

Eggplant Meat Gratin Dinner (with Salad)

4 Servings

(Leftovers = dinner for 2 the next day)



Ingredients

- Eggplants (medium Japanese) – **3 (≈600 g)**
- Onion – **1 medium (≈200 g)**
(half sliced, half finely chopped)
- Ground beef – **300 g**
(*reduce from 400 g → balances fat/sodium; leftovers will still be filling*)
- Mushrooms (shiitake, shimeji, or button) – **100 g**, chopped
(*extra umami + fiber, cuts down need for salt*)
- Garlic – **2 cloves**, minced
- Dried red chili – **1 small (optional)**, seeded and chopped
- Whole canned tomatoes – **1 can (400 g)**, chopped with juice
- **Coconut aminos – 2 tsp**
(*instead of bouillon cube; lowers sodium, adds depth*)
- Fresh/dried herbs – **1 tsp dried oregano + 1 tsp dried thyme** (or a mix of basil/shiso if seasonal)
- Shredded cheese (cheddar/gouda/parmesan mix works best) – **60 g total**
(*up from 20 g → 15 g per portion; still moderate but more satisfying*)
- Olive oil – **2 tbsp total** (instead of canola; richer flavor, healthier fats)
- Salt – **to taste, but ≤1/2 tsp total for entire dish**
- Black pepper – **to taste**

Instructions

1. Prep

- Preheat oven to **220°C**.
- Lightly coat baking dish with a few drops of olive oil.
- Cut **eggplants** into bite-size irregular chunks. Pat dry.
- **Slice half the onion; finely chop the other half. Chop mushrooms. Mince garlic.**

2. Cook Vegetables

- Heat **1 tbsp olive oil** in pan over **medium heat**.
- Add sliced **onion + eggplant**; sauté until softened.
- Season with just a pinch of **salt + pepper**.
- Spread mixture in prepared baking dish.

3. Make Meat Sauce

- Add remaining **1 tbsp olive oil** to same pan.
- Sauté **garlic + chopped onion + mushrooms** until fragrant.
- Increase heat, add **beef + chili**. Cook until browned and crumbly.
- Add **tomatoes + juice, coconut aminos, oregano, thyme**.
- Simmer **5 minutes** until thickened. Taste, adjust with **pepper** (and only a light touch of **salt** if needed).

4. Assemble & Bake

- Spread meat sauce evenly over eggplant layer.
- Sprinkle **cheese** evenly.
- Bake at **220°C** for **12–15 min**, until cheese is bubbling and browned.

Nutrition (per serving, 4 total)

- **Calories:** ~485 kcal
- **Protein:** ~27 g
- **Fat:** ~30 g
 - Sat. Fat: ~10 g
- **Carbs:** ~23 g
 - Sugars: ~10 g
- **Fiber:** ~6 g
- **Sodium:** ~1.1 g (with coconut aminos & ≤½ tsp salt)
- **Omega-3:** ~0.1 g (trace from beef/veg; pair with walnut salad or fish starter for balance)

Flavor / Health Boost Suggestions

- **Topper idea:** sprinkle toasted panko + parmesan for crunch without much sodium.
- **Add shiso** (finely sliced) just before serving → fresh, Japanese touch.
- Serve with **green side** (simple spinach ohitashi or salad) to round it out.
- For an **Omega-3 bump**: add 1 tbsp ground flax or hemp seeds into the meat sauce before baking (they'll disappear into the tomato base).

Simple Low-Sodium Vinaigrette (for 2 persons)

Ingredients

- Olive oil – **3 tbsp (45 ml)**
- Rice vinegar (or red wine vinegar) – **2 tbsp (30 ml)**
- Dijon mustard – **1 tsp (5 g)**
- Honey – **1/2 tsp (3 g)** (*balances acidity without being sweet*)
- Garlic – **1 small clove, finely grated or pressed**
- Coconut aminos – **1 tsp** (*umami + light salt substitute*)
- Freshly ground black pepper – to taste
- Optional: **fresh herbs** (parsley, basil, shiso, or chives), finely chopped

Instructions

1. In a small jar or bowl, whisk (or shake) vinegar, mustard, honey, garlic, and coconut aminos until combined.
2. Slowly whisk in olive oil until emulsified (or just shake vigorously in the jar).
3. Stir in herbs, season with black pepper. Taste — if you want more brightness, add a squeeze of **lemon juice**.

Vinaigrette Nutrition (per 1 tbsp / 15 ml)

- **Calories:** ~62 kcal
- **Protein:** 0.1 g
- **Fat:** 7 g
 - Sat. Fat: 1 g

- **Carbs:** 1.2 g
 - Sugars: 0.9 g
- **Fiber:** 0 g
- **Sodium:** ~45 mg (from coconut aminos)
- **Omega-3:** ~0.05 g (trace from olive oil)

💡 **Serving tip:** Toss this with a mix of leaf lettuce, cucumber, and a handful of walnuts. That way, you get crunch + an Omega-3 boost to complement the gratin dinner.

🥗 **Side:** [Simple Green Salad with Vinaigrette](#)

- **Salad base:** ~100–120 g greens (leaf lettuce, cucumber, walnuts optional).
- **Dressing:** 1 tbsp (15 ml) vinaigrette per serving.