

The Healthy Cook

Stuffed Italian Eggplant



For this recipe I prefer fresh tomatoes, which are more subtle and less acidic than canned. If you have no choice, though, use 1 cup of diced no-salt-added canned tomatoes.

Fresh thyme is delicious in tomato-based sauces, vinaigrettes, bean soups, and stews. Pop any leftover sprigs into your next roasted chicken or pot of stock. No fresh thyme? Use ½ tsp. of dried thyme in step 2 and don't use any in step 5. (Dried herbs and spices need to be cooked in oil to release and temper their flavor.)



- 2 Italian eggplants (about ½ lb. each)
- 3 Tbs. + 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ tsp. + ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 sprigs + 1 sprig fresh thyme
- 3 Tbs. tomato paste
- 1 lb. ground chicken breast
- 2 cups chopped fresh tomatoes
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup shaved parmesan cheese

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Cut the eggplants in half lengthwise. Scoop out the seedy flesh with a spoon and discard. Brush the eggplant halves with 3 Tbs. oil and season with ¼ tsp. salt. Roast on a lined, rimmed baking pan on the top rack until tender and lightly browned, 18–20 minutes.
2. In a large pan, heat the remaining 1 Tbs. oil over medium heat until shimmering. Sauté the garlic and 3 sprigs of thyme until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring often, until it starts to brown, 2–3 minutes.
3. Add the chicken to the pan. Sauté, stirring frequently, until lightly browned and cooked through, 3–5 minutes. Break up the chicken with a wooden spoon or potato masher.
4. Add the tomatoes to the pan. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes start to break down and the sauce thickens, 5–7 minutes. Season with the remaining ½ tsp. salt and the pepper.
5. Spoon the chicken mixture into the cooked eggplant shells. Top with the parmesan cheese and a few thyme leaves from the remaining sprig of thyme.

PER SERVING (1 stuffed eggplant half): calories 340 | total fat 19 g | sat fat 3.5 g | carbs 14 g
fiber 5 g | total sugar 7 g | added sugar 0 g | protein 30 g | sodium 530 mg

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Grilled Sesame Chicken & Vegetables

 SERVES 4

So simple and delicious. Fire up the grill and dinner will be on the table in 30 minutes. This chicken is on regular rotation in my house. If you have leftovers, they make a great salad.



- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp. sweet paprika
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika
- ½ tsp. ground coriander or cumin
- 1 tsp. mild red chili flakes (Korean gochugaru or Aleppo-style) or hot paprika
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp. brown sugar
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
- 1 Tbs. toasted sesame seeds
- 2 bell peppers (any color), quartered lengthwise and seeded
- 4 small zucchinis, halved lengthwise
- ¾ cup Sesame Sauce (see below)

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together the oil, dry spices, sugar, and salt.
2. Cut the chicken into ½-inch pieces, add it to the spice mixture, and mix to coat the pieces completely.
3. Thread the chicken onto four skewers.
4. Preheat the grill on high with the lid closed to 500°F. Clean the grates well, then lightly oil them with peanut, sunflower, or safflower oil. (Look for any inexpensive oil that says “refined for high heat” on the label.) See the photo below for a safe technique.
5. Grill the chicken skewers over medium-high, turning a few times, until the chicken is well-marked and cooked through, 5–7 minutes. Remove the skewers to a serving platter and allow to rest for 5 minutes. Sprinkle with the sesame seeds.
6. Grill the peppers and zucchinis until tender and charred in spots, 10–15 minutes. Once the chicken is off the grill, close the lid to help the vegetables cook.
7. Add the vegetables to the serving platter. Serve with the Sesame Sauce.

PER SERVING (1 skewer + vegetables + 3 Tbs. sauce): calories 410 | total fat 27 g | sat fat 4.5 g | carbs 14 g
fiber 5 g | total sugar 7 g | added sugar 1 g | protein 31 g | sodium 580 mg

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Sesame Sauce

 MAKES ABOUT ¾ CUP (12 TBS.)

Leftover sauce makes a great salad dressing for a chopped salad with tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers, and romaine.

- ¼ cup tahini
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbs. reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tsp. toasted sesame oil
- 1 clove garlic, grated or finely minced
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- mild red chile flakes, to taste (optional)

1. Whisk all the ingredients together with 2 Tbs. water into a smooth sauce. Sprinkle the chile flakes (if using) on top.



Use tongs and a paper towel to lightly oil a grill safely.