

Timballo



This dish has about as many variations as there are folks who make it. That's the beauty of it – you can use what you have available. Most popular, it seems, are various eggplant-wrapped versions. But I have also seen prosciutto-wrapped and even pizza dough-wrapped versions.

Stuffing can vary greatly as well, but this recipe is a fairly standard compilation. You can

add or subtract ingredients per your preference or availability (an interesting option is to use meatballs instead of bulk ground meat, sausage, bacon, or ham).

Ingredients:

Eggplant Encasement:

- 4-5 Large Purple Eggplants, more if they are a bit small -- sliced lengthwise 1/8" thick (you need enough slices to line your baking pan; see photos next pg.)
- 1/4 cup Olive oil
- 1/2 ts Salt
- 1/4 ts Black pepper

Stuffing:

- 400 gm Pasta, short (macaroni, penne, etc)
- 2 Tb Olive oil
- 1 sm Onion, diced
- 1/2 cup Carrot, small diced
- 500 gm Meat (ground beef, bulk Italian sausage, prosciutto or ham, pancetta or guanciale, or small meatballs – you can even *dice* up some left-over fried chicken or chicken/veal parmigiana)
- 1/3 cup Red wine
- 1/2 cup Peas (frozen is ok)
- 720 ml Nana Pasta Sauce (any flavor)
- 1 cup Mozzarella cheese (about 6 ounces), diced
- 1/3 cup Parmesan and/or Romano cheese, grated

Equipment:

- * Baking Mould: such as a 9" spring-form pan, casserole, or shallow Bundt pan.
- * Good Slicer: such as a large mandolin slicer or a mechanical slicer that can make thin and even slices of large eggplant.

Method:

Prepare the eggplant:

Fire up a charcoal grill until coals are medium-high. Using a pastry brush, lightly brush the eggplant slices on both sides using the 1/4-cup olive oil. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper. Grill the eggplant slices

until they become noodle-like in consistency and grill marks are apparent; approximately 1- to 2-min per side. Cover to keep from drying out and set aside.

Prepare the Pasta:

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the pasta and cook to *al dente*, according to package instructions (pasta will cook more while baking). Drain pasta.

Prepare the Stuffing:

Meanwhile, heat 2-Tb of olive oil in a skillet. Add the onion and carrot; sauté until tender, about 3-min. Add the beef, pork, and/or sausage. Brown the meat, breaking it apart (not if using meatballs, of course) with a wooden spoon, about 5-min. Add the wine and cook until the liquid has evaporated and any raw meats are cooked through, about 3-min. If using all ground beef, add salt and pepper to taste. Remove from heat.

Add the peas and Nana Pasta Sauce to the meat; stir to combine. Carefully fold in the cheeses and cooked pasta until evenly combined. Set aside.

Note: Some folks like to make layers of each stuffing component, rather than mixing them together.

Assembly:

Preheat the oven to 175°C (350°F). Line your baking pan with the grilled eggplant, overlapping slices to form somewhat of a seal. Be sure the eggplant slices hang over the edge of the pan enough to fold back over after stuffing.



Stuff the eggplant-lined baking pan with the pasta-meat mixture. Pack the stuffing down a bit to make sure distribution is even. Fold the hanging eggplant slices up over the top of the stuffing. Add more eggplant slices on top to completely encase the Timballo.

Bake the Timballo for about 35-min at 175°C (350°F), or until warmed through and the cheese has melted. Allow Timballo to rest on the counter 10-min to set before serving.



To serve, invert the baking pan onto a serving plate and gently remove pan, tapping the bottom, if necessary, to loosen the Timballo up so that it is set free onto the plate. Sprinkle grated Parmesan or Romano cheese over the top. Slice and serve with soup and/or salad.

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For best results always use *Nana* Pasta Sauce.