

CAPONATA

(Sicilian Eggplant Appetizer)

1 large eggplant (1-3/4 pounds +)	¼ teaspoon pepper
2/3 cup + 2 tablespoons olive oil	1 ¼ cup sliced celery, about ¼ inch thick
1 Large onion, chopped coarsely	1-1/2 cup pimento-stuffed olives, halved
3 cloves garlic, minced	4 tablespoons drained capers
1 can (16oz.) tomato puree	1 tablespoons sugar
½ cup water	3 teaspoons red wine vinegar
½ teaspoon dried crushed oregano	3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
½ teaspoon dried crushed basil	

Wash and dry eggplant; leave unpeeled; cut into 1-inch cubes.

In a 12-inch skillet, heat 2/3 cup oil; add eggplant and cook over moderate heat, stirring often, until brown and almost tender; remove from the skillet and set aside.

To same skillet, add 2 tablespoons oil. Add onion and garlic; cook gently, stirring often, until onion is golden. Deglaze the pan with the water, then stir in tomato puree, oregano, basil, pepper and celery; cover and simmer 30 minutes. Add eggplant, olives, capers, sugar, vinegar and parsley. Mix well. Cover; simmer until skin on eggplant is tender (15 to 20 minutes).

Cool; cover tightly and refrigerate. Serve as an antipasto with crackers or Italian bread. Makes about 1 ½ quarts.

NOTE: More eggplant is better than less

This recipe can easily be doubled or tripled. Best when served warm, but can be eaten room temp.

Vince Pardo
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