well combined. Transfer to a serving bowl and garnish with the parsley and pine nuts.