

## Cooking

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• There is no substitute for fresh lemon juice, so throw away the bottled stuff!

### Kiopoolu—Bulgarian Roasted Eggplant Spread

It is fascinating to see the bountiful variety of eggplant dishes throughout the Jewish Diaspora, each community using the flavors and produce indigenous to the area to create its own version of roasted eggplant. Here's a Bulgarian variation:

- 1 eggplant (about 1-1½ pounds)
- 2 whole jarred roasted and peeled red bell peppers, rinsed and patted dry
- 2 roma tomatoes
- 1-2 large cloves of garlic
- 3 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 Tablespoon red wine vinegar
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ¼ cup Italian parsley
- 1 teaspoon sugar, optional

**1.** Roast the eggplant in a 425°F oven or over a hot grill, turning every 10 minutes until the skin is charred on all sides. Place the eggplant in a 1-quart bowl. Slit the skin open from just below the stem to the very bottom of the eggplant. Let it sit for 15 or more minutes so the bitter juices will drain into the bowl.

**2.** Carefully peel the eggplant. Place the pulp in the workbowl of a processor (alternatively, cut all of the ingredients into small dice with a knife and fork).

**3.** If using the processor, cut the peppers into 1-inch pieces and add to the work bowl.

**4.** Cut the tomatoes in half crosswise and, holding the tomato half cut-side down over the sink, gently squeeze the tomato to release the seeds. Cut the halves into chunks and then add to the eggplant and peppers.

**5.** Pulse the processor on and off about 5 times. Add the garlic and pulse again until the mixture is coarse but well combined.

**6.** Add the oil and vinegar and pulse on and off to combine.

**7.** Season with salt and pepper and sugar (if mixture is slightly bitter).

**8.** Add the parsley. Pulse the processor on and off just enough to break it up and evenly distribute it.

**9.** Pour into a serving dish. Chill for at least 30 minutes to allow the flavors to meld together. The mixture will thicken slightly. Serve with crackers. Yield: about 2 cups or 8 servings.

#### Tina's Tidbits:

• To keep tomatoes from adding bitterness to a dish, seed the tomato or add a touch of sugar, barley-malt sweetener, or honey.

• Be careful not to over-mix green herbs like parsley in a processor; otherwise they will release their chlorophyll, leaving you with a grassy-tasting sauce. □

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