



WHAT'S IN SEASON //

Purple Passion

Beyond eggplant Parm

For years, eggplant was the neglected stepchild in my kitchen, a vegetal Cinderella, subjugated to peppers, tomatoes, and squash. I had issues with its bitterness, its mushiness, its scabby skin. But I toughed it out, faced my fears, and, with the support of a stovetop flame, smoked paprika, olive oil, and an immersion blender, therapy was complete. Now I roast it whole almost weekly, basking in its creamy, smoky, reciprocated love.

Of course, I braise and fry it, too, sometimes even smother it in marinara and mozzarella to mollify my kids. Whatever the need, it's always there for me. And late summer is when it really comes through, its skin taut and glossed like an ingénue, its stem vibrant green. Reject the large ones—they'll get over it—for their excessive bitterness and seeds, check for smoothness and heft, get them home, and store in the fridge for several days if need be. Then roast whole over a flame or in the oven, pricking the skin first, then peeling it away when done for that blissful purée (add tahini, lemon, garlic, sesame seeds, and olive oil for baba ghanoush). If you're frying slices, salt them first for 20 minutes to draw out bitterness and excess liquid, then rinse and dry. A dredge in flour or batter will reduce oil absorption.

Chef Laurent Ceron knows all the tricks. At *Tagine* (120 Grand St, Croton on Hudson 914-827-9393; taginecroton.com), eggplant shines in several guises, cloaked in the spice bazaar of Moroccan cuisine. His vegetarian tagine sings like a savory call to prayer, summoning with a house-made spice blend, grilled eggplant and summer squash, artichoke, tomato, and carrot. Order it, and you'll never miss the meat. "Eggplant is almost like a protein," Ceron says. "It's meaty, so it adds weight and texture." You'll find it in his couscous, too, cubed and roasted, and in his eggplant baba, grilled to mahogany and puréed. Such revelations! If only I'd had this enlightenment sooner.

Eggplant Baba

Courtesy of Laurent Ceron, Tagine
Serves 8-12

3 medium eggplant, unpeeled, washed, cut lengthwise, then crosswise into ½-inch-thick slices
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for brushing
2 Tbsp tahini
2 lemons, juiced
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

eggplant slices with olive oil, season with salt and pepper. Grill (or roast) eggplant until deep golden brown. In food processor, add eggplant, 1 cup olive oil, tahini, and lemon juice. Process to a smooth paste, adding more oil if mixture is too thick. Season with salt and pepper. Serve with pita, sliced baguette, or crudités.

// Diane Weintraub Pohl

Pre-heat grill to medium-high and oil grate (or pre-heat oven to 450° F). Brush

COFFEE WITH THE CHEF //

Iain Falconer

Cooper's Mill
670 White Plains Rd, Tarrytown
(913-333-1216; coopersmillrestaurant.com)

Five Items in My Home Refrigerator...V8, cheese, beer, salad, hot sauce.

Dish I Do the Best...Any dish with game meat, e.g. pigeon, venison, hare.

Culinary Hero...Anthony Bourdain. He's creative and a rebel.

If Not a Chef, I'd Be a...landscape gardener. I love being outdoors.

Last Book Read...The Cat in the Hat to my son.

I Never Eat...Brussels sprouts. It's the Devil's veg.

Favorite Place to Dine Out...Brasserie Les Halles on Park Avenue in New York City.

I Hate it When a Diner at My Restaurant...orders a steak well done.

Favorite TV Show...The Good Wife.

Show I'd Like to Be On...The Amazing Race; see the world doing crazy stuff.

The Strangest Request From a Diner...To cook the trout that he had just caught.

Shoes I Wear in the Kitchen are...smelly.

The Worst Incident That Occurred in the Restaurant Was...being flooded due to a rainstorm. Customers were given umbrellas.

Favorite Late-Night Snack...Rice cake with peanut butter and hot sauce.

Culinary School Can't Teach...how to swear properly.

My Favorite Cookbook...Fergus Henderson's The Whole Beast: Nose to Tail Eating.

Most Famous Person I Ever Cooked For...Princess Margaret.

Best Thing About Cooking in Westchester...great local produce.

Best Thing About Living in Westchester...Fresh air and state parks.

Three People (Living or Dead) I Would Invite to a Dinner Party...Joey Ramone, Anthony Bourdain, Sid Vicious.

// Ilana Fromm

Face Off

The County restaurants with the most Facebook "Likes"

Don Coqui, New Rochelle location		37,137
Rory Dolan's Restaurant, Bar & Caterers, Yonkers	9,752	
Sofrito, White Plains	8,938	
Havana Central, Yonkers		8,753
Candlelight Inn, Scarsdale		3,892
Polpettina, Eastchester		3,243
The Bedford Post Inn, Bedford	3,053	
Westchester Burger, Mount Kisco, Rye Brook, and White Plains	2,840	
Ron Blacks, White Plains		2,697
Posto 22, New Rochelle		2,573

// JBT with Jessica Schoen