Eggplant is available in August and September.

The eggplant we enjoy today originated in India as a spiny plant with bitter fruit. It gets its name from the early fruit which was small, white, round and resembled eggs. Because eggplants belong to the nightshade family, in early years it was believed to cause madness in people who ate the fruit.

There are a wide variety of oriental eggplants available at area farmers markets. These include oblong white, various small round green varieties, the long and oblong purple varieties, and also a small orange variety. Regardless of the type of eggplant you buy, they are interchangeable from recipe to recipe.

Eggplant is a warm season vegetable and can only be grown in areas with a growing season of four months or more.

**What to Look for When Purchasing**

Look for fruit with satin smooth skin that is free of bruises or scars and is firm. Eggplants should feel heavy for their size. Avoid fruit with soft brown spots. Eggplants with wrinkled skin will be bitter, as will over-sized fruit.

**Storage Tips**

Eat eggplant as soon after purchase as possible as they become bitter with age.

Uncut eggplants can be stored in the refrigerator for 3-5 days.

**Nutrition Facts:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving Size = 1 c cooked</th>
<th>Calories – 25</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proteins (g) – 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates (g) – 6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiber (g) – 2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fat (g) – 0.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potassium (mg) – 208</td>
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</table>

Eggplant is low in calories and nutrients.

**Oriental Eggplant**

*Solanum melogena*

Oriental eggplant may be steamed, baked, or grilled. If baking, prick the skin with a fork before baking at 400° for 30-35 minutes.

**Uses**

- Steam halved eggplant with a dressing of sesame oil, soy sauce, and vinegar. Let sit until it reaches room temperature.
- Brush with olive oil and grill.

**Cooking Tips**

Wash the eggplant just before using and cut off the cap and stem. Whether you peel an eggplant before cooking or not is a matter of personal preference.

In Asian recipes, eggplant is always cooked. You may wish to slice the eggplant, salt it lightly, and allow it to set for 10-15 minutes to remove the bitter flavor.

This information was taken from “Oriental Vegetables” by Joy Larkcom. For more information refer to this book.

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