

RATATOUILLE

A GREAT SUMMER SALAD

By Katie Beck

Photography by Marty Snortum Studio

Ratatouille. It's fun to say, pretty to see and even better to eat. A popular dish from the French region of Provence, this vegetarian fare lacks nothing in the taste and presentation departments due to its colorful array of tantalizing vegetables.

A medley of bell peppers, eggplant, onions, tomatoes, zucchini, garlic and herbs are simmered in olive oil to create this versatile dish that can be served warm or cool. If there is one type of food that can be consumed with reckless abandon, it is your veggies. The health benefits of including vegetables in every meal are seemingly endless. Edible plant foods are full of fiber, complex carbohydrates (the good ones), magnesium, protein and other disease-fighting compounds.

The predominant ingredient in Ratatouille is eggplant. Its mild flavor and soft texture mingle nicely with the accompanying vegetables in the dish. When in need of a quick meal, this recipe is a fast, easy and healthy. More importantly, it is full of robust flavors that will benefit your taste buds and your body.

Ratatouille

Yields 4 luncheon salad servings

- 4 each small eggplants
- ¼ cup minced shallots
- 4 tbsp minced garlic
- 1 cup diced red onion
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1½ cups diced canned tomatoes and juice
- 3½ cups eggplant meat - cubed ½ inch in size
- 3 ¼ cups diced zucchini
- 2 cups diced yellow squash
- 1½ cups diced red bell pepper
- ¼ cup fresh oregano
- ¼ cup fresh thyme
- 4 each vine ripened tomatoes
- 1 head red leaf lettuce
- salt and pepper to taste

Nutrients per serving:

Calories: 170	Cholesterol: 0 mg
Carbohydrate: 31 grams	Protein: 5 grams
Total fat: 5 grams	Sodium: 429 mg



To Prepare

A carved eggplant makes a visually stunning serving vessel for the finished Ratatouille, and it's easy to create: simply cut a sliver off the bottom of an eggplant so that it sits on a plate without wobbling, then cut the top off in a decorative or simple design. Scoop out the inside and the top of the eggplant leaving about 1/4 inch of flesh along the insides. Cube the eggplant meat for preparation in the ratatouille and set aside. Rub the inside of the eggplant with extra virgin olive oil and season with garlic salt and a little dried oregano. Crumple aluminum foil and fill the cavity to hold the cavity open and bake the eggplant shell in a 350-degree oven for 20 minutes or until fork tender. Remove from the oven (do not remove the foil) and cool, then refrigerate.

To prepare the ratatouille, in a medium saucepan, sauté shallots, garlic and red onion in olive oil until lightly browned. Add diced tomatoes and cook over medium heat for about 5 minutes. Next, combine all of the other ingredients and continue to cook over a medium-high for 10 minutes, or until vegetables are tender. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt & pepper. Refrigerate for 24 hours to blend all flavors.

To Plate

Line a plate with red leaf lettuce; center one of the baked eggplant vessels and fill with chilled ratatouille. Garnish with sliced tomatoes seasoned and sprinkled with lemon juice and drizzled olive oil.

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