

Ratatouille

It's the perfect time of year for this dish. You'll truly celebrate the bounty of the harvest with this ancient casserole. Eggplant, tomatoes, sweet onion, garlic, summer squash, new harvest bell peppers, lots of basil, fresh thyme and parsley blend to offer up a terrific flavor combo. All of this is paired with succulent, roasted tri-colored potatoes in this 18th century dish.

Ratatouille is literally French for "motley stew." The combination of vegetables hasn't really varied over the centuries. However, I add some pinto beans for extra protein. This flavor-filled casserole is one of my favorite ways to enjoy the late harvest, and, it's a great meal for guests.

Preparation Time: 3-1/2 hours - Servings: 2-4

Organize Your Ingredients!

Notes on Organizing

Prep and organize ingredients before you start cooking. Once everything's prepped and set out, this dish is easy to pre-cook and assemble. Sweat Eggplant as part of the prep. Once you've cut the 1/2" rounds, lay them on a cookie sheet and sprinkle both sides with salt. Let stand about 45 minutes per side. Before turning to sweat the other side, wipe the salty water from the top of the rounds. Once sweated, pat all rounds dry with paper towel before you brown them.

Sweated Eggplant/Caramelized Potatoes

Eggplant:

- 1 large egg plant (cut into 1/2" slices/sweated)
- 1 tsp. salt

Caramelized Potatoes:

- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 2 medium red potatoes (sliced 1/4" thick)
- 2 golden potatoes (sliced 1/4" thick)
- 2 medium purple potatoes (sliced 1/4" thick)

Tomato Sauce

- 2-1/2 C. Heirloom tomatoes (chopped)
- 1/2 C. low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1 bay leaf

- 1/3 C. fresh basil (chopped)
- 2 tsp. fresh thyme
- 1/4 C. fresh parsley (chopped)

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- 2 large carrots (scrubbed and cut into 1/8" rounds)
- 1 T. canola oil
- Sweated Eggplant (from above)
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- one 8" zucchini (sliced in 1/4" thick slices)

- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 2-1/2 C. red onion (coarsely-chopped)
- 1 C. celery (chopped)
- 1-1/2 C. green bell pepper (seeded and cubed)
- 1-1/2 C. red bell pepper (seeded and cubed)
- 3 cloves garlic (smashed and chopped)
- 1/4 C. white wine

- 1 Field Roast Smoked Apple Sausage (browned and chopped)
- one 15 oz. can of pinto beans (drained and rinsed)
- 8 Calamata olives (sliced)
- Tomato Sauce (from above)

Bread and Apple Side Plate

- 1 artisan seed baguette
- 2 honeycrisp apples (cored/thin-sliced)
- 2 tsp. blue cheese crumbles



Let's Prepare, Cook, and Plate This!

Basic Assembly Instructions

A fair amount of time is required for this recipe involves the sweating of the eggplant. Once this is done, the dish will assemble in about 45 minutes. While eggplant sweats, arrange potato slices on an oiled cookie sheet and slide into a preheated 425° oven. Roast 10 minutes per side. Remove from oven and let cool.

Tomato Sauce

Place tomatoes, broth, salt, pepper and bay leaf in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Stir in fresh basil, thyme and parsley. Return to a boil. Remove from heat.

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1. Steam sliced carrots 3 minutes. Set aside.
2. Heat canola oil in a large sauté pan. Brown sweated eggplant slices on both sides in hot oil over medium-high heat. Set aside on a paper towel to cool.
3. Add another tsp. oil and brown zucchini in the same pan. Remove from pan and set aside.
4. Heat more olive oil in same pan and sear onion, celery and peppers. Once onion begins to brown, sprinkle in chopped garlic. Add wine and toss. Remove from heat.
5. Oil a large Dutch oven or oven-proof kettle and arrange potatoes, zucchini and eggplant alternately around pan. Arrange standing on edge like a giant fan until bottom of the pan is full.
6. Sprinkle chopped apple sausage and drained pinto beans over the potatoes, eggplant and zucchini.
7. Pour seared onion and peppers mixture over everything in the pan.
8. Sprinkle sliced olives around the pan and distribute steamed carrots evenly.
9. Pour all tomato sauce mixture over the top of the vegetables. Gently shake the kettle to help tomato mixture settle.
10. One hour before dinner, preheat oven to 375°. Cover assembled ratatouille and cook 45 minutes. Remove ratatouille from oven, uncover and allow to cool 15 minutes.

Bread/Apple Side Plate/ Serve

Turn off oven, wrap bread in foil and heat bread in cooling oven while ratatouille rests. Slice bread before serving.

Arrange sliced apple on a side plate and sprinkle with blue cheese crumbles.

Serve family style with bread and apples on the side.

What I've Learned from This Recipe

This assembly method ensures that individual flavors jump out even as the dish stews. Caramelization activity on potatoes, combined with the browning of the eggplant and zucchini, add extra flavor and help preserve the individual identities of each item once the dish is cooked.

Let us know what you think, and any questions you may have! chezdon@plate6.com