

The Vegetable Butcher: How to Select, Prep, Slice, Dice, and Masterfully Cook Vegetables from Artichokes to Zucchini

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Winner, IACP Cookbook Awards for Single Subject and People's Choice.

The skills of butchery meet the world of fresh produce in this essential, inspiring guide that demystifies the world of vegetables.

In step-by-step photographs, "vegetable butcher" Cara Mangini shows how to break down a butternut squash, cut a cauliflower into steaks, peel a tomato properly, chiffonade kale, turn carrots into coins and parsnips into matchsticks, and find the meaty heart of an artichoke.

Additionally, more than 150 original, simple recipes put vegetables front and center, from a Kohlrabi Carpaccio to Zucchini, Sweet Corn, and Basil Penne, to a Parsnip-Ginger Layer Cake to sweeten a winter meal. It's everything you need to know to get the best out of modern, sexy, and extraordinarily delicious vegetables.

CARA MANGINI was the first official "vegetable butcher" at Eataly in New York City. She is the owner and executive chef of Little Eater, a produce-inspired restaurant named by the Washington Post as "one of the 50 best places in the world to eat your vegetables," and Little Eater Produce and Provisions, an associated local and artisanal foods boutique, in Columbus, Ohio, where she lives with her family. Eggplant

It is difficult to imagine that eggplant was once thought to be poisonous, feared for its bitterness, and overlooked for the beauty of its flowers. Now eggplants are almost impossible to resist-available in all shapes, colors, and sizes-with a flesh that becomes silky when cooked.

Best seasons: Mid-summer to early fall

Good partners: Arugula, balsamic vinegar, basil, cilantro, coconut milk, cornmeal, cream, dill, farro, feta, garlic, ginger, goat cheese, green beans, honey, mascarpone, mint, mizuna, mozzarella, onion, orange, parmesan, parsley, peppers, pine nuts, polenta, provolone, red pepper flakes, red wine vinegar, ricotta, ricotta salata, sesame seeds, tahini, toasted sesame oil, yogurt, za'atar

Varieties to try: Globe/Purple/Western (the classic, all-purpose eggplant). Japanese and Chinese (long and slender). Italian. Fairy Tale, Rosa Bianca, Listada di Gandia (three small heirloom varieties). White (snowy white).

Selection: Look for an eggplant that is very shiny and heavy for its size and gives slightly to the touch: It should be neither rock-hard nor squishy. Avoid eggplants with puckered skin or soft spots that indicate bruising. Eggplant comes in many shapes and sizes, but as a general rule, younger (smaller) eggplants are sweeter, have fewer to almost no seeds, and thinner skin. I generally recommend small to medium eggplant, but larger ones are fine for grilling steaks or roasting and turning into a puree.

Storage: Use eggplants within a few days of purchase to avoid their potential bitterness. Storing them requires a balancing act. If they become too cool for too long, their seeds will harden and their flesh will become bitter, but leaving them in the heat for too long will

cause their moisture to evaporate and flesh to soften. Place eggplants in an open plastic bag. If you will use them within 24 hours, store them in a cool corner of your kitchen. Any longer, refrigerate them in the crisper.

Butchery Essentials

Cut long eggplants of consistent width (like Japanese, Chinese, and some heirloom varieties) as you would other cylindrical vegetables (see page 13). Once you've broken down bulbous globe eggplants into slabs (below), you can butcher them further in much the same way.

To Cut Globe Eggplant into slabs

1. Cut the stem and base off the eggplant, then halve it crosswise, separating the round, broader end from the more narrow stem end. (Round or egg-shaped eggplants can be trimmed and left whole.)
2. Place the eggplant (or a piece of the eggplant) on its widest cut end and cut downward into slabs according to your desired width.

Favorite Cooking Methods

To grill or roast whole eggplant

This is a useful technique for dips and spreads. Preheat a grill to high heat. Place the eggplant on the grill and cook it, rotating every so often, until its skin is charred all over and its flesh has collapsed and is soft all the way through, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a bowl to cool, then peel the eggplant with your fingers. Alternatively, for a less smoky flavor, preheat an oven to 450°F. Prick the eggplant in several places with a fork, and rub with olive oil; place on a parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet. Roast until the skin is shriveled and blackened in places, and the flesh has collapsed and is soft all the way through, 30 to 40 minutes.

