

Darcie's Tofu Milanese with Eggplant Parmesan (Vegetarian)

By Darcie Kent

*Pair with Almost Famous' Wine Without Borders
Grüner Veltliner*

Ingredients for sauce

- 2 lb Roma Tomatoes (skinned and seeded)
- 2 Tbs Fresh Basil
- 2 Tbs Fresh Chives
- 1 Tbs Fresh Oregano
- 1 tsp Fresh Thyme
- 2 Cloves of Garlic (minced)
- Pinch of Sugar
- Salt and Black Pepper to taste

Ingredients for everything else

- Eggplant (medium sized)
- 12oz Extra Firm Tofu
- 1/2 c Panko Bread Crumbs
- 1/2 c White Flour
- 1/2 tsp Baking Powder
- 2 Eggs (blended well with 1 Tbs water)
- 1 tsp Dried Oregano
- 5 Tbs grated Pecorino Cheese (I used Sheep's milk Pecorino Sardo, but Parmesan would work, too)
- 4 oz shredded Goat Gouda or other cheese (Mozzarella would work here, just less flavorful)
- 1/2 c Light Olive Oil (for frying)
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Instructions (page one)

About an hour before cooking, skin the eggplant and slice into about 1/4" slices (I cut mine in half so they were semi-circles, not required). Place the eggplant slices in a rack over a pan, then liberally sprinkle with salt on both sides. Lay eggplant on the rack and allow to "sweat" for about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, take out your block of tofu, wrap it in a towel or a bunch of paper towels, and set it in a colander in the sink. Place something heavy on top to drain out some of the water for at least 30 minutes to an hour.

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Instructions (page two)

Now then, while all that is draining and sweating (doesn't that sound tasty?) we can go ahead and make the sauce! Place your tomatoes, sugar, fresh herbs, and garlic together in a food processor and blend to your desired consistency (*I like it a bit chunky, but that's just me.*) Season with salt and pepper to taste, then set aside.

Preheat your oven to 400°F, and gather three wide bowls or pie pans. In the first one, place breadcrumbs, 2 Tbs of your grated cheese, dried oregano and a pinch of both salt and pepper. In another bowl, place flour and baking powder. In the final bowl, place your beaten eggs and water.

Take your tofu and slice into 1/4" slices. Take the slices and one at a time place them in the flour, then tap the excess off. Move the slice to the egg mixture, then when coated, place it in the bread crumbs. When all the tofu has been dipped, you can repeat the process with the eggplant, but make sure to first wash the eggplant off (we need all the salt and "sweat" off of it).

Heat your oil in a pan over medium heat. When hot, start frying your tofu pieces until golden brown (should be about 2 – 3 min a piece, turn over mid-way) and remove from the oil to a rack or plate covered in paper to drain off the oil. Season with salt if needed.

When the tofu is finished, fry the eggplant the same way as the tofu, be sure not to burn any pieces. Grab a 9" x 13" baking dish and spray it with some non-stick spray (something like Pam). Cover the bottom of the dish with about 1/3 of the sauce.

Layer all your tofu along the bottom of the dish, top with another 1/3 of the sauce followed by 1/2 of your shredded cheese. Now place your eggplant on top of the other layers, placing the last 1/3 of your sauce on top, followed by the other 1/2 of your shredded cheese, finishing with the last 3 Tbs of grated cheese. Place the pan in the oven for 20 minutes, until the cheese is all melted and delicious looking.

Let cool for 5 minutes and serve!