

GOLDEN EGGPLANT AND MOZZARELLA TOWER WITH BASIL PESTO

SERVES 4

Ingredients:

- 2 Medium-sized Eggplants
- 1 lb Antonio Mozzarella Factory Hand-wrapped Mozzarella (fresh or smoked)
- 4 oz Basil Pesto Sauce (found in your grocer's refrigerated section or pasta aisle)
- 8 oz Tomato and Basil pasta sauce (found in your grocer's refrigerated section or pasta aisle)
- Olive oil for grilling and coating
- Salt to taste

Garnish:

- 4 leaves fresh Basil
- 2 wooden skewers, soaked in water, broken in half (to hold towers together)

Preparation:

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit
- Slice the mozzarella in four round pieces (approximately ½" thick) and set aside.
- Take the eggplants, cut off the ends and discard. Slice the eggplants to match the thickness of the mozzarella slices. You should have 16 eggplant slices and 16 mozzarella slices.
- Lightly season each eggplant slice with salt.



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- Oil the bottom of a cookie sheet or sheet pan with olive oil, making sure to completely coat it. Lay the eggplant slices in a row on the pan, and using a pastry brush coat the top of each slice with olive oil.
- Place the pan in the oven and grill 10 minutes or until the eggplants starts to brown slightly – you want them to be soft and not dry.
- Once done, gently remove the eggplant from the pan and set aside. Keep the pan for the next step.

Creating the Towers:

- Place 4 slices of the grilled eggplant in a row on the pan – evenly spaced.
- Spread a teaspoon of basil pesto on each slice and top with a slice of mozzarella. Add about 2 teaspoons of tomato sauce on top and finish with another slice of eggplant.
- Repeat steps until each tower consists of 4 eggplant slices with pesto, mozzarella and tomato sauce.
- Place a wooden skewer through the center of each tower to keep it in place.
- Place the towers in the preheated oven for 5 minutes or until the mozzarella starts to brown.
- Using a flat spatula, lift the towers from the pan and gently place on individual plates. Remove the skewers and place a basil leaf over the tower.