

Stuffed Baked Eggplant features a bounty of vegetables, perfect for spring



Stuffed Baked Eggplant

Photos Susie Iventosch

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Serves 2 for a Main Meal

INGREDIENTS

Veggies :

- 1 large whole eggplant (cut in half lengthwise and remove the pulp with a knife or grapefruit spoon, leaving about 1/2-inch shell. Keep the skin on the shell. Save the eggplant you've removed from the shell to bake with the other veggies.)
- 1 medium zucchini, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 yellow onion, peeled and sliced or chopped
- 2 shallots, peeled and sliced lengthwise into long strips
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 6-8 medium-large cremini mushrooms, cut into quarters or sliced
- 12 cherry tomatoes
- Salt, pepper and lemon pepper, to taste
- Italian herbs, optional
- 2-3 tablespoons olive oil

Topping:

- 3/4 cup wheat germ
- 1 cup grated Parmesan
- 1 1/4 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 tablespoon melted butter
- 1/2 cup or so of milk or half and half (just enough to make a paste out of all of the crust ingredients.)

Mix all topping ingredients in a bowl and set aside until the veggies are ready to spread over the stuffed eggplant halves. If you find you need a little more liquid to get to a paste consistency, just add enough to make a thick paste. If you have extra topping, save it and use it to top roasted tomatoes or any other veggie you like to roast. It's so delicious!

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 F. Prepare a baking sheet that has 1-inch sides with cooking spray.

Spray or oil the bottom of a separate casserole dish and place the hollowed out eggplant shells with the cut side up, in the casserole dish. Set aside for now.

Toss all of the veggies except the cherry tomatoes, with the olive oil, salt, pepper and lemon pepper. You can also add Italian herbs if you like at this point.

Spread the seasoned veggies out on the prepared baking sheet. Roast for about 20-25 minutes, or until they begin to soften and just start to turn brown on the edges. Turn the veggies with a spatula about halfway through the cooking. Toss in the cherry tomatoes, and roast for another few minutes. Remove veggies from the oven.

Reduce oven temperature to 350 F.

Transfer the roasted veggies into the hollowed out eggplant shells. Fill the shells as full as you can.

Spread the wheat germ-parmesan-nut topping over the top to cover the veggies in the eggplant.

Bake for about 35 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown and the eggplant shell is cooked. Serve hot.

You can eat the entire thing, shell and all!

NOTE: Here is a link to "The Vegetarian Epicure," if you decide you'd love to have a copy for yourself!
<https://www.amazon.com/Vegetarian-Epicure-262-Recipes/dp/0804170541>



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>

By Susie Iventosch

The other day I found a beautiful eggplant at the store and immediately knew how I would prepare it. This recipe is based upon one we've been making for decades from the original "The Vegetarian Epicure" by Anna Thomas, first published in 1972. I am sure many of you have some well-used recipes from this book as well. The pages in my copy are all stained, torn and tattered, but how I still love this cookbook!

Over the years, I have changed the recipe and now just oven roast all of the veggies together before stuffing them into the eggplant shells. The original recipe calls for cooking them in stages, and layering them into the shell, but I love them all mixed together anyway, kind of like a ratatouille. You can use any size eggplant you like, and it depends upon whether you want to serve this as a main or a side dish. I like to use a great big

eggplant, and it serves two people nicely for an entrée. If you find smaller eggplants, they would make perfect sides. We have also added cremini mushrooms, zucchini and shallots to the veggie assortment, because all of those flavors are so amazing when roasted together and they complement the wheat germ-Parmesan-walnut crust so well! Anyway ... this is my version of the dish and if you'd like to see the original, pick up a copy of the book at a local book store or order on Amazon (link provided).

Just a fun little note, when I last made it, my husband said, "Nah, I don't like eggplant and that doesn't sound like something I'd like." I thought, great, all the more for me! But, then after tasting it as a side to some grilled salmon, he admitted how much he loved it and has since asked for it again. (So much for hogging the whole thing to myself.) I hope you love this as much as we do!

Looking Good in Lamorinda

Finding fashion at 50 and beyond



Influencer/stylist Francie Low



Cotton dress by Fenini available at Harper Greer



It's the Year of the Dress at Luck.

