Engaging stories of love, joy, comfort and friendship with proven scrumptious, healthy recipes, we celebrate LOVE as the secret ingredient for wonderful food!

Search this website

# Eggplant Tarts Make a Great Tuscan Starter Dish

October 13, 2017 by Mary — 12 Comments

*Franco's dish at the cooking class at Tuscookany.*

Join 32k+ followers!

**Never miss out on a recipe!**
Subscribe to receive new posts via email:

Email Address

Follow

Mary Frances

Spread love through cooking.

Summer Favorites

Hello again.

I am trying to be back after my husband's passing in June. It is so very hard. Three things are helping – cooking and Tuscany, plus of course, ALL of my close friends.

I decided to move to Tuscany, San Fabiano, near Arezzo, in particular, to be in a different place all together and to be with dear friends. I will be here for nearly 3 months to test it out.

I am renting a Count's home on their vineyard, overlooking a small lake. I'm hoping that a new view may give me a new outlook on my life going forward. It is very hard when you've had the same partner you've loved for literally 2/3's of your life.

My friends here in Tuscany encouraged me to do it, helped to set it up and have been so incredibly warm and welcoming and what they say in Italian about me and the passing of Steve to others, I can't hear (just yet) so I don't cry as much.

I am going to take Italian language classes. I started with 2 lessons while still in New York with a lovely young man, Giancarlo. I know the days of the week, counting, some key phases and a few other things. It's really very little, but it's a start.

All of this was put into place during my last trip to Tuscany in late July, after Zachary's wedding in Poland. And during that last trip, I had the most fortunate opportunity to cook with Franco and Paolo at Tuscookany.

Tuscookany is a most marvelous place, lined with lavender, overlooking three mountain ranges high on an mountain itself, where you can stay and learn to cook Italian classics, like pizza, tiramisu, gnocchi and some brilliantly revised dishes like Franco's Eggplant Parmigiano, revisited, that I will share with you here. He calls it Eggplant Pudding. I prefer to call it Eggplant Tarts – I think this name is more appropriate for the sophistication of this dish.

Franco and his partner, Paola (they said they are not married but nearly, as they have a mortgage together) run the amazing cooking school. If you recall, when we all visited Tuscany last year for Bianca's wedding, Cristina had given me this book that I had talked to you about where I made the most marvelous pasta bean soup. Well, Franco was one of the authors of that cookbook!!

In this recent

## Categories


Appetizers
Breakfast
Brunch
Cocktails
Contest
Cookies
Cookware and tools
Desserts
Dinner
Events
First Course
Fish
Food Responsibility
Guest Post
Lunch
Meat
Pasta
Poultry
Products for sale
Salads
Sauces
Sides
Soups
Tea time
Travel

class, we cooked from about 3 pm until 6:30 or 7, then had time to freshen up or have a glass of wine and enjoy the view (me) and eat the dinner we all made starting at 8 and lasting until 11 or so with wine flowing throughout and the after-dinner drinks – oh my word – so many of them!! And of course I had to sample a few and arrived home to Tiziana very drunk. She was sweet and said I was "just a bit tipsy."

This eggplant dish is not difficult to make at all, a real surprise to serve your guests, light, flavorful and so, so delicious. But, it does take time. However you can make the tarts and the sauce the day before and warm both up in the microwave, assemble, and serve, so that makes it super easy.

I have taken numerous cooking classes but only Franco's and another one I'll tell you about later, in Spain, really taught me new tricks and methods. Franco is quite knowledgeable and also down to earth. He teaches you things you can easily use as a home cook to pump up your skills. You can put his techniques to use right away, as I made these just as soon as I got home in August.

For instance, if your tomato sauce is a bit too acidic, instead of adding sugar, add a tiny bit of baking soda, watch it bubble, just like in chemistry class, and voila! The acidity will be gone through and through, not just in your mouth but in your tummy too!

Another great tip from Chef Franco – leave hard eggplants out with your fruit for 2 days to soften and ripen and they will be much more flavorful.

