

TIMBALLO

Serves 8 to 12.

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from a recipe in
Southern Italian Cooking by Jo Bettoja.

Timballo is an excellent way to turn leftovers into something fancy. Timballo is layered in a mold, such as a springform pan or ring mold. This recipe uses rice and eggplant for a side dish. With the addition of chicken, lamb, or fish it can be served as a main course. You can substitute zucchini, tomatoes, sautéed mushrooms, or other vegetables

for the eggplant. Potatoes or pasta can be used instead of rice. I use pasta sauce, but béchamel could be substituted. Timballo is fancy enough to bring to a special gathering or potluck; who needs to know you're giving them your leftovers?



Ingredients:

1 eggplant, about 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 2 pounds (800g to 900g)
1 to 2 tablespoons butter
1 small onion; finely chopped
2 cups Arborio rice (400g)
2 bouillon cubes (chicken or beef) or 1 tablespoon granulated bouillon
1 quart (1 liter) water
Olive oil for frying
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (105g) freshly grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
2 tablespoons fine bread crumbs
4 ounces (110g) mozzarella cheese; cut into small cubes or shredded
Freshly ground pepper to taste
6 to 8 basil leaves, cut in chiffonade for garnish
Marinara sauce; heated for garnish when serving

Directions:

Peel the eggplant or not peel it—it's up to you. Slice the eggplant across its width into $\frac{1}{4}$ - or $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch (6mm-8mm) slices. Sprinkle generously with salt and place in a large bowl or colander. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside for 1 hour.

Heat a skillet with the butter and add the chopped onion. Sauté over medium heat until translucent and tender, about 6 to 8 minutes. While the onion is cooking, heat the water in a saucepan until boiling and dissolve the bouillon in it to make a broth. Add the rice to the skillet and add the boiling broth. Stir and cover. Reduce heat to low and simmer 16 minutes. After the cooking time, set aside to cool.

Rinse the sliced eggplant well and allow to drain. In a large skillet heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Pat eggplant with paper towels to remove excess water. Sauté until tender and lightly browned on both sides. Add more olive oil to the skillet as necessary, as the eggplant will absorb some oil. Place the cooked eggplant on paper towels to drain.

Before assembling the timballo, check the rice for excess moisture (I never find any) and drain if necessary. Add the grated Parmesan (or Romano) cheese and stir lightly to blend.

Using a 10-inch (25cm) ring mold or 9-inch (23cm) springform pan, grease the pan with butter and dust with the bread crumbs. Spoon about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the rice into the mold, pressing down to level the top. Layer about half the eggplant on the rice. Sprinkle about half the mozzarella and grate some pepper on top. Add another layer of rice, followed by eggplant, cheese, and pepper. Finish with the last of the rice.

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Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat to 375°F (190°C). Bake the timballo 45 minutes.

Remove from the oven and allow to rest 10 minutes. Heat the marinara and place in a serving bowl. Invert the timballo from the springform pan or mold onto a serving platter. (It can be browned lightly under the broiler if desired.) Garnish with basil chiffonade. Cut at the table and serve garnished with a topping of warm marinara.

This side dish would go well with my Pesto Lamb or Tuscan Meatloaf.

The step-by-step photos were removed. See the video for the preparation.