



## Sweetly Spiced Afghan Stewed Eggplant "Borani Banjan"

By Dylan Sabuco

**Prep Time** 10 / **Cook Time** 20 / **Serves** 4 - 6

### Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

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

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

**sauté:** to cook or brown food in a pan containing a small quantity of butter, oil, or other fat.

### Equipment

- Medium pot + lid
- Small or medium bowls (4)
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife
- Measuring spoons
- Wooden spoon
- Fork to test doneness

### Ingredients

#### Sweetly Spiced Afghan Stewed Eggplant "Borani Banjan"

- 1 large (globe) eggplant OR 3 small (Japanese) eggplant **\*\*(for NIGHTSHADE ALLERGY sub 2 C mushrooms or zucchini)\*\***
- 1 medium yellow onion
- 1 medium potato, any variety **\*\*(for NIGHTSHADE ALLERGY sub 1 C mushrooms or zucchini)\*\***

- 2 tomatoes **\*\***(for NIGHTSHADE ALLERGY sub 4 T pumpkin purée)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 T curry powder
- 2 T vegetable oil **\*\***
- 1/4 C plain yogurt **\*\***(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free plain yogurt)**\*\***
- 2 T tomato paste **\*\***(Omit for NIGHTSHADE ALLERGY)**\*\***
- 1/2 C water
- 1 T honey
- pita bread or pita chips, optional **\*\***(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub corn chips)**\*\***

## Food Allergen Substitutions

### Sweetly Spiced Afghan Stewed Eggplant "Borani Banjan"

**Nightshade:** For 1 large eggplant or 3 small eggplants, substitute 2 C mushrooms or zucchini. For 1 medium potato, substitute 1 C mushrooms or zucchini. For 2 tomatoes, substitute 4 T pumpkin purée. Omit tomato paste.

**Dairy:** Substitute dairy-free/nut-free plain yogurt.

**Soy:** Substitute canola oil or other nut-free oil for vegetable oil.

**Gluten/Wheat:** Substitute corn chips for optional pita bread or pita chips.

## Instructions

### Sweetly Spiced Afghan Stewed Eggplant "Borani Banjan"

#### intro

"Borani Banjan" (Bor-ah-nee Bahn-jahn) is a traditional Afghan dish that consists of eggplant cooked in yogurt sauce. This dish is delicious on its own but is often paired with lamb, chicken, and rice. Let's dive into our Sticky Fingers Cooking® version of Borani Banjan.

#### chop + measure

Start by small dicing **1 eggplant, 1 yellow onion, 1 potato,** and **2 tomatoes.** Keep all the ingredients separated in small or medium bowls. Measure **1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon black pepper, 1 tablespoon curry powder, 1 tablespoon honey,** and **2 tablespoons vegetable oil** and pour them into the bowl of eggplant. Toss gently to coat.

## superstar food spotlight

Let's talk about eggplant! This purple nightshade is technically a berry, but it is used as a vegetable in almost all preparations. Aside from having a ton of flavor packed into each eggplant, this berry is also really good for you. Eggplants are loaded with antioxidants and fiber, which help process food and get rid of harmful waste. They are also high in vitamins C, K, and B6!

## sauté + stir

Add the **diced and coated eggplant** to a medium pot over medium heat for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Do your best to lightly brown the eggplant on all sides. Then, add the **diced potato and onion** to the pot and continue sautéing for 5 more minutes.

## simmer + season

Finally, add the **diced tomatoes, 1/4 cup yogurt,** and **2 tablespoons tomato paste**. Sauté for about 1 minute. Add **1/2 cup of water**, stir a few times, and cover the pot with a lid. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 10 minutes or until all the sauce has become thick and coats the eggplant. Also, before moving on to serving, check the doneness of the potatoes with a fork. They should be tender. If not, cook for a few more minutes until they soften.

## drizzle + serve

Drizzle the Sweetly Spiced Afghan Stewed Eggplant "Borani Banjan" with **Whipped Yogurt Mint Sauce** drizzled over the top and optional **pita bread or pita chips** on the side! "Noshe jaan" (Nohshuh jahn) or "Enjoy your food" in the Afghan Dari language!

## 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

Eggplants 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!