

## Eggplant Parmigiana

Eggplants made their first appearance in southern Italy centuries ago, about the time that the popularity of tomatoes was on the rise. So this dish quickly evolved into a standard, and easily made the jump to the vast Italian-American repertoire. We give ours extra crunch with panko breadcrumbs, a no-fail way to keep the eggplant crispy. It's a delicious history lesson.

See Cook's Notes on choosing a marinara sauce.

### Ingredients

Olive oil, for frying  
3/4 cup all-purpose flour  
5 large eggs, lightly beaten  
3½ cups panko breadcrumbs  
1 cup finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano  
2½ pounds medium eggplants (2 to 3), sliced crosswise into ½-inch-thick rounds  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
3 cups marinara sauce  
1/2 cup fresh basil leaves, torn  
1 pound salted fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced

### Directions

Pour oil to a depth of 1/2-inch in a large, deep heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Meanwhile, place the flour in a wide, shallow bowl. Put the eggs in a separate wide, shallow bowl. Mix the panko and 2/3 cup of the Parmigiano in a third wide, shallow bowl. Working with one round of eggplant at a time, dredge in the flour, then dip in egg, then dredge in the panko mixture. Arrange in a single layer on a sheet pan. When the oil is hot but not smoking (if you have a thermometer, look for 365 degrees; if not, drop a breadcrumb in the oil and it's ready when the oil bubbles), fry the eggplant rounds in batches a single layer, flipping halfway through, until golden brown on both sides, about 5 minutes per batch. Allow the oil to return to temperature before frying each batch. Transfer to a sheet pan fitted with a wire rack and lightly season with salt and pepper.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Spoon 1 cup of marinara in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking pan. Arrange half the eggplant rounds in a slightly shingled layer and sprinkle with 1/3 of the basil. Spoon 1½ cups sauce over the eggplant and top with a layer of the mozzarella. Add the remaining eggplant in another shingled layer, followed by half of the remaining basil, the remaining sauce and mozzarella. Sprinkle the top with the remaining Parmigiano. Bake uncovered until the sauce is hot and the cheese melts and begins to turn golden, about 35

minutes. Let rest for 10 minutes, then sprinkle with the remaining basil. Let sit for a bit, and then serve.

**Cook's Notes:** We've got a tasty and easy marinara sauce for you already! Check out the Gnocchi with Pomodoro Sauce recipe for the win. Store-bought is fine in a pinch, however. Choose a good one. This dish deserves it.

**total time:** 1 hour 25 minutes

**active prep:** 30 minutes

**serves:** 6

**difficulty:** *medium*