



For the Love of Good Food

RATATOUILLE (Mediterranean Vegetable Medley)

What could be more perfect for a summer dish than one using Mediterranean vegetables that are typical of the California environment? There are many variations on this. It comes from southern France, but also crosses the border with Italy where it is called Peperonata and they tend to use 4 anchovy filets to salt the mixture. It is a dish that can be eaten hot or cold, on it's own or with grilled meat or fish, used as a sauce on pasta or pizza, so I think it will strike a chord with most of you. You can cook on a stovetop or grill most of the vegetables on a BBQ then combine at the end. Just remember things take longer cooked this way. Here goes.

Ingredients (serves 4)

2 Asian eggplants, cut into 1 inch slices, sprinkled with salt & set aside for 2 hours

2 sweet peppers (1 red, 1 green or yellow) cut into 1 inch pieces

2 large onions, roughly chopped into 1 inch pieces

4 zucchini (2 green, 2 yellow) cut into 1 inch slices

8 Roma tomatoes chopped into 1-inch cubes

4 or more cloves of garlic, sliced to taste

1-tsp. Italian herbs, salt and pepper

¾ cup olive oil

1 head of fennel cut into 1 inch slices (option and good if serving with fish/seafood)

1. It is not absolutely necessary to salt the eggplant, but it absorbs less oil if you do, and it intensifies the flavor. When ready to cook, brush off the salt and pat dry.
2. Toss eggplant in 1-tablespoon oil and broil or sauté until golden brown. Set aside.
3. Toss peppers in 1-tablespoon oil and broil or sauté until slightly charred on outside and soft. Set aside. Do the same with the zucchini and the fennel if using.
4. Add the rest of the oil to the skillet and gently cook the onions and sliced garlic until transparent.
5. Add the herbs, salt and pepper and then the tomatoes. Cook covered over gentle heat for about 10 minutes.
6. Add the other ingredients that you have set aside, cover and simmer for another 10 – 20 minutes or more depending upon how soft you want your vegetables, I prefer them a little crisper, so cook less time. Adjust seasoning to taste.

To Serve Cold: Allow to cool, squeeze a little lemon and sprinkle with parsley and olives. Can serve with grilled chicken, tuna or prawns on top or the side. Great with fresh crusty bread.

To Serve Hot: Omit lemon juice, and serve over pasta, with couscous, use as a topping on pizza. Still good as a side dish with any kind of grilled meat or fish.