To grill or roast eggplant rounds

Preheat a grill to medium heat or the oven to 400°F. Place ½ - to ¾ -inch-thick rounds of eggplant in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet. Brush both sides with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

To Grill: When the grill is hot, use tongs to place the rounds on the grill. Cook, covered and turning once, until the eggplant flesh is tender but not completely soft and limp, 4 to 5 minutes per side. You can also grill oblong eggplants like the Chinese and Japanese varieties in the same way. Cut them in half lengthwise and follow the same instructions.

To Roast: Roast the oiled eggplant rounds on the baking sheet, flipping them halfway through cooking, until they are golden and tender through the middle, about 20 minutes. Sprinkle lightly with flaked sea salt and fresh herbs if you wish. As a variation, add minced garlic, chopped fresh herbs, and/or a splash of wine vinegar to the olive oil before brushing.

Smoky Eggplant Dip

Grill (or roast) 1 whole medium eggplant until charred and completely soft. When the eggplant is cool enough to handle, cut away the stem end and peel off the skin with your

fingers. Place the eggplant flesh in a food processor along with 1 garlic clove, 1 tablespoon olive oil, 2 tablespoons plain Greek yogurt, 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice, 1 tablespoon tahini, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper. Puree until smooth. Adjust salt, pepper, and olive oil to taste. Cover and chill for up to 2 days. Sprinkle with tart ground sumac or za'atar spice. Serve with grilled pita and sliced cucumbers.

Makes about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups

Grilled Fairy Tale Eggplant with Garlic and Mint

Cut $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 pound baby eggplants (such as Fairy Tale variety) in half lengthwise (small caps peeled back and pulled off). Toss with 2 tablespoons olive oil, 2 minced garlic cloves, a couple of generous pinches of salt, a pinch of freshly ground black pepper, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup loosely packed mint leaves. Let marinate at room temperature for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours or covered in the refrigerator for up to 8 hours. Remove the eggplant from the marinade (reserve it), and grill the eggplants, turning occasionally, on a nonstick grill pan over medium heat or in a grill basket, covered, over a medium-high fire, until the skins are slightly charred and the flesh is tender with slight firmness, about 10 minutes. Transfer the eggplants back to the marinade bowl and immediately toss with a splash of red wine vinegar or balsamic vinegar, a sprinkle of flaked sea salt, and more fresh mint.

Serves 3 to 4

Baked Eggplant Fries with Tomato-Balsamic Ketchup

Serves 3 to 4

These "fries" deliver all the fun that inherently comes with a pile of warm potato fries and a ramekin of dipping sauce, but without any of the guilt. A combination of breadcrumbs (for flavor) and cornmeal (for crunch) is used to coat the fries. Take the time to make your own ketchup: This recipe spikes melted tomatoes with balsamic vinegar to make a sweet and tangy condiment. For a particularly festive occasion, I'd suggest making a double batch of fries and serving them with the ketchup and Shredded Cucumber Tzatziki (page 140). The duo of dips will provide even more of a thrill-if you can imagine that.

6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 large globe eggplant, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-wide by 3-inch-long sticks

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fine sea salt, plus extra as needed

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus extra as needed

2 large eggs

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup fine, dry, plain breadcrumbs (page 19)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cornmeal (fine or medium grind)

1 tablespoon za'atar (optional)

A small handful coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley and/or basil leaves, for garnish

Tomato-Balsamic Ketchup (page 297), for dipping

1. Preheat the oven to 400 $\frac{1}{2}$ F and brush 2 rimmed baking sheets with 2 tablespoons of olive oil each.

2. Place the eggplant sticks in a large bowl and toss them with the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of the salt, and the $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of pepper to coat.
3. Lightly beat the eggs in a shallow bowl. In another shallow bowl, combine the breadcrumbs, cornmeal, and the za'atar (if you are using it).
4. Place a handful of eggplant sticks in the beaten eggs and turn them to coat fully. Gently remove them one by one with tongs, allowing the excess to drip back into the bowl, and place them in the crumb mixture. Use your fingers or another set of tongs to turn the sticks in the crumb mixture until they are fully coated, then place them on a prepared baking sheet. Repeat this process until all the sticks are coated, spreading them out in a single layer on the baking sheets.
5. Bake the eggplant sticks until just tender, about 15 minutes. Using tongs, flip them over and bake until they are golden and crispy, another 10 minutes. (The fries can be made up to 2 hours in advance and stored, uncovered, on a cooling rack at room temperature. Transfer them back to the baking sheets and crisp them at 400 $\frac{1}{2}$ F for 10 minutes.)
6. Sprinkle the eggplant fries with more salt and pepper to taste, then top with a sprinkle of chopped herbs. Serve immediately with the Tomato-Balsamic Ketchup alongside.

