



INGREDIENTS

- 1 large eggplant, cut into 2cm dice
- Salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 red capsicum, seeded and chopped
- 1 yellow capsicum, seeded and chopped
- 1 fresh bay leaf, torn
- 3 sprigs thyme
- 3 zucchini, halved lengthways, cut into 1cm-thick discs
- 400g canned tomatoes, chopped
- ½ cup chopped flat-leaf parsley

Ratatouille

This versatile Provençal dish is delicious hot or cold, as a standalone vegetarian meal, or an accompaniment to grilled meat, poultry or seafood. There aren't any hard and fast rules, it's a quick, one-pot combination of eggplant, capsicum, onion, tomato, and usually zucchini, in whatever quantities you have on hand. Some people insist on frying each vegetable separately, while others toss them all in together. I follow the middle path, frying the eggplant separately then combining it with the rest, but if you're short on time, you can skip that step and add it at the same time as the capsicum. As for a wine, whenever I think of Provence, I think of rosé. I recently tasted the Fairbank Rosé from Sutton Grange, an organic winery in Bendigo; and I think this lovely Provençal-style rosé would be an ideal match with my ratatouille.

Serves 4

METHOD

1. Toss the eggplant with a handful of salt in a strainer, place a plate on top, weight it down with a can or jar and set aside for an hour or so to extract excess moisture. Rinse well and squeeze gently in a clean tea towel to dry.
2. Heat oil in a saucepan over high heat. When hot, add eggplant and cook for 10-12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until coloured. Drain and set aside, reserving the oil.
3. Heat reserved oil in a frying pan over medium heat.
4. Add onion, salt generously, cover and cook for 2-3 minutes until it starts to soften. Add garlic, capsicum, bay leaf and thyme, cover, reduce heat and cook for about 10 minutes, until tender, stirring occasionally.
5. Increase heat to high, stir in zucchini and cook for a couple of minutes, stirring often.
6. Add tomato, eggplant, and a good grind of pepper, bring to the boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for about 3 minutes, until zucchini is just tender.
7. Stir through parsley and serve immediately, or cool and serve at room temperature.