

I made this for a party I catered back in January. While I don't typically love eggplant, I love caponata. Especially on toasted crostini, but I already had two appetizers served on crostini. I decided to put this deliciousness over some warm spiral pasta, and viola, pasta salad. It was a hit.

EGGPLANT CAPONATA PASTA SALAD

based on a recipe by Mario Batali

- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large yellow chopped in 1/2-inch dice
- 1/4 cup pine nuts, reserve 1 Tbsp. for garnish
- 3 tablespoons zante currants
- 1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
- 2 medium eggplant, cut into 1/2-inch cubes (to yield 4 cups)
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves or 1/2 teaspoon dried
- 1/4 cup basic tomato sauce, recipe follows
- 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 cup parsley, minced for garnish
- 16 oz. cooked spiral pasta (can use regular or gluten free)

PROCEDURE:

1. Heat oil in a large saute pan over medium heat, until hot but not smoking. Add the onions, pine nuts, currants and chili flakes and saute for 4 to 5 minutes until softened.
2. Add the eggplant, sugar, cinnamon, and cocoa and continue to cook for 5 more minutes. Add the thyme, tomato sauce, and balsamic vinegar. Bring the mixture to a boil.
3. Lower the heat and simmer the mixture for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to cool to room temperature, garnish with mint and chili flakes. Serve the caponata spooned on crostini or in middle of table with crostini on side to allow guests to help themselves

BASIC TOMATO SAUCE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil or veggie stock to saute
- 1 medium yellow onion, small dice
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme leaves, or 1 tablespoon dried
- 1/2 medium carrot, finely grated
- 2 (28-ounce) cans peeled whole tomatoes, crushed by hand and juices reserved
- Salt

PROCEDURE:

1. In a medium saucepan, heat the olive oil or stock over medium heat.
2. Add the onion and garlic and cook until soft and light golden brown, about 8 to 10 minutes.
3. Add the thyme and carrot and cook 5 minutes more, until the carrot is quite soft.
4. Add the tomatoes and juice and bring to a boil, stirring often.

5. Lower the heat and simmer for 30 minutes until as thick as hot cereal. Season with salt and serve.
6. This sauce holds 1 week in the refrigerator or up to 6 months in the freezer.

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