

THE UP!BEAT

issue one

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July's a month of battling weeds. We're not starting much new in this heat—watermelon, pumpkins. Most of our energy goes to helping our team survive.

We water. And we help our plants fight for turf, air, and sun by yanking up roots, untwining bindweed, giving our crops a puncher's chance.

Look for us at the Terre Haute Farmer's Market in a week or two. And if you ever want to water, weed, or harvest, just contact us through Facebook or email Mark at minster@rose-hulman.edu.

Ryves Up! at Benjamin Franklin Elementary School is a gardening program that teaches kids and their families about sustainability, science, engineering, art, and math. Started by Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology faculty and students, we are grateful for the support of RHIT, the Wabash Valley Community Foundation, the Vectren Foundation, the Old National Bank Foundation, and more!



Eggplant

Solanum melongena

Like tomatoes and potatoes, eggplants are woody, hairy-stemmed plants. The genus name *Solanum* likely refers to the Latin word Sol, the sun, while the species name *melongena* relates to the Italian name for the vegetable *melanzane*, a word that sounds like *mala insane*, “mad apple.”

I like it. I like to think of eggplants as mad apples, crazy apples, wacky sun apples.

Come to think of it, they look way more like sun apples than they look like eggs.

Grow it!

We start seeds indoors in spring, letting seedlings get strong before making them brave flea beetles in late May or June. Those pesky jumpy little black beetles chomp holes in every young eggplant leaf. But the grown plants they leave mostly alone. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, I suppose, and eggplants are a good example. Give them 18 inches of space and plenty of sun.

Save the seeds!

To save eggplant seeds, let one fruit shrivel on the vine. It should be overripe, even rotting. In a bucket of water, smash the fruit to make a rotting eggplant tea. It will stink. Don't drink it. Let the seeds soak a day, then strain them out and let them dry, all spread out. Make sure they're totally dry before sealing them away for next year!

THE EGGPLANT ISSUE

Buy it!

A regular Italian eggplant can cost between \$2 and \$3 a pound. Each pound contains about four cups, and each cup contains about 20 calories, which means it's about 32 calories per dollar, or about 3 cents per calorie. Since they're low-fat, high-fiber, and high in vitamins and minerals, they're worth it! For each dollar, you're getting nearly 5% of your daily Vitamin C. (Vitamins per dollar and cents per calorie are cool units!)

Buy eggplants the day you want to use them or a day before and don't worry about refrigerating them. The skin should be taut, the flesh firm. You don't want spongy.

If you're worried about bitterness, peel them, make slices an inch or two thick, and salt each slice. The salt will draw out the bitterness. It will also make the eggplant sweat, so do this in a colander or on a towel and rinse the slices afterwards.

Grill it!

Baba Ghanoush (Middle Eastern dip, great with bread, grilled meat, fresh vegetables)

1 Italian eggplant
1 clove garlic
1 t. salt
just under ¼ c. tahini (sesame paste)
1 lemon

1. Pierce the eggplant all over with a fork. Wrap it in foil and place on a hot grill, under a broiler, or even directly on a gas burner until it collapses. It's okay if the outside burns. Set it aside to cool.
2. Using a pestle or the side of a knife, mash the garlic with the salt. Mix this with the tahini and the lemon's juice and pulp. I use a fork, but you can use a food processor.
3. When the eggplant has cooled, unwrap it, and peel off the skin. Add the stringy pulp, seeds and all, to the tahini mixture. If the flesh has charred, you can even keep some of that for smoky flavor.
4. You can add cumin, pepper, thyme, olive oil, coriander, paprika—any or all of these are delicious.

Stir-fry it!

Eggplant stirfry (adapted from <https://www.spicetheplate.com/pork/eggplant-stir-fry/> see <https://omnivorescookbook.com/sichuan-eggplant/> for a more complicated version)

3 Asian eggplant, cut into strips
1/4 pound ground pork
2 slices ginger
three cloves garlic, minced
2 green onions, chopped
1/4 c. oil
½ t. salt
2 T. soy sauce

1. Heat a pan over medium-high heat, add oil and pork and stir-fry for about 5 minutes until the meat loses its pink.
2. Add the eggplant, ginger and garlic, stir-fry for about 5 minutes.
3. Add salt and soy sauce and stir fry for 2 minutes.
4. Add the green onion and cook for no more than another minute.
5. Serve with rice. You can sweeten with sugar, add vegetables, experiment with oils.

Sauté and roast it!

Melanzane alla Parmigiana (from <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/12671-mark-bittmans-eggplant-parmesan>)

Olive oil as needed
2 pounds eggplant, in ½-inch slices
Salt and pepper
1 medium onion, chopped
1 28-ounce can tomatoes
Parmesan cheese

1. Put 1/8 inch of oil in a skillet over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the eggplant slices. Season with salt and pepper and cook, turning as necessary, until tender and brown on both sides; drain on paper towels.
2. Cook the onion in the remaining oil. when it's tender, add the tomatoes and salt and pepper and cook for 10 minutes. Heat the oven to 400.
3. In a casserole, layer eggplant, tomato sauce, then cheese, then eggplant, tomato sauce, cheese. Make more layers if you like. Bake until the cheese is melted and the whole thing is bubbly, about 15 minutes.