

# Cheesy Eggplant and Rigatoni Bake

Based on a recipe by Sue Li in the NYT Cooking on 5/22/20

**YIELD** 8 servings

**TIME** 1 hour 15 minutes

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## INGREDIENTS

**1/2 pound rigatoni**  
**6 tablespoons olive oil**  
**2 medium eggplants (about 1 1/2 pounds total), peeled & cut into 1-inch pieces**  
**Kosher salt and black pepper**  
**1 small yellow onion, thinly sliced**  
**4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced**  
**1 teaspoon red-pepper flakes**  
**1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes, juices reserved**  
**1 cup lightly packed grated Parmesan (about 2 ounces)**  
**4 cups grated fresh mozzarella (about 1 pound)**  
**1 cup fresh basil leaves, torn, plus additional for serving**  
**Grated ricotta salata, for serving – substitute Feta if you can't find ricotta salata**

## PREPARATION

### Step 1

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Cook rigatoni according to package instructions but keep it slightly more al dente. Reserve 1 1/2 cups pasta cooking water, then drain and rinse pasta under cold water, and transfer to a large bowl while you cook the eggplant.

### Step 2

Place the eggplant in a colander and lightly salt. Allow to drain for about 15 minutes, then rinse and pat dry. Lightly coat with 2 tablespoons of olive oil, and pour on to a parchment lined sheet pan and bake until soft, while preparing the sauce.

### Step 3

Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in the skillet over medium. Add onion and garlic and cook, stirring, until translucent, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in red-pepper flakes and season with salt and pepper. Add tomatoes and their juices, crushing the tomatoes with your hands as you add them. Cook until the tomatoes are very soft, about 5 minutes. Stir in the reserved pasta cooking water, adding up to 1 1/2 cups as needed to create a silky sauce.

### Step 4

Lightly oil a casserole, lasagna pan, other deepish oven-proof pan. Add the drained rigatoni and the eggplant. Sprinkle in 1 cup of mozzarella, the parmesan, and 1 cup basil, and toss together to mix.

### Step 5

Pour the sauce over the pasta, mix, and top with remaining 3 cups of mozzarella and bake for 25 – 30 minutes until bubbly and lightly browned.

Top with the feta or ricotta salata and the torn basil, and serve.

Even better the next day.