



Crispy Japanese Eggplant "Katsu" Curry

By Dylan Sabuco

Prep Time 10 / **Cook Time** 15 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

stir: to mix together two or more ingredients with a spoon or spatula, usually in a circle pattern, or figure eight, or in whatever direction you like!

chop: to cut something into small, rough pieces using a blade.

fry: to fry in a pan in a small amount of fat.

measure: to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

scramble: to stir or beat eggs, blending the whites and yolks together, before cooking the eggs or dipping meat or vegetables into them so flour and breadcrumbs stick better when breading and frying.

knife skills: Bear Claw (growl), Pinch, Plank, and Bridge (look out for trolls).

Equipment

- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife
- Paper towels
- Measuring spoons
- Small bowls (2)
- Whisk
- Liquid measuring cup
- Large sauté pan
- Spatula or tongs

- Medium bowl
- Medium saucepan
- Blender

Ingredients

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- 1 large eggplant ****(for NIGHTSHADE ALLERGY sub 1 block extra firm tofu OR 12 small mushrooms)****
- 1/3 C vegetable oil, divided ******
- 1 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp grated ginger root (or 1/4 tsp ground ginger)
- 5 T cornstarch, divided (1 T for sauce and 4 T for the breading)
- 4 T panko breadcrumbs ****(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free panko breadcrumbs)****
- 1 egg ****(for EGG ALLERGY sub 1 T flaxseeds + 1/4 C warm water—more info below)****
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 C soy sauce ****(for GLUTEN/SOY ALLERGY sub coconut aminos)****
- 1/4 C water
- 1/2 tsp mild chili powder ****(for NIGHTSHADE ALLERGY sub curry powder)****
- 1 T granulated sugar

Food Allergen Substitutions

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Nightshade: For 1 large eggplant, substitute 1 block extra firm tofu OR 12 small mushrooms. Substitute curry powder for mild chili powder.

Gluten/Wheat: Substitute gluten-free panko breadcrumbs. Substitute coconut aminos for soy sauce.

Egg: For 1 egg, substitute 1 T flaxseeds + 1/4 C warm water. Stir and soak flaxseeds in warm water for 5 minutes or until fully absorbed and thickened.

Soy: Substitute canola oil or other nut-free high-smoking point oil for vegetable oil. Substitute coconut aminos for soy sauce.

Instructions

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intro

Katsu (KAHT-soo) is a dish that comes from Japan. Generally, it means breaded and fried food coated in a thick, sweet, and salty sauce called tonkatsu sauce. This SFC version will use eggplant instead of the traditional pork or chicken. Dice, bread, and fry the eggplant and smother it in thick, sweet garlic sauce atop a bed of **Steamed Sesame Rice** for a perfect dinner for you and your family.

dice + measure

Large dice **1 eggplant** into ½ -inch-thick cubes. Set the diced eggplant on a plate or cutting board lined with paper towels. The paper towels underneath the eggplant will absorb some of the water inside the eggplant. Wet eggplant doesn't turn golden brown! Measure **1 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, 1 teaspoon ginger, 4 tablespoons cornstarch,** and **4 tablespoons panko breadcrumbs** into a small bowl. Whisk the dry breading ingredients together.

fun food facts

The cooking method we are using today to cook the eggplant is called stir-frying. To stir-fry, you simply need a wok (or our skillet), high heat, and a big drizzle of oil. Then, as the food sizzles in the pan, you stir constantly until it is browned and delicious. This cooking method was invented in Ancient China during the Shang Dynasty. It was necessary to invent a new cooking method because all cooking was done over a super hot fire instead of the stovetops of today. These fires would burn food cooked in a traditional skillet. The wok has sloped edges so food can be stirred and pushed to the sides where there is less heat from the fire. Stirring constantly also helps maintain a balanced level of heat. While you stir-fry today, pretend your skillet is a wok and teach your kiddos a little lesson about stir-frying.

crack + scramble

Crack **1 egg** into a different small bowl and whisk to scramble the egg.

bread + stir fry

Heat ****1/4 cup oil*** in a large sauté pan over medium heat (may need a few tablespoons more oil depending on skillet size). While the oil is heating, dip each piece of eggplant into the egg (be sure to shake off any excess drips of egg), then dip the egg-covered eggplant into the panko mixture (again, shake off any excess panko). Once all of the eggplant is breaded, start carefully laying the eggplant in the pan. It will sizzle for 5 minutes on each side before turning golden brown. When golden brown, remove from the pan and reserve in a medium bowl.

mince + measure

Mince all **4 garlic cloves** and combine with **1/4 cup soy sauce, 1/4 cup water, 1 tablespoon cornstarch, 1/2 teaspoon chili powder, 1 tablespoon sugar, 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, 1 pinch of salt,** and **1 pinch of black pepper** in a medium saucepan.

sticky science

Sugar and water, when boiled, make simple syrup. When boiled, the water turns to steam (leaving the pan), and the sugar becomes thicker and stickier. This concept is used all around the globe to create sticky, sweet sauces. This recipe will combine syrup and soy sauce to make tonkatsu sauce.

simmer + blend

Simmer the ingredients for 5 minutes over medium-high heat until the garlic is soft and the sugar is dissolved. (Tip: For a less spicy sauce, cook the garlic a little longer.) Blend this mixture in a blender or using an immersion blender until smooth. Return the sauce to the saucepan and add the katsu eggplant. Stir for 30 seconds and serve! "Tanoshimu" or "Enjoy" in Japanese!