Variation: Baked Zucchini Fries: Substitute about 2 medium to large zucchinis for the eggplant.

Eggplant Steaks with Salsa Verde

Serves 4

Cutting an eggplant in half lengthwise—with its skin on and stem intact—produces thick, juicy steaks. (Rounds tend to become too soft to really dig into.) Here you will score the eggplant halves, brush them with garlic and oil, and let them roast until the upside is browned and tender. A fragrant and fresh sauce packed with parsley, mint, cilantro, and citrus adds a bright and herbal zip. Serve the garlicky steaks and green salsa with a scoop of couscous and tangy Greek yogurt—or, even better, dollop some Turkish Carrot Yogurt Dip (page 86) on top. Make the Salsa Verde at least an hour before serving so it has time for its flavors to blend.

2 Italian, globe, or heirloom eggplants ($\frac{1}{2}$ pound to 1 pound each) (see Notes, page 145)
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
Fine sea salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Cooked couscous, for serving (optional)
Salsa Verde (page 178), for serving
1 cup low-fat or full-fat plain Greek yogurt, or Turkish Carrot Yogurt Dip (page 86), for serving

1. Preheat the oven to 375 $\frac{1}{2}$ F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Cut the eggplants in half lengthwise, keeping the stems on. Make several deep slashes— $\frac{1}{2}$ inch apart—diagonally across the flesh, going two-thirds down (be careful not to puncture the skin).

3. In a small bowl, combine the garlic and oil, then spoon about a tablespoon over each half, working the mixture into the cuts. Brush it lightly on the skin side, too.

4. Put the eggplant halves, cut side up, on the prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle the flesh with salt and pepper, then drizzle it with more of the garlic and oil mixture to coat.

5. Roast until the flesh is golden brown and tender, about 40 minutes. Allow the eggplants to cool slightly. Serve the steaks warm with a scoop of couscous, if desired, the Salsa Verde, and a dollop of Greek yogurt or Turkish Carrot Yogurt Dip alongside.

Honeyed Eggplant and Polenta Cake with Orange Mascarpone Frosting

Serves 6 to 8

It may be hard to imagine, but eggplant performs as a sweet treat. Here, it melts with honey, vanilla, and nutmeg and caramelizes in balsamic vinegar, turning a simple, rustic, Italian-style polenta into a complex, moist, and dense cake—one that's only made better with the addition of orange mascarpone frosting. You must try it to believe it.

Slender Asian eggplants or small to medium Italian eggplants are ideal here. Whichever variety you choose, make sure to use them as soon as possible after purchase to avoid them turning bitter. Use medium-grind, stone-ground polenta for a more toothsome cake (I love it this way), or an extra-fine, almost powdery cornmeal for a softer cake with a more typical texture.

For the eggplant puree

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter

1 pound eggplant, peeled and cut into ½ -inch dice (about 4 cups)

½ teaspoon fine sea salt

½ cup honey

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar

For the polenta cake

8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus extra for greasing the pan