Vegetables

*My version of this dish!*

**Here are the recipes:**

***EGGPLANT TARTS*** *– adapted from Chef Franco Palandra – serves 12*

3 large eggplants
3 eggs
8 large basil leaves, chopped
Mint leaves from 4 stems, chopped
1 3/4oz. of capers, drained and finely chopped
3 anchovy fillets, patted dry of oil and chopped
1 clove of garlic, finely minced

Olive oil in spray format
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste
Mozzarella cheese or Buffalo Mozzarella cheese, sliced in ¼" thick slices while cold.
Tomato sauce – recipe follows

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Wash and dry the eggplants. Pierce the eggplants in several places with a fork, place on a parchment paper-lined, rimmed baking sheet and roast for 45 – 55 minutes. When the eggplants are soft and the skin looks wrinkled, remove from the oven and let them cool down.

Cut each eggplant in half, lengthwise, and scrape the insides out, leaving the skin intact as much as you can. Chop the inside membranes of the eggplants and place in a fine mesh colander to drain. Squeeze as much liquid out of the eggplant membrane as you can, before adding the rest of the ingredients below.

Combine the capers, anchovies, garlic, basil and mint and add to the drained eggplant. Lightly beat the eggs separately and add to the eggplant mixture along with salt and pepper to taste. Combine everything in the mixture thoroughly.

*The Eggplant Tarts before going into the oven.*

Spray the insides of the cups of a 12 cup muffin pan with olive oil spray. Line each cup with some skin from the eggplant, so that the cooked purple side will be on the outside when the cup is turned over. Fill the eggplant skinned lined cups with the eggplant mixture and place the muffin tray on a rimmed baking sheet and bake the eggplant tarts for 20 – 27 minutes in a 350 degree F oven. The tarts should be firm and not wet looking when done.

Allow the tarts to cool slightly, then invert the muffin tin pan on a large flat cutting board. Tarts should be served warm and they can be easily microwaved to a warm temperature before serving.

## ***TOMATO SAUCE*** *– serves 12*

2 lbs. of whole plum tomatoes, washed, cored and chopped
1 small onion, chopped
2 cloves of garlic, chopped
5 Tbs. olive oil
1 bunch of fresh basil
Salt
Pepper

Warm the oil in a stainless steel or enameled Le Creuset pot. Add the onions and garlic, cover and cook on low heat to sweat and sweeten the onions, for 12 – 15 minutes, stirring often. Add the chopped tomatoes and simmer for 45 – 60 minutes, until the tomatoes are soft and lovely. Season with salt and fresh ground pepper to taste.

Pass the mixture through a fine sieve or food mill to remove all skin and seeds.

If the sauce is too sour, add ¼ tsp. baking soda.

You can make this sauce ahead of time, refrigerate and warm in the microwave to serve.

## ***TO PLATE EACH DISH:***

Slice the mozzarella cheese in ¼" thick slices while still cold, then cover with plastic wrap and leave to attain room temperature and more flavor.

Cover the bottom of each small serving plate with a thin layer of warm tomato sauce. Cut each slice of mozzarella into quarter pieces to open up the serving circle a bit and place in the center of your pool of tomato sauce. Or alternatively, grate the buffalo mozzarella in a circle in the center of the tomato sauce. Place a warm eggplant tart on top of the cheese. Garnish the plate with 2 – 3 basil leaves and serve with a smile and LOVE!

Your guests will LOVE you for this!!

Save

You may also like:

shareaholic

Pasta with Fresh Tomato Sauce and My Italian Dinner

Shakshuka - LOVE-the secret ingredient LOVE-the secret ingredient

Pomarola-Sauce-Recipe

Pork with Ginger, Spring Onions and Eggplant - An Ottolenghi Recipe

Sunny Golds with Bacon Pasta Sauce

Get Dressed Sesame Sensation Roasted Eggplant Noodles

Spaghetti Squash with Roasted Eggplant Fresh Zucchini Capers Italian Tuna recipe

Farro Pasta with Portobello Mushrooms, Chicken, Tomatoes, and Green Beans in a Sherry Cream Sauce

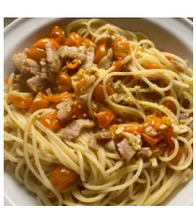
**Related**

Cumin, Lamb and Eggplant Pasta
April 10, 2014
In "Dinner"

