



BĀDENJĀN II. USES IN COOKING

ii. Uses in Cooking

Eggplant has been used in Persian cuisine in a variety of ways: as a basic ingredient of appetizers (*mazas*) served before meals or with drinks, in main courses, and pickled in vinegar. One of the first references to the culinary aspects of the plant occurs in a medieval Persian medical treatise, which describes its medicinal value and methods of preparation (E. Jorjānī, *Daḳīra-ye k̄vārazmšāhī*, ed. J. Moṣṭafawī, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973, III/1, pp. 122, 154).

Two kinds of eggplants are common in Iran: the conventional *bādenjān-e rasmī*, which is long and thin, and the more ample *dolma'ī*, which was imported from abroad. In Persian cuisine, choice eggplants are straight, long, firm, and black. Eggplants are among the foods that are preserved and stored for winter in Iranian homes (*qorma-ye bādenjān*). Selected in the last month of summer when they are most abundant, eggplants are preserved in two ways: 1. After peeling, they are cut, salted, and left to “sweat,” thereby losing their biliousness (*zardāb*, *talkāb*, *sawdā'*); then they are hung on a line to dehydrate in the sun (the dried eggplants are rehydrated twenty-four hours before use); 2. the peeled eggplants are browned in a great deal of oil, placed in a copper pot, and then covered with a thick layer of hot oil which congeals to seal them.



In Persian cuisine, unlike that of Turkey, Greece, and the countries of North Africa, eggplants are cooked peeled and generally seasoned with cinnamon or turmeric, the latter being more to Iranian taste. Most eggplant dishes are classified *nānk^vorešī* (eaten with bread) and served as appetizers consumed with alcoholic beverages.

An early eggplant dish mentioned by the 8th/14th-century poet **Boshāq Aṭ'ema** is *būrānī-e bādenjān*, chopped eggplant sautéed with onions and turmeric, slowly cooked, and then mixed with yogurt (Āšpaz-bāšī, *Sofra-ye aṭ'ema*, p. 46; Boshāq Aṭ'ema, *Dīvān*, ed. Mīrzā Ḥabīb Šīrāzī, Istanbul, 1303/1885-86, p. 104). Popular in Iranian cuisine is the combination of *kašk* (condensed whey) and eggplant, which is found in the dish *āš-e kašk o bādenjān*, layered sautéed eggplant, grilled onions, and red beans covered by whey seasoned with turmeric (Mosīū Rišahr Khan, *Ṭabbākī*, p. 27). A variant of the ubiquitous Persian stew and soup *āb-gūšt* contains eggplant, meat, *gūra* (unripe grapes), potatoes, tomatoes, and split peas. Similarly, a variety of *kūkū*, the traditional Persian vegetable soufflé, *kūkū-ye bādenjān*, calls for mashed, grilled eggplant, eggs, parsley, walnuts, and onions (M. R. Ghanoonparvar, *Persian Cuisine*, Lexington, 1982, I, p. 134). Another traditional recipe, *māst o bādenjān*, which combines eggplant, yogurt, and dry mint, is called *nāzkātūn* by Tehranis (cf. Ghanoonparvar, *Persian Cuisine* II, p. 150, whose recipe calls for pomegranate juice). In Persian stews (*k^vorešes*), eggplant is cooked with chicken and *gūra* or pomegranate juice in a dish called *mosammā-ye* (or *mosamman-e*) *bādenjān* (Āšpazbāšī, *Sofra-ye aṭ'ema*, pp. 23-24; *Farhang-e fārsī* III, p. 4, 119) and with lamb in *k^voreš-e bādenjān* (N. Ramazani, *Persian Cooking*, n.p., 1974, p. 138). Among other dishes prepared with eggplants are: *āš-e darhamjūš*, *kotla-ye bādenjān* (cutlet of *bādenjān*), *fesenjān-e bādenjān*, *yaḡnī-e bādenjān*, *bādenjān-e sork-karda*, *ḡalīm(-e) bādenjān*, *kašk o bādenjān*, *eškana-ye bādenjān*. The introduction of the ampler American *bādenjān* has allowed cooks to prepare such stuffed eggplant dishes as *dolma-ye bādenjān* (Ramazani, *Persian Cooking*, pp. 50-51).

Eggplants also figure in the regional cooking of Iran. *Bādenjān-polow*, which combines a paste of chopped, sautéed eggplant, chopped meat, and assorted spices with white rice, is prepared mainly in Fārs and Kermān. *Bādenjān-e qāsemī* or *mīrzā qāsemī*, a casserole of grilled eggplants, garlic, tomatoes, and eggs, is a specialty of northern Iran (Ghanoonparvar, *Persian Cuisine* I, p. 140).

The rise of the domestic canning and jarring industry during the last two decades in Iran, has added to the number of preserved eggplant products on



the market. Consumers can purchase an eggplant preserve made from *bādenjān-e rasmī*, heavy syrup, cloves, and cardamom. Also widely available is an array of pickled eggplant and vegetable preparations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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