

## Tomatoes, Eggplant, and Basil Pasta

1 baby eggplant  
⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil  
4 cloves garlic  
Large pinch dried chili peppers  
1 pint grape tomatoes

Sea salt to taste  
1 teaspoon dried oregano  
Handful fresh basil  
1 pound linguine or spaghetti

Cut the eggplant into small dice, leaving the skin on. In a large skillet heat about 3 tablespoons of the olive oil until almost smoking. Add the diced eggplant, stirring until the cubes are nicely browned. With a slotted spoon, remove the eggplant cubes to a paper-towel-lined plate to drain.

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to the boil. Use only the minimum amount of water needed, because you want the pasta water to be as starchy as possible.

Cut the tomatoes in half. Mince the garlic. Pour the remainder of the olive oil into the same skillet over medium-low heat. Add the minced garlic and the chili peppers to the skillet, and cook for several minutes, stirring until the garlic is fragrant but not browned.

In the meantime, add the pasta to the boiling water, and cook at least 1 minute less than the time given to reach the *al dente* stage. It will cook further with the tomatoes.

Raise the heat on the skillet to medium high. Toss in the halved tomatoes, the sea salt, oregano, and basil leaves. Continue stirring until the tomatoes are softened, and they begin to shrivel and blister. Add the sautéed eggplant cubes, and continue cooking for a few more minutes.

Just before draining the linguine or spaghetti, reserve 1 cup of the pasta water, then drain the pasta. Quickly stir the pasta into the tomato mixture, tossing and cooking for a minute or two to combine all the elements. Add as much of the starchy pasta water necessary to make a moist (generally about ½ cup), but not watery, sauce. Drizzle a bit more olive oil into the mixture.

Serve the pasta in bowls, topped with a few basil leaves, with or without grated cheese.

This recipe will yield 2-3 servings.