

# Eggplant Parmesan Pasta

By Kay Chun

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Yield: 4 Servings

Time: 35 Minutes

## INGREDIENTS

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

¾ cup panko bread crumbs

Kosher salt and black pepper

½ cup finely chopped yellow onion (from 1 small onion)

3 garlic cloves, minced

1½ pounds eggplant, peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes (8 cups)

2 tablespoons tomato paste

1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes, crushed with your hands in a bowl

1 basil sprig, plus ⅓ cup coarsely chopped basil leaves

¼ teaspoon dried oregano

1-pound short pasta, such as mezze rigatoni, fusilli or shells

2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

8 ounces fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced and at room temperature

## PREPARATION

1. In a high-sided large (12-inch) skillet with a lid, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium. Add panko, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring constantly, until golden and crispy, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Set a large pot of salted water to boil.
2. Wipe out the skillet and heat 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 2 minutes. Stir in garlic until fragrant, 30 seconds. Add eggplant and drizzle over the remaining ¼ cup oil. Season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally, until eggplant is softened, about 8 minutes. Add in tomato paste and stir constantly until lightly caramelized on the bottom of the skillet, about 2 minutes. Add crushed tomatoes, basil sprig, oregano and 1½ cups of water, and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat.
3. Cover the skillet and reduce heat to medium. Cook, stirring occasionally and smashing some of the eggplant, until the eggplant is very tender and the sauce is thickened, about 15 minutes. Discard the basil sprig.
4. Meanwhile, in the large pot of water, cook pasta according to package instructions until al dente. Reserve ½ cup of pasta water and drain.
5. Add cooked pasta, reserved pasta water and the eggplant sauce to the large pasta cooking pot, and cook over medium heat, stirring, until sauce thickens and coats the pasta, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in ¼ cup of the chopped basil.
6. Add Parmesan to the panko and mix well. Divide the pasta in bowls and top each with some of the mozzarella. Sprinkle over cheesy bread crumbs, and garnish with the remaining basil.