Selecting, Storing, and Serving Ohio Eggplant

As you look at the deep, rich purple of an American eggplant crowned with its grey-green cap, you will agree it is the king of vegetables. It is one of the most exotic of all vegetables in appearance, taste, and history. Until 100 years ago, it was grown in America primarily as an ornamental plant. In Japan, it is the third most important vegetable. Eggplant is a native of South and Eastern Asia and is a member of the nightshade family. Eggplant is available nearly all year, peaking from June to October. Contact your county Extension office for eggplant variety information for Ohio.

Selection
- Look for firm, smooth, deep-purple skin.
- Heaviness and firmness of flesh are also important. Choose eggplant that is of medium size (3 to 4 inches in diameter).
- Avoid those with brown or blue streaks, a light color, or yellowish cast. These are of poor quality.
- Shriveled and flabby eggplant is often bitter and poor in flavor.
- Decay may appear in any dark sunken area on the surface. Cracked skin across brown spots may indicate a storage disease that causes eggplant to spoil rapidly.

Storage
Store as soon as possible in the vegetable compartment of your refrigerator at 45 to 50 degrees F. Temperatures below 45 degrees F produce chilling injuries that will appear as “water-soaked spots.” These spots are soft and spongy. High humidity is preferred for eggplant storage. If eggplant is not stored in the vegetable compartment, wrap it loosely in plastic wrap. Use within one week of purchase.

Yield
- 1 pound fresh = 1¾ cups, cooked and cubed
- 1 pound fresh = 1 pint frozen
- 1 medium eggplant = about 1½ pounds
- 1 bushel = 33 pounds

Nutrition
The “Dietary Guidelines for Americans” recommend that adults need 2–2½ cups of a variety of vegetables daily. Eggplant is a good choice to help meet that nutritional requirement. Eggplant contains small amounts of several important minerals and vitamins needed daily. It is very low in sodium and suitable for a low-sodium diet. It is also low in calories, with only 30 to 35 for a 1 cup serving.
Safe Handling

Clean surfaces, utensils, and hands after touching raw meat and poultry and before you use them on fresh produce. Wash eggplant just before using. To remove dirt, wash vegetables thoroughly in cold water. Do not use soap, detergent, or bleach as they can be absorbed by produce. Drain and rinse several times with cold water. Lift vegetables from water to prevent redepositing of dirt and residues.

Serving

Eggplant is a versatile vegetable and can be baked, broiled, boiled, stuffed, or used in a variety of casseroles in combination with other vegetables. Although often used as a meat substitute in recipes, eggplant is not high in protein value.

- Boiled—Cut in cubes just before cooking as eggplant will discolor quickly. Place in 1 inch of boiling water; heat to boiling and cook 5 minutes.
- Sautéed—Cut into 3/4-inch slices (with or without skin). Sprinkle salt lightly on cut surfaces, pile slices on top of each other and place weight on top for about 1 hour. This will remove some of the water from the eggplant. Coat slices with seasoned flour or bread crumbs. Sauté gently on both sides. Slices will be crispy on the outside and soft on the inside.
- Oven Sautéed—Use the same method of preparation as for sautéing. Place in oven at 350 degrees F for about 20 minutes.
- Pan Fried—Cut eggplant into 1/2- or 1-inch slices. Peel if necessary. Dip in flour or fine dry bread crumbs, then in an egg beaten with 2 tablespoons of milk. Dip in flour or crumbs again. Season with salt and pepper. Fry slowly in a small amount of hot fat until browned on one side and rather transparent looking. Turn and brown on other side. Serve hot.
- Broiled—Cut eggplant into 1/2- to 3/4-inch slices. Brush with melted margarine. Place about 2½ inches from tip of flame or electric element. Broil about 5 minutes or until browned. Turn and brown other side. Season and serve hot. Excellent with broiled meats.
- Seasoned—Use marjoram, oregano, allspice, chili powder, curry powder, garlic, or rosemary.

Contact your county Extension office for more information on preserving eggplant by freezing or drying.

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