

## Enticing Eggplant

Do you like eggplant? Eggplant is also known as aubergine. It is a member of the nightshade family. Some people avoid these nutrient-dense vegetables because they may trigger inflammation, especially in individuals with certain inflammatory conditions, such as arthritis or psoriasis.

Here is everything you need to know about eggplant.

Regardless of the variety, look for eggplants that are heavy, firm, and have smooth skin. The most common varieties are deep purple. There are also white and white/purple streaked varieties.

Deep purple eggplants are typically tear-drop-shaped. For the best quality, choose one that is medium-sized (3 to 4 inches in diameter). Other varieties of eggplant may range from egg-shaped to long and slender. Smaller eggplants have fewer seeds, thinner skin, and tend to be sweeter and more tender.

The skin should be vivid, glossy-looking, and free from scars or blemishes. Avoid those with brown or blue streaks, a light color, or a yellowish cast, as these indicate poor quality. Shriveled and flabby eggplants are often bitter and lack flavor.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends 2½ cups of a variety of vegetables each day as part of a healthy diet. Eggplant is a good choice to help meet this nutritional requirement.

Eggplant is good for you. Eggplant may not be the most nutritious vegetable, but it does give a decent supply of fiber and potassium. An eggplant's deep purple skin contains the antioxidant anthocyanin. One cup of raw eggplant has 20 calories.

Eggplant is delicate and doesn't store well for long periods. It is best to use them as soon as possible. Store unwashed, whole eggplant in the refrigerator's vegetable crisper for a maximum shelf life of 2 to 4 days. Leftover cooked eggplant will store well for up to 5 days in the refrigerator in an airtight container.

Eggplant has a flavor similar to summer zucchini or squash. Eggplant can be eaten raw. Eggplant is wonderful when it's baked, broiled, fried, grilled, roasted, sautéed, or cooked and pureed into a dip.

When eaten raw, eggplant has a slightly bitter taste and spongy texture. Once cooked, though, the taste becomes milder and a bit richer. It also takes on a soft, creamy texture. Eggplant will absorb the flavor of whatever it's cooked with.

Wash the eggplant thoroughly in cold water prior to serving to remove any dirt.

Any eggplant variety can be used interchangeably in most recipes unless the skin color is a specific visual factor. Eggplant is a versatile ingredient that can be prepared and enjoyed in numerous ways. While eggplant can be the center of the dish, it can also complement other ingredients.

When cut open, you'll find meaty white flesh, maybe with a hint of green or yellow, dotted with small clusters of beige seeds. If the inside is brown, the eggplant might have gone bad. Don't cut an eggplant until you're ready to cook it.

Many recipes have you salt the eggplant or soak it in salt water for up to 2 hours, then pat dry before cooking. This helps remove some of the bitterness and prevents the eggplant from tasting chewy. Yes, it takes extra time and effort, but it's well worth it for the best-tasting finished product.

Eggplant gets an unfair reputation for being soggy or even slimy. However, with the right prep and cooking techniques, you can roast, sauté, or grill eggplant to crispy, creamy perfection. The key to any of these methods is hot, high temperatures. Using high temperatures, you're not going to get any slime. You'll get a caramelized outer layer and a creamy interior.

Try a new food now and then. Eggplant is irresistible in dishes.