

Grilled Eggplant with Creamy Spiced Yogurt & Herbs

Whatever shape, size or color you're looking for, there's an eggplant to fit it. You can pick one to match your menu, mood or decor. There are minis that need to be skewered or sautéed, and small green Thai globes that work well sauced. Medium-sized varieties come in white, lavender or pink, often with streaks or speckles. And then there's the deep purple of the classic Italian and Japanese workhorses. This time of year, you really can't go wrong. Just pick one and get your grill on before it starts raining. Of course, then you can go inside and roast them instead. You win either way.

See Cook's Note on choosing a the best eggplants.

Ingredients

1 (16-ounce) container Greek yogurt, preferably whole milk
1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons olive oil
1 clove garlic, finely grated
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 pinch chile powder or more to taste (optional)
1 large or 2 small eggplant, peeled and sliced into 1/2-inch rounds (about 1 pound)
Baby arugula, a few handfuls for lining the platter
Fresh dill fronds, for garnish
Fresh mint leaves, for garnish
Zest of 1 lemon

special equipment

gas grill

Directions

Turn the grill on high and heat to 500 degrees, about 5 minutes.

Whisk the yogurt, 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, garlic, 1 teaspoon salt, coriander, cumin and chile powder, if using, in a medium bowl and set aside while you grill the eggplant. Makes about 1¾ cups.

Brush the eggplant slices on both sides with the remaining 1/4 cup olive oil and sprinkle with the remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Arrange the slices on the grill, close the lid and grill slices for 2 to 3 minutes. Rotate each slice 90 degrees so the grates singe a nice criss-cross pattern into the eggplant. Keep the lid closed as much as possible to maintain temperature. Turn the slices over and repeat on the other side. The eggplant is done when it softens and starts to look translucent in places, about 10 minutes. Remove from the grill and place on a clean plate.

Use your hands to gently mix the arugula and herbs in the middle of a serving platter and then spread it out toward the edges. Arrange the eggplant slices on the greens and add some of the yogurt, about 1/2 cup. (Save the remaining yogurt for chicken marinade

or use in falafel pita sandwiches.) Zest a lemon over the top. Enjoy al fresco with a cool, refreshing beverage and some good friends.

Cook's Note

When you're choosing an eggplant, make sure to give it a little squeeze while no one's looking. You won't have to do this at a farmers market because they will be freshly picked, but make sure anything at the store doesn't feel too mushy or spongy. It should feel firm and the skin should be free of dents and wrinkles. Once you get it home, don't make your eggplant wait too long in the bottom of the drawer. It will turn faster than you think. If you cut into it and find brown spots in the flesh, it's too late. Even if you cut them out, it's too far gone to grill.

Some people sit eggplant slices in salt for an hour before cooking, but we don't see the need. This extra step draws out some of the water, but with it goes flavor. They say it removes bitterness, we say skip it. If your eggplant is farm-fresh, you'll want to taste everything it has to offer.

total time: 20 minutes
active prep: 15 minutes
serves: 4
difficulty: *easy*