Eggplant, Mozzarella and Oil-cured Black Olive Spaghetti
May 3, 2015
In "Dinner"

Spaghetti Squash with Roasted Eggplant, Fresh Zucchini, Capers & Italian Tuna
October 24, 2016
In "Dinner"

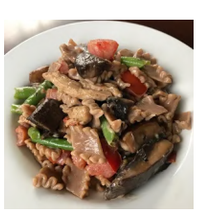
*You might also like:*



Sunny Golds with Bacon Pasta Sauce

Pork with Ginger, Spring Onions and Eggplant – An Ottolenghi Recipe

Shakshuka



Farro Pasta with

Portobello Mushrooms, Chicken, Tomatoes, and Green Beans in a Sherry Cream Sauce

Thanksgiving in Tuscany

Filed Under: Dinner, First Course, Vegetables
Tagged With: eggplant, eggplant tarts, great starters, love, Mary's Secret Ingredients, tomatoes, vegetarian

## *Leave a Reply*

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Comment

Name *

Email *

Website

Security check- *

6 + = seven

Notify me of follow-up comments by email.

Notify me of new posts by email.

Post Comment

COMMENTLUV

Subscribe me to your mailing list

This site uses Akismet to reduce spam. Learn how your comment data is processed.

## *Comments*

Anne Maxfield says
October 13, 2017 at 8:31 AM

I'm glad things are going well for you. You've been in my thoughts a lot lately. I learned this (wierd) trick to drain roasted eggplant for baba ganoush and it works brilliantly–run it through a salad spinner! I'm going to give these a try, they sound delicious! xxoo

Reply

Mary says
October 14, 2017 at 1:37 PM

Thanks Anne – and thanks again for checking on the roof.

Your trick with the salad spinner sounds perfect. I have a salad spinner here but it's about 30 years old and doesn't work too well 🙁 – but I am managing. My kitchen is actually pretty good – nice pots and knives but the burners on the stove won't go very low so I have to search for some of those old fashioned things that lift a pot up so I can just get a simmer.

It's Italy!!

Reply

Jovina Coughlin says
October 13, 2017 at 9:31 AM

So very glad to see you send out a post again. And what a fabulous post Mary Frances. I enjoyed reading this post and learning about how you are doing. The experiences you are having in Tuscany sound fantastic. What a fabulous recipe and so Italian but with an elegant touch. I am definitely going to add this recipe to my collection. I look forward to more interesting posts from you. Stay well and enjoy you fabulous stay in Tuscany.

Reply

Mary says
October 14, 2017 at 1:38 PM

Thanks Jovina – you are too kind!

Hope all is well with you! 🙂

Reply

Debbie Spivey says
October 13, 2017 at 1:17 PM

Glad you have found something that brings you a smile. This is a beautiful dish!

Reply

Mary says
October 14, 2017 at 1:38 PM

Thanks Debbie! 🙂

Reply

Maya @ NatureImmerse says
October 15, 2017 at 12:50 AM

From the drive up to this property to our reluctant departure, we had a fabulous experience. Having read previous reviews, we had high expectations, but I can honestly say they were exceeded. The property is stunning, with pretty much everything catered for, including separate lounge areas, full access to the kitchen, dining area & bar. All of the staff were extremely helpful, & always on hand. Barbara was a star, even helping me to organise my case for transporting back all the 'goodies' I'd purchased!! I must admit, I thought I'd feel a bit intimidated by being in the same kitchen as a professional chef, but Franco was ever helpful & attentive. With a glass of wine on hand & The Rolling Stones / Queen accompanying our culinary efforts, this has to be an experience that I would love to repeat one day. Fantastic!!

Maya @ NatureImmerse recently posted…Best Routes for Bicycle Tourists

Reply

Mary says
November 19, 2017 at 5:27 PM

Maya – so glad your experience equaled mine!! Best – Mary

Reply

Karen (Back Road Journal) says
October 21, 2017 at 2:25 PM

Thank you for sharing Chef Franco's recipe…I can't wait to try it. I'm wishing that Italy will be everything you want it to be.

Reply

Mary says
November 19, 2017 at 5:29 PM

Thank you Karen.