

Ichiban Eggplant

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Quick Facts

- Also known as the Japanese eggplant
- Have a sweeter and mild taste than other eggplants
- Skin contains most of nutrients so it is safe to eat
- The nutrients it has are potassium, vitamin C, folate and also nasumin, which protects the brain from damage
- Ichiban eggplants are used in gourmet restaurants for their nice texture and mild flavor



Cooking and Recipe

Cooking Facts:

- Very absorbent spongy flesh; it absorbs the flavor from sauces easily
- Extremely versatile because of its thin skin and mild flavor
- Most commonly cooked by grilling, roasting, sautéed and baked with oils and sauces

Recipe: Eggplant Parmesan Rollatini

Ingredients:

- 4 Tablespoons olive oil (or any cooking oil)
- 2 large ichiban eggplants, sliced lengthwise (16 total)
- 1 ½ cups of marinara sauce
- 2 large eggs
- 1 15-ounce container of ricotta
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 2 cups of grated mozzarella
- ½ cup grated parmesan

Directions:

- Heat oven to 450 F. Divide the oil and eggplant slices between 2 baking sheets. Place eggplant slices in a single layer and turn them to coat in oil; can season with salt and pepper
- Bake the eggplant until soft and beginning to brown (12-15 minutes). Let cool & reduce heat to 400.
- In the bottom of a 9-by-13 inch baking dish, spread ½ cup of marinara. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, ricotta, oregano, 1 cup of mozzarella and ¼ teaspoon of both salt and pepper.
- Place 3 teaspoons of mixture onto eggplant slice, roll up and place on other sheet. Repeat on the rest of the eggplants
- Top eggplant rolls with remaining cup of marinara and cup of mozzarella
- Bake until cheese is has melted and sauce is bubbling (20-25 minutes)

Growing Guide

- Does best in warm climates, needs full sun, and matures in 50 to 60 days
- More productive than the American eggplants
- Tend to grow to be 10 inches long and the plants grow 3-4 feet tall and 2-3 feet wide
- Space the plants 3-4 feet apart and stake/cage them so they don't fall
- Sensitive to frost; stops growing if temperatures are below 50 F so cover in frost blanket if temperatures drop
- Start seeds 6-10 weeks before setting out; they are best put out 2-3 weeks after the average last frost date



Harvesting

- Can be picked at any stage of development
- Spoil quickly so it's best to keep on plant until ripe and then used
- They are ripe when the skin is still glossy and the fruit feels solid; when skin is dull, then they are overripe
- Use sharp knife to cut eggplant off plant; leave short stub of stem attached



Pests and Diseases

- Pests called aphids can reside on the leaves of the eggplant plant, which can usually be saved by pruning off the damaged leaves and/or shoots
- Most common are cercospora leaf spots (the picture to the left); to prevent this, water plants at base and water in the morning so they have ample time to dry
- Blossom-end rot occurs when there isn't enough calcium in the soil, usually due to competition for it between different plants. It causes lesions on the fruit. To prevent this, maintain the soil's pH at 6.5 and utilize lime soil
- Flea beetles also can attack leaves, but don't interfere with production

Purchasing Condition

- Use quickly or freeze the eggplant since they go bad quickly
- Look for eggplants with shiny skin and that also feel hard and sturdy with also a sturdy/hard stem are best
- When they are overripe and also under ripe, they are very bitter and squishy

