

# Parmigiana di Melanzane - Eggplant Parmigiana (Serves 6-8)

## *Ingredients*

1/2 cup (125 g) shredded mozzarella cheese

1/2 cup (125 g) grated Italian pecorino or Parmigiano cheese

*1 portion Tomato Sauce with Sausage and Fennel (recipe below)*

*1 portion Fried Eggplant (recipe below)*

## *Preparation*

Lightly cover the bottom of a large casserole dish with the **Tomato Sauce with Sausage and Fennel**, then add a single layer of **Fried Eggplant** slices. Add another layer of sauce and a sprinkling the grated and mozzarella cheese. Continue to layer until finished. End with a layer of sauce on top and grated pecorino/ parmigiano cheese. Cover with aluminum foil. Bake for 45 minutes at 400 degrees Fahrenheit (200 degrees Celsius). Allow to cool for 5-10 minutes before cutting into squares to serve.

## **Tomato Sauce with Sausage and Fennel**

### *Ingredients*

1 large carrot finely diced (1/2 cup - 125 ml)

1 medium onion finely diced (1/2 cup - 125 ml)

1 medium fennel bulb finely diced (1 cup - 250 ml)

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1/2 lbs. (200 g) sweet Italian sausage (loose – not in casing)

2 large cans (28 oz - 800 g) San Marzano tomatoes

### *Preparation*

Heat 2-3 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil in a deep pan or skillet over medium heat. Add finely diced carrots, diced onions, and diced fennel. Salt lightly and stir frequently. After 5 minutes, add sausage, mix thoroughly, and stir frequently until browned. (Fresh basil and parsley may be added if desired.) Add San Marzano tomatoes, either crushing them first or using a masher to crush in the pan. Lower heat to low-medium setting and cook for 30-60 minutes, stirring occasionally. Salt and pepper to taste.

## **Fried Eggplant**

### *Ingredients*

Vegetable oil for sautéing (approximately 1 cup - 250 ml)

4 large eggplants

2-3 tablespoons of salt

1 cup (250 ml) flour

### *Preparation*

Slice eggplants into lengthwise slices, approximately 1/4 inch or thinner (5 mm). Discard the end slices with skin. Liberally salt eggplant slices and place between two cutting boards (with a weight on top) for one hour to allow the water to drain.

Heat 2-3 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil in large skillet over medium heat. Dredge both sides of the eggplant into the flour, shaking off any excess flour. Sauté both sides of the eggplant slices in vegetable oil, flipping occasionally, until golden. Cook the eggplant slices until they bend easily. Place eggplant slices on paper towels to absorb excess oil.

## Sauteed Zucchini Blossoms (Serves 6-8)

### *Ingredients*

10-15 large zucchini or squash blossoms (*Note: zucchini or squash blossoms can be sourced from home gardens where zucchini or squash produce large yellow flowers. Additionally, they are sometimes found at farmers markets.*)

1 cup (125 ml) flour

Vegetable oil for sautéing

Several slices of Italian prosciutto or ham

1/2 cup (125 g) mozzarella or soft cheese

1 cup (250 ml) sparkling water

### *Preparation*

Cut open and remove the blossom bottoms just enough so the stamen and stem can be removed. Delicately rinse and gently dry with paper towels.

Mince the sliced meat and cheese small enough to stuff the blossoms. Gently fill each blossom with cheese and meat. Be careful to not to overstuff or rupture the blossoms and leave enough space to lightly pinch blossoms closed at the open end.

Pour flour in a medium bowl. Slowly add sparkling water to flour while stirring briskly, ensuring the flour is completely absorbed. Add only enough sparkling water until the mixture has the consistency of thick pancake batter.

Lightly coat a nonstick pan with olive oil and heat to medium.

Dip each blossom in batter, covering lightly and gently pinch the open ends closed. Place in pan and cook for 1-2 minutes on each side or until golden in color and cheese is melted. Salt to taste.