Smoky eggplant dip

Makes about 1 cup
Fresh from the garden
eggplants, garlic, basil, parsley, lemons

In the classroom, we saved time by getting the students to prepare the eggplants for the next class. This involved roasting or barbecuing them, which takes 15-25 minutes, then setting them aside. At home, you can get on with other activities while the eggplants cook.

Barbecuing gives the best smoky flavour. The finished puree stores well for several days in a covered container in the refrigerator.

Ingredients

3 small eggplants (aubergines)
1 clove garlic
15 basil leaves
10 stalks parsley
% lemon
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
salt
freshly ground black pepper

Equipment

1 medium serving bowl
1 small, 2 large chopping boards
knife - 1 small, 2 large
chopper (if using oven)
lemon juicer

What to do

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C. Prick each eggplant 2-3 times with a skewer. Place the eggplants on a baking tray and bake for 25 minutes. Or for the very best flavour, cook the eggplants on a barbecue, turning with tongs as the skin blackens - this will take about 15 minutes and the skin will become quite charred.

2. Remove the eggplants from the oven. Allow to cool slightly. Prick each eggplant 2-3 times with a skewer to allow the steam to escape.

3. Peel the skin from the eggplants - this will make it easier to remove the flesh. You can use a small knife, a small metal spoon or even your fingers. The skin should come off easily. If you are using a barbecue, the skin may be more difficult to remove. If you leave on too much skin, the dip will be quite coarse.

4. Cut the eggplant flesh into small pieces and place in a medium bowl. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Rinse the basil and parsley, dry by rolling in a tea towel, then chop. Juice the lemon.

5. Place the skins in the compost bucket and wipe down the chopping board to get rid of any blackened bits of skin and any liquid. Return the eggplant flesh to the chopping board and chop to a coarse puree. An effective but unusual technique is to use 2 knives at once. Place the eggs in the containing plate and wipe down the chopping board. You can also chop with 2 knives of the same size, one in each hand, and chop.

6. Scoop the coarse puree back into the bowl. Add the garlic, basil and parsley and lemon juice. Stir in the olive oil and taste for salt and pepper.

Served with... warm pita bread or normal toast.