

Caponata

Makes 8 cups

This classic Sicilian eggplant antipasto is best prepared sensuously chunky to take advantage of the eggplant's soft, silk texture and its affinity for big flavors – in this case, the delicious balance between sweet and sour. Make a generous batch, keep it in the fridge at the ready, and serve it not only as an antipasto alongside slices of salumi, bruschetta, or hard-boiled eggs, but also spooned over grilled or poached fish and chicken, or stirred into hot or cold pasta. It keeps for up to 1 week and the flavors improve as it sits.

2 large eggplants, cut into 1-inch cubes

¼ cup kosher salt

½ cup white wine vinegar

1 tablespoon sugar

¼ cup currants or raisins

¾ cup olive oil

3 ribs celery, cut into large dice

1 medium yellow onion, chopped

4 anchovy filets, chopped

One 28-ounce can whole peeled plum tomatoes, quartered, and their juices and the canning juices

1 cup large green olives, pitted and halved

2 tablespoons capers

1 bay leaf

Pepper

1. Toss the eggplant with the salt in a colander and let the bitter liquid drain out for about 1 hour. Meanwhile, combine the vinegar and sugar in a small bowl. Add the currants and set aside to plump.
2. Pat the eggplant dry with paper towels. Heat ½ cup of the oil in a heavy wide pot over medium-high heat. Working in batches, fry eggplant until browned all over, about 10 minutes. Transfer eggplant with a slotted spoon to a bowl.

3. Add the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of oil, the celery, and the onions to the pot. Cook over medium heat until just soft, about 10 minutes. Stir in the anchovies. Add the tomatoes and the juices, olives, capers, and bay leaf. Return eggplant to the pot. Stir in the currants and vinegar. Simmer, gently stirring often, until the juices thicken a bit, 10-15 minutes. Season with pepper. Refrigerate for at least 1 day and up to 1 week. Remove bay leaf before serving.

-OurLocaltopia 2013-



www.ourlocaltopia.com