

Grilled Eggplant and Mozzarella Panino

Ingredients:

1 Eggplant, cut lengthwise into roughly 1/4" thick slices

Extra virgin olive oil

Balsamic vinegar*

Fresh mozzarella, cut into thin slices

Four ciabatta rolls.

1 tbsp each minced fresh basil, rosemary, and oregano, mixed together

Preheat oven to 350°F, and preheat your grill. Slice the rolls in half and toast in the oven. Brush the eggplant slices with olive oil and grill until soft. Drizzle a little olive oil on the bottom halves of the roll; then alternately later with the slices of eggplant and cheese, drizzling oil vinegar and sprinkling a little of the herb mixture between each layer, until all the pieces are used. Top with oil, vinegar and salt and pepper to taste, and serve warm.

*A note on balsamic vinegar: true balsamic vinegar, the DOP regulated *balsamico tradizionale*, is created by cooking unfermented wine juice into a syrupy liquid called *mosto cotto* ("cooked must") which is aged in wooden barrels for at least twelve years. Most "balsamic vinegar" available in the supermarket is a mockery of this process, a combination of cider or wine vinegar, grape must (sometimes), caramel color and artificial flavors. In response to demand for inexpensive balsamic vinegar, producers have created *balsamico condimento*, which follows many of the same processes of *tradizionale*, yielding a high quality vinegar that is much less expensive than its hand-made elder. Look for vinegars imported from Modena or Reggio nell'Emilia with "Consorzio di Balsamico Condimento" on the label; make sure the acidity is not over 7%, and that grape must is the first ingredient listed. This note was gleaned from *La Cucina Italiana* March/April 2009 issue.