

# RECIPE for health

NOVEMBER 2008 In partnership with Health4U and University Housing

Featured Food:

## EGGPLANT



*When it is good it is very, very good but when it is bad, it is horrid.* Paraphrasing Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, this is an apt description of eggplant.

Eggplant is a garden jewel with a stigma in North America that is holding it back from the prominence it enjoys in other world cuisines, where bitter taste is prized. Here, it can be a challenging food that gets only one chance — if it is a negative experience, the result may be a lifetime of eggplant avoidance.

How to make eggplant *very, very good*:

- Use eggplants in season. They are far superior to the typical large purple-black ones that come out of storage to be sold in supermarkets. In Michigan, eggplants are in-season from July through October. When fresh, they are sweet and mild. Store them in a cool spot, not the refrigerator, and use within a day or two.
- Keep in mind that shape and color indicate flavor. Egg-shaped European varieties have a rich, meaty flavor and substantial texture, while elongated Asian varieties are mild and creamy when cooked. In terms of color, white eggplants are the mildest, followed by the striped varieties, then the dark purple globes, and finally the red-orange ones that are quite bitter and are meant for pickling.
- If eggplant tastes bitter to you, try this salting technique. Sprinkle eggplant slices or cubes lightly with salt. Place it in a colander and let stand for at least 30 minutes. Give it a quick rinse and pat dry before use in your recipe.
- When using eggplant in a fried dish, reduce its spongy texture and oil-absorbing capacity by precooking it — microwaving works well — or by salting it for one hour.

Eggplant's only other burden may be the name itself. Perhaps call it by its French name, *aubergine*.

## Penne Pasta Provencal

from the kitchen of University Housing Dining Services  
Serves 4 – 6

- 1 ½ cups penne pasta
- 1 cup eggplant, peeled and diced
- 1 cup zucchini, unpeeled, half-moon slices
- 1 cup red pepper, diced
- 1 cup mushrooms, sliced
- ¼ cup onions, diced
- 2 Tbsp fresh basil, chopped
- 3 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 ¾ tsp garlic, minced, ¼ tsp reserved
- 1 cup Campbell's® tomato juice
- 1 cup canned diced tomatoes; drained, juice reserved
- ¼ tsp oregano
- ¼ tsp rosemary, crushed
- ⅛ tsp thyme
- 1 ½ tsp Mrs. Dash® Tomato Basil Garlic Seasoning
- ½ tsp sugar
- 1 ½ tsp vegetable base
- 2–3 Tbsp vegetable or olive oil

Boil pasta until al dente. Cool and set aside. If desired, salt eggplant according to directions in accompanying article. Prepare vegetables and herbs. Make sauce by combining tomato juice, drained diced tomatoes, dried herbs, 1 ½ tsp garlic, sugar and vegetable base; simmer for 20 minutes. Add fresh basil and parsley. Add some of reserved tomato juice as needed. Continue simmering for 10 minutes. Taste. Add more sugar or herbs if needed for flavor. Heat oil in deep sauté pan; add ¼ tsp garlic. Add peppers, onions and zucchini; cook until tender/crisp. Add eggplant and mushrooms; cook until mushrooms are soft. Add Mrs. Dash® seasoning. Stir in pasta and sauce. Heat through and serve.

Penne Pasta Provencal will be featured in the MSU Residence Hall Dining Rooms at lunch on November 3. Once you try this delectable dish, you'll want to make it at home! Enjoy. For meal hours and complete menus, visit [eatatstate.com](http://eatatstate.com).

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