

06/12/10 - Fire Roasted Eggplant Salad

An opaque purple shiny surface is the mark of a young fresh eggplant. They should be firm to the touch, not spongy or spotted. Eggplants come in a large variety of shapes and sizes, some perfect for stuffing, some long and thin for barbeque, some large, and some small for individual servings. There is a large variety coming into local farm markets now. Fried, stuffed, grilled, stewed, baked or mashed, they are an essential ingredient in many cuisines. Turkey, Israel, Italy, and Asia all have many dishes with eggplants. Eggplants have an earthy creaminess and can absorb many flavors or impart their own smokiness to many dishes. I made this salad with just ordinary n



1 medium large eggplant

1 large red bell pepper

1 large yellow bell pepper

½ cup pitted Kalamata olives

1 Roma tomato

½ cup fresh parsley chopped

½ cup fresh mint chopped

1/3 cup fresh cilantro chopped

½ Spanish onion finely diced

4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced

4 tablespoons olive oil

Zest from one lemon

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Fresh cracked pepper

Sea salt

Additional olive oil for drizzling (optional)

Wash the eggplant and the peppers. Preheat a barbecue or indoor grill. Place the peppers and eggplant on the grill, and using tongs give the peppers a turn as each side blackens. When the peppers are lightly charred, remove them from the grill and place them in a paper bag to finish steaming. The eggplant will take longer to cook. As each side becomes soft, give the eggplant a turn until the whole thing is cooked and softened.

Alternatively, you could bake the eggplant in a 350° oven for about 45 minutes. Set the eggplant on a plate, cover it with aluminum foil, and let it cool off slowly while you prepare the rest of the ingredients. You can grill the peppers and eggplant the day before. I always keep a container of charred and peeled peppers in my refrigerator because I like them in salads, sandwiches, and panini.



Next, peel the eggplant and dice it in $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cubes. Peel and seed the charred peppers. Do not run them under water while you peel them, as you will wash away a lot of the flavor. The skins should come off easily. Grasp the stem end and pull to remove the seed core, and then open the pepper down one side, lay it flat and remove any remaining seeds and any white pith. Julienne the peppers and then dice them.

Dice the Roma tomato and chop up the olives in circles. In a preheated small sauté pan, add two tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the diced onions and minced garlic cloves. Sauté until translucent and flavorful. Place the diced eggplant and peppers in a salad bowl. Pour the onions and olive oil over the eggplant and peppers. Next, add the olives, tomato, and fresh herbs. Season all with sea salt and cracked pepper. Pour the fresh lemon juice on the salad and sprinkle the zest. Toss the salad together and taste. Adjust the seasoning and drizzle the remaining two tablespoons of olive oil over the salad. Serve at room temperature.



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