



## HIGHWAY 12

VINEYARDS AND WINERY



**Nonni's Eggplant Parmigiano**

**Serves 8**

### **Ingredients:**

#### **For the tomato sauce**

2 (28-oz.) cans whole peeled plum tomatoes with their juices (San Marzano if possible)  
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
2 slightly crushed cloves of garlic  
1 large yellow onion-peeled and cut in half through the root  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  stick unsalted butter  
Kosher salt  
Basil stems tied with twine

#### **For the bechamel sauce:**

4 tbsp flour  
4 tbsp unsalted butter  
2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups whole milk-warmed  
Salt to taste  
Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg-optional

#### **For the eggplant:**

3 large eggs  
Kosher salt  
 $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups dried plain fine breadcrumbs-Progresso Italian-style best  
3 medium eggplants, sliced to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch rounds-safely use a mandolin if you can About  
1 cup good frying oil—vegetable or canola  
 $1\frac{1}{2}$  -2 cups shredded whole milk mozzarella cheese (not fresh—high water content) 1  
ball fresh mozzarella-ripped into chunks  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup finely grated Pecorino Romano or Parmigiano Reggiano  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fresh basil leaves-plucked from stems-save the stems for sauce



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### Instructions:

Place oven rack in the top third of the oven and pre-heat to 400°F.

#### **Make the tomato sauce:**

In a medium-large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-low heat, add the oil, basil stems and garlic, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the garlic is softened slightly and fragrant but not yet browned, about 4 minutes. Pour in the tomato cans, crushing them in your hands as you go and season with a generous pinch each of salt. Add the 2 onion halves and butter. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook, stirring frequently, until thickened slightly, at least 1 hour. Discard basil stems onions and garlic cloves when done.

#### **Make the bechamel sauce:**

Over med heat saucepan, add the milk and simmer—shut off and set aside. In another saucepan over med heat, add the butter and flour and stir to combine as it melts together. Keep stirring until a paste forms and turns slightly golden brown. Slowly add warm milk and whisk as to avoid lumps. If need be, turn the heat up slightly until a low bubble starts to form. When the bechamel thickens and coats the back of a wooden spoon, it's done. Add nutmeg and salt—stir. Set aside with wax paper touching the surface to avoid a film forming.

#### **For the eggplant:**

Salt each side of the eggplant slices, let sit for 20 minutes to remove bitterness  
Rinse and dry thoroughly

In a medium baking dish or wide shallow bowl, beat the eggs with 1 tablespoon water. Season with a generous pinch of salt. In a second baking dish or bowl, stir together the breadcrumbs and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Working with one or two at a time, dredge the eggplant slices in the egg wash and let the excess drip back into the bowl. Transfer to the breadcrumbs and coat very lightly on each side.

Line a large baking sheet with a few layers of paper towels and set by the stove. In a large high-sided skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1/2 cup oil until shimmering. Turn the heat down to medium and add some eggplant slices in a single layer until the skillet is full. Cook, turning once, until well browned on each side, about 6 minutes total. Transfer to the prepared baking sheet.



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Repeat with the remaining eggplant, working in batches as needed and adding a little more oil every other batch, or as needed. As you work, continue to add layers of paper towels between the eggplant slices so they remain separate or use multiple baking sheets.

### **Build the dish:**

In a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, ladle  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup or more into the bottom to cover. Cover the sauce with a single layer of eggplant (start with the thickest ones on the bottom and save the prettiest slices for the top). Ladle another  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sauce on top, spreading it evenly. Dot spoonful's of bechamel around and spread slightly to blend with sauce. Sprinkle with about  $\frac{1}{3}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup mozzarella and 1-2 tablespoons Pecorino or Parm. Add another layer of eggplant and repeat this process until you've reached the final layer of eggplant. Top this layer only with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sauce, torn pieces of the fresh mozzarella and some Pecorino or Parm.

Bake, uncovered, until the cheese is melted and browned and the sauce is bubbling around the edges, about 30 minutes. If getting too brown—cover with foil. Remove and let cool slightly.

Sprinkle with torn pieces of fresh basil, slice into squares and serve warm.

***Buon appetito!***

This pairing is probably one of my top 3 favorite things to eat and sip. This recipe is perfect for the new Private Reserve Cabernet Franc as both are at the top of their game. This dish, just like the wine, is rich, savory, and herbaceous and extremely well-balanced.

Simple perfection—but both the wine and the eggplant parm take a bit of time and effort to get this good so make it with a partner, sip some vino and turn on some tunes--enjoy the process!



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