

RATATOUILLE: SIMPLE, ELEGANT AND SATISFYING

Ratatouille is a simple, elegant, and satisfying vegetarian dish. Fresh garden vegetables are the star of this easy dinner recipe!



This post is being submitted to the [Best Home Chef Vegetarian](#) dish challenge. I wrote and posted this recipe when I was still using blogger.com, in 2011. Hope you enjoy this delicious ratatouille recipe.

My youngest daughter has been pestering me to make Ratatouille ever since the Disney movie opened in theaters. There is only one minor issue that has kept me from making the dish for almost two years...my family doesn't like vegetables. There, I said it!

I don't want to place blame here, but the source of the distaste for

vegetables comes from one particular person...my darling husband! Corn, beans, and potatoes are the bread of his vegetable pleasures, thus resulting in familial taste choices in his offspring. On the other hand, I delight in all manner of vegetables and cannot fathom the loss of palatable pleasures my family has missed over the years! He is seriously missing out on *PICKLED BEETS*.

Finally, after two years of badgering from our youngest child, I decided to make Ratatouille for the first time! With my husband off in China on a business trip, this was the perfect time to experiment with a dish that consists of only vegetables.



Using the traditional French recipe, I tried keeping to the same fresh flavored ingredients but made a minor adjustment with by adding button mushrooms.

Recipe:

1 large eggplant sliced 1/2 inch thick rounds, skin on
3 small zucchini
2 medium yellow summer squash
2 large yellow or orange bell peppers
2 large clove garlic
2 medium sweet onions sliced 1/2 inch thick rounds
5 vine ripe tomatoes, skinned
1 14 ounce can chopped tomatoes with juices
1 pound button mushrooms
olive oil
1 tablespoon fresh thyme
1 bay leaf
salt and pepper to taste

Method:

Wash and slice vegetables. Peel tomatoes by placing them in boiling water for 10-15 seconds, remove skin and crush tomatoes with spoon or by hand into a medium skillet, set on low heat, add thyme, bay leaf, garlic and salt and pepper and simmer until ready to use

In a large heavy bottom skillet, add two tablespoons olive oil, cook eggplant for 5 minutes, turning occasionally, add olive oil if pan becomes dry, drain cooked eggplant on paper towel, add salt and pepper and set aside



Next repeat the same process with zucchini and yellow squash, remove from heat add salt and pepper and drain on paper towel.

COOKING THE VEGETABLES SEPARATELY AND IN ORDER IS IMPORTANT WHEN MAKING RATATOUILLE.

Using this process, allows each vegetable to keep its own distinct flavor without being compromised by the other vegetables; the result, a perfectly balanced dish. Also, adding salt and pepper to each vegetable after removing the from the skillet will keep the natural juices from escaping and prevent the vegetables from being “boiled” and becoming mushy.



Add two tablespoon vegetable oil to the skillet and cook the peppers for 5 minutes, remove to paper towel and season with salt and pepper.



Add two tablespoons olive oil to skillet and cook onions for 5 minutes, remove to paper towel and salt and pepper to taste.



Add two tablespoons olive oil to skillet and cook mushrooms for 3-5 minutes, remove to paper towel and salt and pepper to taste.



Assemble:

In a large oiled casserole dish begin layering the vegetables in the same order as they were cooked; eggplant, zucchini, squash, peppers, onions and then mushrooms





Pour tomato sauce over layered vegetables and bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for 40 minutes. More salt and pepper can be added by your guests, but I found it wasn't necessary as the flavors were a delicate and delightfully seasoned.

Don't forget the wine! I served a spicy and beautifully structured Zinfandel blend. *Ridge 2005 California Sonoma County Three Valleys, Zinfandel*. A perfect combination of grapes from multiple vineyards, this was a wonderful pairing for my ratatouille. Priced around \$26-\$30 dollars per bottle and worth every penny!



I also serve garlic crostini to sop up all the juices.



Not having any previous experience with eating Ratatouille, I was blown away by the complex flavors of this dish! Each individual vegetable retaining its own distinct flavor but perfectly combined to create a mouth-watering, soul satisfying meal. My family, minus the vegetable-challenged man of the house, loved it!!

