

## **MIDI-POCHE (EGGPLANT BAKE)**

[From *Greene on Greens*]

2 small eggplants (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound), sliced  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 tablespoon plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt  
4 tablespoons ( $\frac{1}{2}$  stick) unsalted butter  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 shallot, minced  
1 small onion, finely chopped  
1 clove garlic, minced  
3 cups chopped, seeded tomatoes (about 2 pounds)  
Pinch of sugar  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon chopped fresh thyme, or a pinch of dried  
1 tablespoon minced fresh basil, or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons dried  
1 teaspoon crushed allspice  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup all-purpose flour  
1 cup cooked rice  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place the sliced eggplant in a colander. Sprinkle it with the lemon juice and 1 tablespoon salt; let stand 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat 2 tablespoons of the butter with 1 tablespoon of the oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the shallot and onion; cook 2 minutes. Stir in the garlic; cook 1 minute longer. Add the tomatoes; sprinkle with sugar. Add the thyme, basil, allspice, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt. Cook, uncovered, over medium-low heat 20 minutes. Set aside.

Brush the eggplant with paper towels to remove the salt; pat dry. Dust the eggplant slices lightly with the flour. Heat the remaining butter and oil in a heavy skillet and sauté the eggplant over medium heat until golden on both sides. Drain on paper towels.

Spoon one fourth of the tomato sauce over the bottom of an ovenproof baking dish or casserole. Layer half the eggplant over the sauce. Sprinkle the eggplant with half the rice and then spoon half the remaining tomato sauce over the rice. Top with half the grated cheese. Repeat the layers of eggplant, rice, tomato sauce, and cheese. Bake until bubbly, about 15 to 20 minutes. Serve hot or at room temperature.

*Serves 4.*

NL 8/21/00