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 purée stores well for several days in a covered container in the refrigerator.

Equipment

skewer
baking tray (if using oven)
tongs
chopping board
knives – 1 small, 2 large
bowls – 3 small, 1 medium
1 tea towel
lemon juicer
colander
plate
tablespoon
metric measuring spoons
serving bowl

Ingredients

3 small eggplants (aubergines)
1 clove garlic
15 basil leaves
10 stalks parsley
½ lemon
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
salt
freshly ground black pepper

What to do

✱Preheat the oven to 200°C. Prick each eggplant 2–3 times with the skewer, place on the 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. **Remove the eggplants from the oven or barbecue.** Allow to cool.

✱Set out the chopping board and knives. While the eggplants are cooking, prepare the following ingredients and set aside in small bowls. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Rinse the basil and parsley, dry by rolling in a tea towel, then chop. Juice the lemon.

✱If you have oven-roasted the eggplant, lift the cooled eggplant onto the chopping board. Cut each eggplant in half from top to bottom. Place the halves in the colander, then stand the colander on the plate. Press the halves with the back of the spoon to extract the moisture, then scrape the flesh from the skins and place the flesh in the medium bowl.

✱If you have barbecued the eggplant, use a small knife to peel away the charred skin from the flesh. Place the flesh in the colander, then stand the colander on the plate. Press the flesh with the back of a spoon to extract the excess moisture, then place the flesh in the medium bowl.

✱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 purée. **An effective but unusual technique is to use 2 knives of the same size, one in each hand, and chop.** Scoop the coarse purée back into the bowl. Add the garlic, basil and parsley and lemon juice. Stir in the olive oil and taste for salt and pepper.

✱Place in the serving bowl and serve with warmed pita bread or normal toast.

BOTTOM DRAWER

Interesting terms/techniques
- squeezing liquid from an ingredient using a cloth
- chopping with two knives

Question What other flavours could you imagine in this eggplant dip?

Answer You could add a small quantity of leftover cooked tomato or homemade tomato sauce; sliced, sautéed onion; yoghurt; or toasted pine nuts.