

EATING LOCAL AND SEASONAL: EGGPLANT

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Eggplants have been around for at least 4000 years, originating from India and China. Despite its arrival to North America about 200 years ago, it continues to be quite underused in North American cuisine. Get some tips in this issue of *Minute Nutrition News* to learn how you might take advantage of this nutrient-rich vegetable in your cooking.

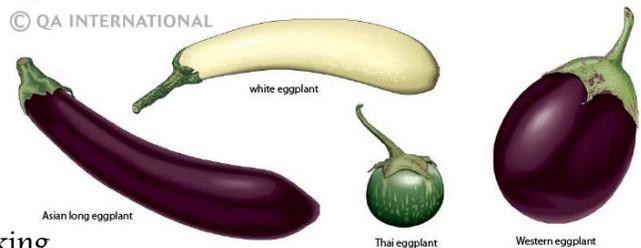
WHAT IS IT

Eggplants come in various shapes and sizes. Their skins are typically of a purple shade, but can also come in green or white. Inside the vegetable is a firm white flesh that softens with cooking. The most common type of eggplant in Canada is the deep purple, oval or globe shaped variety. The second most common is the Asian eggplant which is long and slender. Other varieties also include:

- Italian eggplant, round with purple streaks,
- Thai eggplant, round with green stripes, and
- African eggplant, egg-shaped with white skin.

Each of these varieties are ideal for different ways of cooking.

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NUTRITIONAL GOODNESS

One cup of cooked eggplant contains 35 calories. It is low in fat and contains 10% of your daily requirement of fibre. Other nutrients it contains include vitamins C, E, B1, B3 and B6, as well as folate, potassium, magnesium and copper.

BUYING AND COOKING WITH EGGPLANTS

Choose eggplants with smooth and glossy skin that is firm to the touch. The green cap and stem at the top of the eggplant should also be firm and of a green colour rather than brown and dried. Eggplants can be stored in the refrigerator for up to five days.

Eggplants need to be rinsed under cold running water before handling. Use a stainless steel knife to remove the green cap and cut the plant into desired shape and size according to recipe. (Carbon knives can cause discolouration and give it a bitter aftertaste.) Some recipes suggest lightly salting the eggplant for 15–30 minutes before rinsing and cooking to help reduce the bitterness.

The Western and Italian eggplant is a great choice for baking and grilling. Sliced eggplant can be used to make eggplant parmesan, ratatouille (a traditional French vegetable dish), moussaka (a Mediterranean dish similar to Sheppard's pie), or added into baked pasta and lasagna dishes. Grilled eggplant slices can be lightly seasoned and served as a side dish or added into sandwiches. Roasted eggplant can be used for dips such as the Baba Ghanoush recipe on the next page.

The Asian eggplant is ideal for stir-frying, sautéing, and grilling. Chop eggplants into cubes and add into stir-fries and curries.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

August 2015

Baba Ghanoush (Mediterranean Eggplant Dip)

Baba Ghanoush is a Mediterranean dish of flavoured mashed or pureed eggplant. Traditionally, Baba Ghanoush is served with olive oil, but this recipe is smooth and creamy enough that you can omit the olive oil if you like. Enjoy the dip with veggies or baked whole wheat pita for a high fibre snack!



Makes 2 cups

Ingredients:

1	Medium eggplant
1 clove	Garlic
1 tbsp	Tahini (sesame paste)
1 tbsp	Lemon juice
½ tsp	Maple syrup
¼ tsp	Chili powder
1/8 tsp	Cumin, ground
1/8 tsp	Salt
1/16 tsp	Smoked paprika
	Drizzle of olive oil (optional)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Prick the eggplant a few times with a fork. Place on baking sheet and bake for 40 minutes. Rotate eggplant every 10 minutes.
3. In the last 10 minutes of baking, place garlic in the oven together with the eggplant.
4. Take eggplant out and set aside to cool. Remove garlic from peel and place into a food processor.
5. Add tahini, lemon juice, maple syrup, chili powder, cumin, salt and paprika into food processor.
6. Once eggplant has cooled, peel off the skin and cut the flesh into smaller pieces before placing into food processor.
7. Blend until all ingredients are mixed and eggplant becomes puree texture.
8. Drizzle olive oil on top if desired and serve with baked pita chips. (Visit <http://www.gnplc.ca/services-and-programs/nutrition-services/food-demonstrations/> for the August 2013 recipe on homemade pita chips.)

Nutrition information (per cup):

110 calories, Fat 4.5 g (7% DV), Carbohydrate 17 g (6% DV), Fibre 7 g (28%), Protein 4 g, Sodium 160 mg (7% DV), Sugars 9 g, Calcium 43 mg (4% DV)

Recipe adapted from *Baba Ghanoush* from
<http://jessicainthekitchen.com/baba-ghanoush/>