

Sicilian Stuffed Eggplant

“I am going to make a bold statement. Sicilian food is Italian, but Italian food is not Sicilian. It is a different breed, especially the pastas. You are never gonna see a heavy red sauce or a meatball and god forbid you put Parmesan on something before tasting it first (it’s already in most of the sauces). The chef will be sorely offended and the last thing you want to do is offend a Sicilian.” — *Jo Piazza*

Time 45 minutes

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

2 medium-sized eggplants

4 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for drizzling

½ cup finely chopped onion

4 garlic cloves, roughly chopped

½ cup golden raisins, roughly chopped

½ cup, plus 2 tablespoons, panko breadcrumbs

Kosher salt

¼ cup almonds, roughly chopped

¼ cup green olives, roughly chopped

¼ cup ricotta

Juice of 1 lemon

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Slice the eggplants lengthwise. Use a small sharp knife, cut about a half inch in around the sides of the eggplant. Scoop out the flesh and set the shells aside.

Chop the eggplant flesh into 1-inch pieces. Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the olive oil and when it shimmers, add the eggplant, onion and the garlic. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 4 to 6 minutes or until the eggplant has a little give to it.

Add the raisins and ½ cup of the breadcrumbs and cook for 1 to 2 minutes and stir until well combined. Season very well with salt and remove from heat.

Spoon the mixture into the eggplant shells and fill to just above the rim of the shell and top with remaining breadcrumbs. Lightly drizzle with olive oil on the top.

Place eggplants into a relatively deep baking dish with a small amount of water on the bottom (about a centimeter). Cover with foil and bake for thirty minutes.

Remove foil and add the almonds and olives. Bake for another ten minutes to get the panko nice and golden on top.

Meanwhile, combine the ricotta and the lemon juice and season with salt. Remove the eggplants from the oven, plate and add dollops of ricotta to the top while they are still warm.