Photos provided

By Moya Stone

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting and chatting with Lafayette resident Francie Low. Readers might know Low from her memoir, "Alive and Fixable: A Road to Love and Recovery," which tells the story of her husband's arduous journey back to health from a serious bicycle accident. Since the publication of the book in 2018, Low has started a new chapter in her life and it's focused on one of her favorite topics: fashion!

As a fashion influencer and stylist, Low has been inspired by the women she met over the years she worked in local boutiques. Repeatedly women said to her that once they hit age 50, they had to change the way they dress. "They lost their confidence," she explains. "Or they wanted to reestablish themselves." These women still wanted to be fashionable, but they no longer knew what "fashionable" meant for them. That's where Low can help. In 2021 she launched OhSoFancyFrancie, a blog and Instagram account documenting outfits that she creates for women of a certain age who don't want to look like a grandma.

Low hunts for fashionable

clothing, and then styles what she's found on herself. She posts the looks she has created and lets her followers know where they can buy the featured items. Low says that she's like a curator. "I'm trying on. I know how it fits. I take the guesswork out of shopping." She believes that women can wear what they want. Distressed jeans, for example, are a hot item right now and she advises that 50-plus women could wear a less distressed pair of jeans paired with a frilly blouse. "It's all in the way you wear it."

This year Low has started to offer styling services that range from a full closet clean-out to finding the right outfit for a special occasion. She says that helping clients with fashion brings her joy. "When you can find that perfect thing and they're so happy, it's like the best feeling in the world." Check out Low on IG #ohsofancyfrancie and <https://ohsofancyfrancie.com>.

Spring officially arrives later this month and with it come new looks in fashion. Cropped cardigans, gingham dresses, and silky, shiny fabrics are some of what's trending. Low tells me she's excited about wide-leg jeans and she's searching for the "perfect" non-wrinkle slip dress (a retro

look from the '90s). As for shoes, according to Low, slides are going to be a big hit this season.

"At last travel is starting up again and ladies need and want new clothes," says Terry Kiskaddon from Harper Greer in Lafayette. With that in mind, Kiskaddon is offering lots of dresses in bright colors and separates, such as crop pants with wider hems. T-shirts with "punchy iconic prints" are popular with guests and vests are "flying out the door." Starting April 1 - 4 Harper Greer is hosting a trunk show with the brand Alembika, which is known for chic, edgy designs.

Lorin Platto, proprietor of Luck boutique in Lafayette, says that it's the Year of the Dress. "There are so many pretty dresses right now, most with some form of ruching and feminine sleeve or strap detail." Platto has stocked "tons of dresses for all ages and body types." To top the dresses Luck has cardigans and fun accessories "from bags shaped like shells to clear plexi shoes."

I've been watching the new television series "And Just Like That," a spinoff from the 1990s hit show "Sex and the City," starring Sarah Jessica Parker as NYC stylish writer Carrie Bradshaw. Much has

been said about how the now middle-aged Carrie and her circle of friends are being portrayed, but it's the costuming that have many of us tuning in and anxious to see how Carrie handles fashion in her 50s. In my opinion she's just as quirky, but more covered up. Costumers Molly Rogers and Danny Santiago say that some of the clothing they used is

vintage, some are repeats from the original show, and many are rented from brands such as Chanel and Oscar de la Renta. "And Just Like That" is currently streaming on HBO Max.

Whatever your age ... Go forth in style!

Moya Stone is a fashion writer and blogger at www.overdressedforlife.com.

Natalie Baszile to speak at Orinda Community Church



Photo provided

Submitted by Lani Shepp

Natalie Baszile the author of "Queen Sugar," which has been turned into a television series on the Oprah Winfrey

Network, and editor of "We Are Each Other's Harvest" which is a collection of essays, interviews, photographs, and poems about Black American farmers will speak at 4 p.m. March 20 at Orinda Community Church as part of its annual public lecture on a current meaningful topic. The presentation can be attended in person at the church at 10 Irwin Way, Orinda or live-streamed.

Registration is required and in-person seating is limited. Live-streaming is unlimited. To register go to Orinda-communitychurch.org, click on the lecture button and follow the instructions. The discussion is free.