

Leanne's Eggplant Parmesan

I like this version of eggplant parmesan because the eggplant isn't oily and the panko adds a lovely crunch to the dish. There is plenty of tomato sauce and the eggplant rounds can be stacked vertically if you want a dramatic presentation on the plate.

Ingredients

2 large eggplants
3 eggs
2C panko breadcrumbs
1 C flour
4 C tomato sauce
1 C grated parmesan
½ C grated mozzarella
½ C fresh basil
½ C fresh flat leaf parsley
½ C olive oil
Salt
Pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350.
2. Place the eggs in a shallow bowl, add 1/3 C water, season lightly with salt and beat until frothy. Set aside.
3. Place the flour in a shallow bowl, season lightly with salt and pepper and set aside.
4. Place the panko in a shallow bowl and set aside.
5. Place the tomato sauce in the bottom of an 11x14" baking dish or sheet pan.
6. Julienne the basil leaves and add them to the tomato sauce.
7. Roughly chop the parsley leaves and add 2/3 of them to the tomato sauce.
8. Peel the eggplants and cut them into ½" rounds. Lightly season each piece with a little salt.
9. Heat ¼ cup of the olive oil in a large frying pan. The larger the better, 12" works fine. Medium high heat is good.
10. Bread each piece of eggplant:
 - a. Dip a slice of eggplant in the egg wash and let the excess drip off.
 - b. Coat the eggplant slice in the flour, ensure you have all sides covered with flour. Dap off any excess flour.
 - c. Dip the eggplant in the egg wash again, and ensure the eggplant is completely covered with the egg wash.
 - d. Coat the eggplant slice in the panko, ensure the eggplant is completely covered.
 - e. Continue prepping the eggplant slices until you have enough to fill the frying pan with a single layer of eggplant.
11. Test the heat of the oil by placing the breaded eggplant in the frying pan. You are looking for the eggplant to immediately bubble when it hits the oil. If the eggplant doesn't immediately start to fry, remove the eggplant and let the oil continue to heat. This is important to get crispy eggplant that isn't too oily inside.
12. Add a single layer of eggplant to the frying pan and cook for 1-3 minutes. You are looking for a lovely light brown color on the panko.

13. Turn the eggplant over and let the second side cook until the same golden brown color is achieved.
14. Place the cooked eggplant slices in the baking dish.
15. If there is a lot of burned panko in the frying pan, empty it and wipe it away with a paper towel.
16. Add the remaining ¼ cup olive oil to the pan and repeat the process of coating the eggplant in the breadcrumbs, frying to golden brown, and then transferring them to the baking dish.
17. Once the baking dish is filled with a single layer of eggplant, sprinkle the eggplant evenly with the grated parmesan.
18. Place the grated mozzarella in the spaces between the eggplant slices.
19. Place the baking dish in the oven and cook the eggplant for approximately 20 minutes, or until the cheese has melted on top of the slices.
20. Remove from oven and sprinkle the remaining parsley on the eggplant.
21. To plate, put some of the tomato sauce on the plate and place the eggplant slices on top of the tomato sauce.

**An aside. When I was a young girl, my mother would take the remaining eggy breadcrumb bits and fry it after the eggplant was done. We would fight over them. Once the breadcrumbs were done, my mom would empty out the pan again but not wipe it out. She would take the remaining egg wash and scramble it with a tablespoon or two of mild giardiniera and any remaining cheese. That would go onto a crispy hoagie roll that we would all share.