

Ratatouille is a bright and chunky summer vegetable stew, rich with olive oil and fragrant with garlic and herbs.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large (1.25 lb) eggplant, cut into 1/3-inch cubes
- Salt
- 6 T extra virgin olive oil, plus more for serving
- 2 medium zucchini (about 1 lb), cut into 1/3" cubes
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 red, orange or yellow bell pepper, cut into 1/4" dice
- 5 large cloves garlic, chopped
- 5 large vine-ripened tomatoes (1.75 lb), cut into 1/3" cubes, with their juices
- 1 T tomato paste
- 2 t fresh chopped thyme, plus more for serving
- 3/4 t sugar
- 1/4 t crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- 3 T chopped fresh basil (or chiffonade)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Heat 3 T of oil in a large nonstick pan over medium heat.
- Add the eggplant and season with 1/4 t salt.
- Cook, stirring frequently, until soft and starting to brown, 10 to 12 minutes.
- Transfer to a plate and set aside.
- Add another T of oil to the pan (no need to clean it).
- Add the zucchini and cook, stirring frequently, until tender-crisp, 3 to 4 minutes.
- Season with 1/4 t salt and transfer to a plate; set aside.
- Add two more T of oil to the pan and add the onion and bell pepper.
- Cook, stirring frequently, for about 5 minutes.
- Add the garlic and continue cooking for about 3 minutes more. Do not brown.
- Add the tomatoes and their juices, tomato paste, thyme, sugar, crushed red pepper flakes (if using) and 3/4 teaspoon salt.
- Cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes are broken down into a sauce, 8 to 10 minutes.
- Add the cooked eggplant to the pan; bring to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to low, and simmer, uncovered, for about 10 minutes or until the eggplant is soft.
- Add the zucchini and cook for 1 to 2 minutes more, or until just warmed through. Taste and adjust seasoning, if necessary.
- Sprinkle with fresh basil and thyme, drizzle with a little olive oil if desired, and serve warm or chilled.
- Leftovers can be stored in the refrigerator in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

Freezer-Friendly Instructions: Let the dish cool completely and freeze in an airtight container for up to 3 months. (Keep in mind that the zucchini won't stay crisp after being frozen.) This is delicious served cold, or reheated in the microwave.