



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## Explore 'eggplant extravaganza' at your commissary

*By Kay Blakley,  
DeCA home economist*

**FORT LEE, Va.** – If enjoying the occasional Eggplant Parmesan at your favorite Italian restaurant is the extent of your eggplant experience, maybe it's time to explore that purple beauty a little further. It's low-calorie – only about 25 calories per serving – fat-free and sodium-free, provides a gram of protein, 2 grams fiber and 2 percent of your daily requirement for iron and vitamin C.

Globe eggplant is the most common variety found in the commissary and is available year-round. While certain recipes may call for Italian eggplant (slightly smaller and skinnier) or Japanese eggplant (longer and substantially skinnier), the common globe variety can usually be substituted with fine results.

Choose an eggplant that is firm to the touch and has a smooth and shiny skin, avoiding those with soft spots or a dull or wrinkled skin. Store them in a cool, dry place or in the refrigerator and use within two to three days. Those weighing less than 1 pound each are generally the best choice, because their skins will be tender enough to use without peeling, and they are likely to have fewer seeds.

Eggplant can be sautéed, broiled, grilled or stir-fried. If your recipe calls for salting the eggplant to remove excess moisture, don't skip that step. You'll end up with eggplant that steams in its own juices instead of frying, broiling or sautéing, a texture that's mushy rather than soft, and a taste you won't be anxious to produce again anytime soon.

There are two salting methods that can be used. One is to slice or dice the eggplant as desired, place it in a colander, sprinkle liberally with table salt and let it drain for up to an hour. It must then be thoroughly rinsed and dried before cooking. A second, and sometimes faster, method is to sprinkle the cut eggplant with kosher salt and place it on a baking sheet lined with several layers of absorbent paper towels. As moisture is drawn out of the eggplant, it is wicked away by the paper towels. Once the salt has done its job, it can simply be wiped away with clean paper towels, thus eliminating the rinse and dry steps necessary in the colander method.

If all that sounds like too much trouble to even think about, then try the recipe below for Italian Pepperonata. It features eggplant at its best, with no special preparation, along with lots of other tasty vegetables.

To check out other recipes for delicious eggplant dishes, come to Kay's Kitchen at <http://www.commissaries.com>.

### **Italian Pepperonata (Serves 6)**

**Note:** *Lower heat as needed to prevent overbrowning. Eggplant can absorb an enormous amount of oil. Use up to 4 tablespoons oil, if needed. Thereafter, if mixture continues to be dry, add a tablespoon or 2 of hot water and cover skillet with a lid for shorter periods, but continue to stir often.*

#### Ingredients:

2 to 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1 large onion  
1 each medium yellow, red and green bell peppers  
1 small eggplant (about 1/2 pound)  
1 medium zucchini  
1 clove garlic, pressed through a garlic press  
1 can diced tomatoes, drained

#### Directions:

1. Remove stem and blossom end of eggplant and cut in half lengthwise. Slice each half into thirds lengthwise, then slice crosswise into 1/2-inch thick pieces.
2. Remove stem end of zucchini, quarter lengthwise, then slice crosswise into 1-inch chunks.
3. Clean onion, cut in half vertically, then into 1-inch chunks. Remove stem, seeds and membranes from peppers and cut into 1-inch chunks.
4. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and peppers and stir-fry about 3 to 4 minutes or until onions are beginning to become translucent.
5. Add eggplant, zucchini and garlic and stir-fry until all vegetables are crisp-tender, 3 to 4 minutes more.

6. Stir in enough of the canned diced tomatoes to tie everything together, about 1/2 to 3/4 can. The mixture should be saucy, but not soupy. Continue to cook until all ingredients are heated through. Serve immediately.

**-DeCA-**

**About DeCA:** *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings amounting to thousands of dollars annually. For current savings figures for various groups – single member up to a family of seven – visit <http://www.commissaries.com>. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*