



International Cooking

A Taste of Italy—Mexican-Style

(NAPSA)—Eggplant, bell peppers and tomato—they may sound like the makings of an Italian meal, but these vegetables also all contribute to Mexican cuisine. In fact, all of them are popular Mexican exports that bring a taste of warm sunshine to cooler climates during the winter.

Mexico's beautiful purple eggplants are a common wintertime sight in American supermarkets. During the 2002-2003 season, Mexico sent nearly 86 million pounds of eggplant—making it the top U.S. supplier.

Mexico is also the United States' No. 1 supplier of bell peppers, which are actually native to Mexico, Central and South America. In the last season, for example, Mexico exported over 356 million pounds of bell peppers to the U.S.

And another Mexican native, the tomato, is also a popular export. For decades, Mexico has been the leading U.S. supplier of vine-ripened, high-quality tomatoes during winter and spring.

For an authentic taste of Mexico, try this delicious lunch or dinner recipe for breaded and fried eggplant rounds smothered with bell peppers and a pleasantly spicy tomato sauce.

Berenjena y Chile Dulce con Salsa de Tomate

- 1 large eggplant, cut into 8 round slices (1/2-inch thick)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup fine breadcrumbs
- 1 medium green bell pepper, seeded and sliced
- 1 medium red or orange bell pepper, seeded and sliced
- Vegetable oil for frying
- Spicy tomato sauce
- Fresh cilantro, minced



Sprinkle eggplant with salt. Beat eggs in a shallow bowl. Stir together flour and breadcrumbs on a plate. Dip each eggplant round in egg, then in flour mixture. Refrigerate on a baking sheet for 1-4 hours.

Heat 1/2 inch oil in a medium skillet. Fry eggplant on medium, turning once, until golden brown all over. Then fry bell peppers until soft. Drain vegetables on paper towels.

To serve, spoon eggplant with peppers, then with Spicy Tomato Sauce (recipe follows); sprinkle with cilantro. Serves 4 as a lunch or light dinner.

Spicy Tomato Sauce

- 3 medium tomatoes
- 1 serrano chile, seeded and chopped
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 white onion, chopped
- Salt and pepper

Broil tomatoes until charred, about 5 to 7 minutes; remove cores. Add to blender with chile, and blend until smooth. Heat oil in a medium pan and sauté onion on medium heat until translucent and light brown, about 6 minutes. Add tomato mixture and simmer uncovered for 15 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste.