

A lesser-known Iranian recipe, varaghe hails from the province of Gilan, which happens to be where my mother grew up. Aubergine is so popular and beloved in the region that locals often use it as a substitute for meat in their dishes. As my mother tells me, in the dialect of Gilan (Gilaki), eggplants are actually called 'morghe seeya-yeh bi-nefas' – black breathless chicken. I couldn't help but laugh when I heard that for the first time!

The key ingredients for this recipe are incredibly easy to remember, because they both start with 'egg': eggplants and eggs. Add some oil and seasoning, and the outcome is simply outstanding. Let me be perfectly honest – previously, I was indifferent to aubergines, but served in varaghe form, I can't get enough of those black breathless chickens.

PREP TIME :10 mins

COOK TIME: 55 mins

TOTAL TIME: 1 hour 5 mins

Serves: 4

### INGREDIENTS

500 grams of Japanese or Chinese eggplants

4 eggs

Olive oil

Sea salt

Ground black pepper

### INSTRUCTIONS

Peel and slice the eggplants into half-inch rings. Place the slices in a colander (or sieve) over a bowl, and sprinkle with several teaspoons of salt to extract water and any bitterness. Leave for about 30-45 minutes (maximum 1-2 hours). Once the salt has done its job, rinse off the eggplants with water and dry. You can use a salad spinner to get off the majority of water and then pat down the slices with a paper towel.

Put the eggplant slices in a bowl and add 2 tablespoons of olive oil, then season with salt and pepper and toss to evenly coat the pieces. Place the slices on a lined baking tray, then roast in the oven at 375°F/180°C (fan/convection) for about 35 minutes.

Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Evenly place the oven roasted eggplant slices in the pan. Avoid stacking them and allow a small gap between the pieces. While the eggplant fries in the pan, mix four eggs in a bowl and pour over the slices. Season with salt and pepper.

Cover the frying pan with a lid and turn the heat down to the lowest setting, allowing the 'varaghe' to cook slowly and evenly. The 'varaghe' is ready when the eggs are fully cooked and resemble an omelette, which should take about 15-20 minutes. Slice the eggplant 'varaghe' into squares and serve!





## EGGPLANT VARAGHE

Eggplants ('bademjoon' in Farsi) are a popular ingredient in Persian food, and their earthy, slightly nutty flavour is highlighted in this quick and easy recipe. Varaghe means sheets and describes the slices of eggplants featured in this omelette-like dish.