Featured Ingredient: Eggplant!

Hi! I'm Eggplant!

"I'm the star of this dish, the exciting Eggplant! You might think of me as a vegetable, but I'm actually a berry! Not only that, but I'm large and oblong (that's a long oval shape), and I'm purple! Some of my eggplant cousins are short and plump, and have white streaks, but we all wear the same perky green cap, and we're all good to eat!"

History

The eggplant was called the Mad Apple for hundreds of years before people were actually brave enough to try eating it. People worldwide thought it was poisonous, so it took a long time before someone was brave enough to take a bite.

Eggplant is widely believed to be native to India. In fact, it is known as the King of Vegetables in India. Eggplant still grows wild in India!

Chinese emperors enjoyed eggplant way back to as early as 600 BC. How's this for an interesting fact: Ladies of China found it fashionable to stain their teeth black way back in 600 BC, and they would use eggplant skins to make a black dye for their teeth!

Eggplant eventually made their way around the world with global explorers, but people used them more for table decoration than food for hundreds of years because they were afraid they'd be poisoned if they ate them!

One story tells that when eggplant was brand new to France, King Louis XIV wanted to impress guests at his royal table, so he had his gardeners plant eggplant in his garden. Do you think his diners were impressed? They were not! They described the eggplant as "fruits as large as pears, but with bad qualities."

King Louis XIV cooked them and served them to his guests anyway, without them knowing. And they didn't get sick! This is because he had done his research first and found out that once eggplant mature, they are safe to eat and are actually quite delicious!

Anatomy & Etymology

Eggplant are technically berries, not vegetables! Are you surprised? What are some other fruits commonly mistaken for vegetables? How about cucumbers and tomatoes?

Did you know that eggplant and tomatoes are related? That's right—they both belong to the Nightshade family, along with potatoes and peppers.

The standard eggplant is oval or pear-shaped, glossy-skinned, or purple. However, there are many different varieties of eggplant around the world. For example, eggplant can be white, green, round, small, long, purple-and-white speckled, cream-colored, or deep purple.

With eggplant, bigger isn't necessarily better. The smaller the eggplant, the sweeter it tends to taste.

Eggplant does have seeds, but once they've developed seeds, their flesh becomes pretty bitter. That's why it's best to harvest eggplant before their seeds become too big.

Europeans gave these berries the name "Eggplant" in the middle of the 18th century because the variety they knew looked exactly like Goose Eggs!

Another name for eggplant is "aubergine" (ober-zheen), adapted from the original Arabic name al-badinjan.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

When buying eggplant, look for smooth skin, even color, heavy-in-the-hand, and no bruises. Squeeze the eggplant gently with a finger and then let go. If the eggplant is fresh, it will bounce back again. The stems should be bright and green.

Store eggplant overnight at room temperature and plan to use it soon after bringing it home. If you are storing it for longer than a day, wrap it in a plastic bag and place it on a shelf in the fridge.

The skin of the eggplant is edible, but many recipes advise peeling the skin before cooking because the flesh is sweeter and more tender, while the skin can be tough.

Eggplant is a very watery vegetable, and this is why many people like to salt their sliced eggplant before frying them to remove some of the excess moisture. They also used to be much more bitter, so people would add salt to them to cut the bitterness. Eventually, growers bred the bitterness out of the plants.

Eggplant can be roasted, baked, fried, sauteed, grilled, braised, stir-fried, and stuffed. The only way we wouldn't suggest eating eggplant is raw. While it is not harmful in small doses, eggplant is so much more delicious when cooked.

Eggplant is in peak season from August to March—they love hot weather!

Nutrition

The color of a fruit or vegetable tells us what nutrient it contains (nature is amazing!). Orange vegetables

and fruits have special nutrients. So do green vegetables. Purple eggplant also contain a nutrient that gives them their color: anthocyanin. It's an antioxidant also found in red or purple grapes, blackberries, blueberries, plums, red cabbage, red onions, and prunes.

Brains! Did you know that the brain is made up primarily of fat? Eggplant has a unique nutrient that's been shown to protect the fats in our brain. When we safeguard the fats in our brain, we make it possible for brain cells to send signals back and forth to each other—which is a very good thing! We need our brain cells to talk to each other!

Fiber! We often talk about fiber when we reveal our Surprise Ingredient, and that's because vegetables and fruits contain a lot of fiber. Eggplant are no exception. What does fiber help with? Digestion! And which body parts are responsible for digestion? Many, but namely our stomach and intestines. We definitely want to keep those running in tip-top shape!