



Cooking Corner: Eggplant

The appealingly shiny eggplant is a humble yet beautiful vegetable. It's a workhorse in many dishes, providing a hearty texture and a mild taste that complements rich flavors. The eggplant shares its heritage with other crops in the Solenaceae family (nightshades), which also includes peppers, tomatoes, and potatoes. It hails from India but was developed into a kitchen-friendly crop in Asia and later spread to the Middle East and Europe. It's technically a berry (!) but is known in culinary terms as a vegetable. Eggplants range in color and shape, from tiny white and green orbs, to long thin purple varieties, to the large oblong Italian types that are almost black.



"Kermit" eggplant. Photo from [Johnny's Selected Seeds](#).

In the Kitchen

Small eggplants are often more tender than large ones. To tenderize and remove bitterness from a large, tough eggplant, cut it to the desired shape and sprinkle it generously with salt. Allow the eggplant to sit for at least a half hour, then rinse off the salt and press the eggplant between paper or kitchen towels to remove the moisture. Peeling the eggplant can also help remove bitterness.

Whether you're selecting eggplants from the garden, the farmers market, or the grocery, choose ones that are shiny and smooth, and heavy for their size. The green "cap" on top should also look fresh, not wilted or brown. Be careful when handling eggplants by their tops; the green area often has thorns!

It's ideal to use the eggplant right away, but if you need to store it, place it unwashed and uncut in a plastic bag in the vegetable crisper for up to a few days.

Nutritionally, eggplant provides lots of fiber and magnesium, and good amounts of manganese and potassium. It's also high in the more nuanced nutrients, like antioxidants and phytonutrients.



Fairy Tale and Orient Express eggplants grown on our Grow Pittsburgh production sites.

Cooking Suggestions

Eggplant is versatile and there are tons of recipes out there. Here are some places to start:

[Vegetarian Muffaletta](#)

[Eggplant Parmesan](#)

[Baba Ganoush](#)

[Ratatouille](#)

[Honey-Roasted](#)

[Green Curry](#)

[Roasted Eggplant Pizza](#)



Tasty-looking roasted eggplant pizza from [The Pioneer Woman](#). Recipe above.