1 cup all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting the pan

⅔ cup polenta

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon fine sea salt

1 cup sugar

2 large eggs, at room temperature

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

½ cup whole milk

For the frosting

1 tub (8 ounces) mascarpone cheese, at room temperature

1 teaspoon freshly grated orange zest

- ½ cup confectioners' sugar
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Make the eggplant puree: Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. When it begins to foam, add the eggplant and salt, turn the heat up to medium high, and cook, stirring frequently, until the eggplant begins to soften and become golden on the edges, about 3 minutes. Add the honey, vanilla, nutmeg, and 1/4 cup water, reduce the heat to medium, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the eggplant is soft and caramelized, about 6 minutes. Add the balsamic vinegar and continue to cook, stirring frequently, until the eggplant is completely soft and a deep golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes more.
2. Transfer the eggplant to a food processor and blend, scraping down the side of the bowl, until completely smooth. Set aside and let cool. (The eggplant puree can be made up to 1 day in advance and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator.)
3. Make the polenta cake: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly butter and flour the side and bottom of a 9-inch cake pan, making sure to shake out excess flour. (A round of parchment paper may also be used at the bottom, but be sure to butter and flour the side of the pan.)
4. In a medium-size bowl, whisk together the flour, polenta, baking powder, and salt to combine. Set aside.
5. In a large bowl using a handheld electric mixer (or in the bowl of a stand mixer), beat together the butter and the sugar, beginning on low speed and increasing to medium high, until it is whipped and fluffy, about 1 minute. Add the eggs, one at a time, whipping on medium speed after each addition. Add the vanilla and the eggplant puree, and beat until it is just incorporated. Alternately in 3 rounds, add the dry ingredients and the milk, beating well between each addition until they are just combined. Be careful not to overbeat the batter.
6. Pour the batter into the prepared pan, using a rubber spatula to spread it evenly and smooth out the top. Bake until the cake just starts to pull away from the pan and the top is golden brown all over and is just firm to the touch, but still tender, 40 to 45 minutes.
7. Transfer the cake, still in the pan, to a wire cooling rack, and let cool for 15 minutes. Invert the cake against the rack to release it, remove the pan, and allow the cake to cool completely.
8. While the cake cools, make the frosting: Place the mascarpone cheese in a large bowl and beat it with an electric mixer on medium speed (or with a whisk) until there are no more lumps (do not overmix it). Stir in the orange zest. Sift the confectioners' sugar (twice if needed to ensure there are no lumps) and add it to the mascarpone slowly, beating continuously, until smooth and creamy. (If there are lumps, use the back of a spoon to make figure-eight motions, pressing the spoon against the side of the bowl.) Stir in the vanilla until just combined.
9. Frost the top of the cooled cake and serve. Honeyed Eggplant and Polenta Cake will keep, in an airtight container at room temperature, for 1 day.

Other Books

The Chef's Garden. An approachable, comprehensive guide to the modern world of vegetables, from the leading grower of specialty vegetables in the country Near the shores of Lake Erie is a family-owned farm with a humble origin story that has become the most

renowned specialty vegetable grower in America. After losing their farm in the early 1980s, a chance encounter with a French-trained chef at their farmers' market stand led the Jones family to remake their business and learn to grow unique ingredients that were considered exotic at the time, like microgreens and squash blossoms. They soon discovered chefs across the country were hungry for these prized ingredients, from Thomas Keller in Napa Valley to Daniel Boulud in New York City. Today, they provide exquisite vegetables for restaurants and home cooks across the country. The Chef's Garden grows and harvests with the notion that every part of the plant offers something unique for the plate. From a perfect-tasting carrot, to a tiny red royal turnip, to a pencil lead-thin cucumber still attached to its blossom, The Chef's Garden is constantly innovating to grow vegetables sustainably and with maximum flavor. It's a Willy Wonka factory for vegetables. In this guide and cookbook, *The Chef's Garden*, led by Farmer Lee Jones, shares with readers the wealth of knowledge they've amassed on how to select, prepare, and cook vegetables. Featuring more than 500 entries, from herbs, to edible flowers, to varieties of commonly known and not-so-common produce, this book will be a new bible for farmers' market shoppers and home cooks. With 100 recipes created by the head chef at The Chef's Garden Culinary Vegetable Institute, readers will learn innovative techniques to transform vegetables in their kitchens with dishes such as Ramp Top Pasta, Seared Rack of Brussels Sprouts, and Cornbread-Stuffed Zucchini Blossoms, and even sweet concoctions like Onion Caramel and Beet Marshmallows. The future of cuisine is vegetables, and Jones and The Chef's Garden are on the forefront of this revolution.

?, ?, ?, ?, ? . Calvo , Luz , and Catriona Rueda Esquibel . *Decolonize Your Diet : Plant - Based Mexican American Recipes for Health and Healing* . Vancouver : Arsenal Pulp Press , 2015 . Child , Julia , Louissette Bertholle , and Simone Beck . "