



Turkish Eggplant Salad

Eggplant appears in so many dishes in Turkey that it should be named the country's national vegetable! And why not - it's a wonderfully versatile and delicious ingredient, especially when it's exposed to a bit of intense heat. One of Turkey's most ubiquitous dishes, this tasty eggplant salad, patlıcan salatası, often arrives automatically, along with bread, as soon as you sit down at the table of a lokanta (casual restaurant). The version Somer Sivrioglu serves at Maydanoz in Sydney is the most delicious I've ever tasted, and my recipe is inspired by his. Using a combination of lemon juice, apple cider vinegar and pomegranate molasses gives the perfect refreshing tang to get your tastebuds ready for whatever's to come next. Char eggplant and capsicum directly over an open flame or on a hot grill plate if you prefer.

Serves 4 as a side dish

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large eggplant
- 1 small red capsicum
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- ¼ cup flat-leaf parsley leaves, finely chopped
- 2 green onions, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon strained lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
- ½ teaspoon salt flakes, crushed
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 teaspoons pomegranate molasses
- 1 tablespoon pomegranate seeds

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 200°C.
2. Pierce eggplant all over with a fork, about 12 times.
3. Rub a drizzle of oil all over the eggplant and capsicum and place in the oven for 40 minutes or so, turning occasionally, until the skin is blistered and starting to char.
4. Set capsicum aside until cool enough to handle.
5. Slit eggplant open lengthways, scoop out the flesh and place it in a colander to drain for about 10 minutes.
6. Peel capsicum, discarding skin, seeds and membrane. Finely dice the flesh and place it in a mixing bowl.
7. Roughly chop the eggplant flesh to form a chunky puree and add it to the mixing bowl.
8. Add parsley, green onion, 1½ tablespoons of the oil, lemon juice, vinegar, salt and pepper and mix thoroughly.
9. Transfer to a serving bowl.
10. Combine pomegranate molasses and remaining oil and drizzle over the top.
11. Scatter with pomegranate seeds and serve drizzled with a little more oil if you like.