

GRILLED EGGPLANT

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This week will mark the first of this season's eggplant. Eggplant has the uncanny ability to absorb the herbs and spices it is seasoned with. Grilled eggplant is delightful hot off the grill and also at room temperature. Unfortunately, it doesn't refrigerate very well. This recipe is based on a recipe included in The Splendid Table: Recipes from Emilia-Romagna, the Heartland of Northern Italian Food by Lynne Kasper.

2 medium eggplants
2/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
4 cloves garlic, minced
¾ cup fresh parsley, minced
¾ cup fresh basil, minced
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

1. Slice the eggplant vertically into ¼ inch thick slices. Because the eggplant is so fresh, there is no need to peel it first.
2. Blend the garlic, parsley, basil and pepper in a small bowl. Lightly brush the eggplant slices with olive oil, and then spread a little of the herb mixture on both sides of each slice.
3. Lay the slices side by side on a large platter. Lightly cover with plastic wrap or wax paper and let stand at room temperature for 2 to 4 hours.
4. When you are ready to grill the eggplant slices, sprinkle the slices lightly with salt. Grill the eggplant slices over moderate heat for about 5 minutes for each side, turning once. You can spoon any unused herb mixture left on the platter over each slice after turning. The slices are done when they are a deep golden brown on each side and soft when pierced with a knife.

Serves 4-6.

Note: This recipe can be made with thick slices of zucchini as well. Just decrease the cooking time to 1-2 minutes per side and use higher heat.