

# Melanzane alla Parmigiana

*(Eggplant Parmigiana)*

*A Family Farm in Tuscany*

*Serves 12 – 16*

## Besciamella (Bêchamel Sauce)

5 tbsp butter  
½ cup unbleached all purpose flour  
5 cups milk  
1¼ tsp sea salt  
¼ tsp freshly grated nutmeg

## Tomato and Basil Sauce

1 cup extra virgin olive oil  
2 cups chopped red onions  
6 cups tomato sauce  
1½ cups water  
1¾ tsp sea salt  
6 large basil leaves

## Eggplant

4 large round eggplants, about 3 pounds, sliced lengthwise ½ inch thick  
Sea salt  
1 (5.3 ounces) cup unbleached all purpose flour  
3 eggs, beaten with ¼ tsp sea salt  
4 cups canola oil  
1 cup (4 ounces) grated Parmesan cheese

### For the Besciamella

- Melt the butter in a heavy bottomed (4 quart) saucepan over medium heat.
- When the foam subsides, add the flour and whisk constantly until mixture is well blended.
- Cook, whisking constantly, 3 to 4 minutes.
- Add the milk gradually, whisking constantly.
- Bring to a boil to thicken.
- Whisk in the salt and nutmeg.
- Remove from heat and set aside.
- Cool to room temperature.

### For the Tomato and Basil Sauce:

- Heat the olive oil in a heavy-bottomed, 5 quart soup pot over medium heat.
- When the oil is hot, add the onions and sauté until wilted and transparent, about 10 minutes.

- Stir in the tomato sauce.
- Add the water to the tomato sauce containers, shaking to blend, and add this mixture to the pan.
- Simmer, stirring occasionally, for 20 minutes.
- Tear the fresh basil leaves and drop into the sauce; stir to blend and cook an additional 5 minutes.
- Remove pan from heat and set aside.

*For the eggplant:*

- Arrange a single layer of eggplant slices in a large colander set in the sink.
- Lightly scatter sea salt over the slices to remove bitterness.
- Add a second layer and salt the slices.
- Repeat until all of the eggplant has been salted.
- Place a dinner plate on top of the stacked eggplant, then place a heavy weight (such as a saucepan filled with water) on the plate to press the moisture out of the eggplant.
- Let eggplant sit for approximately 20 minutes.
- Place a wire rack over a baking sheet and cover it with absorbent paper towels; set aside.
- Heat the oil in a heavy bottomed 14 inch skillet to 350°F.
- Remove the eggplant slices from the colander and rinse under running water pat dry.
- Dip the eggplant slices into the flour, coating well and shaking off excess flour.
- Next dip into the beaten eggs, coating well on both sides.
- Fry the eggplant slices in batches as they are breaded.
- Cook on both sides, turning once, until golden brown and crisp, about 2 minutes per side.
- Using tongs, transfer the eggplant slices to the prepared wire rack.

*To assemble and cook the dish:*

- Preheat oven to 350°F.
- Spoon ½ cup of the Besciamella into a 13" x 9" baking dish.
- Add ½ cup of the Tomato Basil Sauce; stir gently to blend.
- Add a single layer of the fried eggplant slices.
- Cover with another layer of the two sauces.
- Scatter some of the Parmesan cheese on top.
- Repeat the layering, using all of the eggplant slices and ending with a topping of the cheese.
- Bake in a preheated oven for 40 minutes, or until bubbly and browned on top.
- Cut into squares and serve hot.