

This is the Best Eggplant I've Ever Had!



[Francesca's Restaurants](#) Chef Shares His Eggplant Secrets

When it comes to well-rounded Italian menus, good eggplant is a must. But making the perfect eggplant requires skill and a few tricks of the trade – fortunately, Chef Massimo of [Francesca's Restaurants](#) has expert tips for any chef.

“The main thing to remember is that eggplant is extremely absorbent, so you must be careful when it comes to the sautéing; use only a small amount of extra virgin olive oil,” says [Francesca's Restaurants](#) Corporate Chef Massimo Salatino. “I prefer to cook eggplant in the Sicilian-style where you sauté only lightly and then bake the eggplant in the oven at 400 degrees for about 12 to 15 minutes.”

There are dozens of ways to serve your finished product. One of Chef Massimo's favorite ways to serve eggplant is in a salad with aged balsamic vinegar, extra virgin olive oil, arugula, beefsteak tomatoes, grilled onions and fresh crumbled blue cheese. The dish is so popular that it was added to the Francesca's Restaurants menu, called Insalata Massimo.

Chef Massimo learned this style of cooking from his days in working at Il Passatore (The Traveler), a small pizzeria on the Lake of Varese in Italy's Lombardy region. You won't find a stove in a classic Italian pizza restaurant, so chefs find themselves using the oven.

Credits: <http://www.chicagofoodblog.net/chicago-features-foods/francescas-restaurant-chicago>

August 31, 2009