

Grilled Marinated Eggplant

BY MARCO CANORA JUNE 2010 SALT TO TASTE: THE KEYS TO CONFIDENT, DELICIOUS COOKING

Yield Serves 4 as a first course or side dish

Ingredients

1/2 cup loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

2 tablespoons drained capers

1 medium garlic clove, peeled and sliced

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Sicilian

1/4 teaspoon minced peperoncini or red pepper flakes

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 medium eggplant (3/4 pound), peeled and sliced about 1/3" thick

3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Preparation

Finely chop the parsley with the capers and garlic. Add the oregano and peperoncini and chop everything together. Put the mixture in a bowl, stir in the oil, season with salt and pepper, and reserve.

Preheat an outdoor charcoal or gas grill or a grill pan until smoking hot.

Put enough eggplant slices on the grill to cover it without crowding. Cook the eggplant until well marked, 3 to 6 minutes, then turn the slices over. Cook until tender, about 3 minutes more.

Remove the eggplant from the grill.

Pour the vinegar into a shallow bowl. While still hot, dip each eggplant slice into the vinegar and set it aside on a plate. Continue grilling and dipping the eggplant until all the slices are cooked and seasoned.

Spoon 2 tablespoons of the parsley mixture onto a platter and spread it evenly with the back of a spoon. Arrange half of the grilled eggplant on the parsley in a single layer. Smear each slice of eggplant with more parsley. Place a second layer of eggplant on top and spread the remaining parsley on it. Cover the dish with plastic wrap and set aside to marinate at room temperature for about 2 hours (or refrigerate for longer). Serve at room temperature.

Chef's notes:

You could make the parsley mixture in a food processor, but I don't. I find hand chopping gives me the somewhat drier texture I prefer.

For this recipe, I don't salt or oil the eggplant; I grill it dry. This way, it has a nice chewy texture. I marinate the eggplant as soon as it comes off the grill so the flavor of the marinade penetrates. Marinated eggplant makes a great antipasto, alone or as part of a larger spread. It also works as an accompaniment to grilled meat and fish. However you serve it, I strongly suggest you make sure to save enough for a sandwich. Country bread with grilled marinated eggplant, prosciutto, and mozzarella—really, really good.