

Heritage Recipes

You can share old family recipes and traditions

Molded Eggplant and Bucatini Casserole or Timballo di Melanzane e Bucatini Casserole

From AnnMarie

I remember as a child, my Grandmother "Molly" making Molded Eggplant and Bucatini Casserole and I would sit spellbound as she told me the story. It seems that during the Renaissance the law was passed forbidding the serving of more than three courses at any meal. So the clever cooks of Southern Italy found ways to combine different meals into one. This recipe came from a close friend of my Grandmother's and while she used a special pan for this dish, I found that both a Teflon spring form pan oven proof dish will work . Also Bucatini is a thick tubular spaghetti, it is becoming very difficult to find so Ziti or Rigatoni can be used. You can also make this in steps, making the sauce and meatballs one day and the rest the next day.

Molded Eggplant and Bucatini Casserole

3 large eggplants (at least 11 inches long and as even in size and fullness as possible), salt
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1/2 to 1 cup bread crumbs (toasted)
2 cup Bucatini broken into thirds, or 2 1/2 cups other type
1 large beaten egg
1 Lb package of (beef, veal and pork combined chop meat)
make a pot of your favorite sauce adding about 1/2 cup red wine, 1/4 cup plus 2 tlbs grated cheese.
1 1/2 cups mozzarella cheese (about 6 oz),
peanut oil for frying

IF YOU PLAN TO DO IT ALL IN ONE DAY: Cut off the ends of the eggplants, lengthwise into 1/4" slices. Layer slices in a colander, set in a bowl, salting each layer as you proceed. Place a second bowl on top of the slices to act as a weight leave for about one hour, this step will help remove any excess water from the eggplant. Generously coat the inside of a 3 1/2'deep,9" round mold or cake pan and thoroughly coat inside of pan with, butter than toasted bread crumbs, shake

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off excess refrigerate till needed. Make your sauce and set aside.

MEATBALLS: In a bowl combine the veal, pork and chop meat (most stores carry this combination), Mix the meat with the beaten egg, 2 tlbs dry white wine, 2 tlbs grated cheese, 1/2 cup bread crumbs, and salt mix well and with your hands form the mixture into small meatballs the size of large grapes. Melt 2 tlbs butter in a frying pan and fry meatballs till browned and firm. Remove with slotted spoon set aside. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and cook the pasta until (al dente) drain and set aside.

EGGPLANT: In a large frying pan, heat 1/2 cup peanut oil, wipe the eggplant free of the salt and fry a few slices at a time until slightly softened about 2 minutes on each side. they should be plyable but not to soft, as they would fall apart drain on paper towel or brown paper. set your oven for 325F.

NOW HERE IS THE TRICKY PART: Line the mold or pan with the slices by draping them from the middle of the bottom of the pan to the end up the side and over the top -- it should overhang about 3 inches. Continue doing this until you have covered the bottom completely and overlapping as you went. In a large bowl mix the pasta, meatballs, small cubed mozzarella, 1/2 of the grated cheese, some parsley and 2 cups of the sauce. Mix well carefully add the mixture to the mold , pack it in and even it out. Now turn the overhanging eggplant towards the center overlapping as you go. It should cover completely. Cover top with 1/2 cup sauce and remaining grated cheese. Bake uncovered for 30 minutes remove from oven place on rack and allow to cool (it will help re-firm the eggplant.)

Run a knife around the side just to loosen a bit, this is why I like to use a spring pan, once it cools a bit and you release the side and wonder of wonders you have this really great looking pasta dish wrapped in eggplant. Open the spring and place on a pretty platter cut into wedges or slices serve with extra sauce crusty bread and a salad.

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