

Eggplant With Lamb (or Beef), Tomato and Pine Nuts

8 servings

2 hours

- 2 large firm eggplants, cut into 13-mm slices (for Japanese eggplant, cut appropriately)
- 4 T extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp kosher salt, more as needed
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 450 g ground lamb or beef
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- Black pepper
- ½ T unsalted butter
- ⅓ C raisins, soaked in hot water for 10 minutes, then drained
- 70 g pine nuts
- 1 (828 mL) can tomato sauce
- 340 g fresh mozzarella, sliced



1. Line a baking sheet with foil or parchment.
2. Brush both sides of **eggplant** slices with **2 T olive oil** and sprinkle with **1 tsp salt**. Arrange slices on prepared baking sheet; use cooking torch to broil in batches until they are deep mahogany brown, turning once halfway through, 5 to 7 minutes per side. (or **oven bake until browned**)
3. Adjust the oven to **190°C**.
4. In a large skillet, heat 1 T of the remaining **olive oil** over **medium heat**.
 - Add **onion** and sauté until translucent, but not browned, stirring occasionally, **about 5 minutes**.
 - Add **garlic** and cook until fragrant, **about 1 minute**.
 - Add **ground beef**, stirring frequently and breaking up meat into very small pieces.
 - Season with remaining teaspoon **salt**, **cinnamon** and **pepper**. Sauté until meat is just cooked through. Taste and add more salt or pepper, or both, as needed.
5. In a medium skillet, melt **butter** over **medium heat**.
 - Add **pine nuts** and reduce **heat to medium-low**. Stir nuts to coat them with butter and continue stirring constantly until nuts are golden brown, **2 to 4 minutes**.
 - Keep a close watch over the nuts; they can burn quickly once they begin to brown. Transfer nuts to a bowl while still warm and salt them lightly.
6. Coat a 33cm x 23cm x 5cm baking dish with remaining **1 T of olive oil**.

7. Spread **120 ml of tomato sauce** in the bottom of the dish. Lay the eggplant slices in a single layer over the sauce, covering as much surface area of the bottom of the dish as possible. Spoon half the meat evenly over eggplant. Pour $\frac{1}{3}$ of the remaining tomato sauce evenly over meat. Sprinkle with $\frac{1}{3}$ of the pine nuts. Layer again with eggplant, meat, tomato sauce and pine nuts. Finish with a layer of eggplant and cover with more tomato sauce, sprinkling top with pine nuts.
8. Pour **240 ml warm water** around the perimeter of the baking dish. (Sauce will thicken as it bakes.) Cover pan with foil and **bake for 90 minutes**. Remove foil; top eggplant evenly with **mozzarella**.
9. **Bake for 15 minutes longer, uncovered**, or until the cheese is bubbling and golden. Serve eggplant warm, over rice.