



Eggplant Stacker with Creamy Pesto Beans and Balsamic Gastrique

Recipe courtesy of UConn Dining Services | dining.uconn.edu/recipes

Makes 8 - 6oz servings

Award-winning Recipe

This recipe received Gold in the 2026 National Association of College and University Food Services Nutrition Awards - Special Diet Recipe category.

Balsamic Gastrique

Yield: $\frac{3}{4}$ cup

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons sugar
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups balsamic vinegar

Directions

1. Combine the sugar and balsamic vinegar in a saucepan over medium heat.
2. Stir occasionally until the sugar is fully dissolved.
3. Continue simmering until reduced to a syrup consistency, approximately half of the original volume.
4. Transfer to a metal container and refrigerate until cooled.

Bruschetta

Yield: 2 pounds

Ingredients

- 2 pounds red and yellow heirloom tomatoes, cored and diced
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper

Directions

1. In a large bowl, combine the tomatoes, olive oil, garlic, basil, kosher salt, and black pepper.
2. Refrigerate until needed.

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Creamy Pesto Beans

Yield: 3 cups

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup shallots, finely chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ¾ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ⅓ cup vegetable broth
- 2 cups cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- ⅓ cup nut-free basil pesto
- ⅓ cup fresh basil leaves, packed
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese, grated

Directions

1. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
2. Add the shallots and garlic and cook until translucent, about 2 minutes.
3. Add the Italian seasoning and crushed red pepper and cook for 1 minute.
4. Slowly stir in the heavy cream and vegetable broth and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat.
5. Stir in the cannellini beans and continue simmering until the sauce slightly thickens, 3–4 minutes.
6. Remove from heat and stir in the pesto, basil, and lemon juice.
7. Gradually stir in the Parmesan cheese until incorporated.
8. Hold warm until needed.

Eggplant

Ingredients

- 2 pounds eggplant, ends trimmed, peeled, and cut into ½-inch rounds
- 3 ounces cornstarch
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons granulated onion spice
- ¾ teaspoon black pepper
- ¾ cup whole milk
- ¼ cup eggs, beaten
- 4 ounces gluten-free panko breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese
- Olive oil, as needed

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Eggplant cont.

Directions

1. In a large bowl, combine the cornstarch, kosher salt, onion spice, and black pepper.
2. In a second bowl, whisk together the milk and eggs.
3. In a third bowl, combine the gluten-free panko breadcrumbs and Parmesan cheese.
4. Dredge the eggplant rounds in the cornstarch mixture, then the egg mixture, and finally the breadcrumb mixture.
5. Heat olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Cook the eggplant for 2–3 minutes per side, or until golden brown.
6. Transfer to paper towels to drain.

Plating Instructions

- Place $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the creamy pesto bean mixture in the center of the plate.
- Layer one eggplant round with 1 ounce of bruschetta. Repeat with a second eggplant round and another 1 ounce of bruschetta. Top with a third eggplant round and finish with 1 ounce of bruschetta.
- Drizzle with 1 teaspoon of balsamic gastrique and serve immediately.