

SWEET-AND-SOUR EGGPLANT WITH TOMATILLOS

MAKES 1 QUART

This is a very simple recipe that celebrates the natural sweetness of eggplant by pairing it with tart tomatillos. I haven't worked with Mexican ingredients that much, but during the Chicago Gourmet event the summer before we opened *Girl & the Goat* restaurant, my sous chef suggested we use tomatillos in a chicken dish. I was a little hesitant, but the unique tartness and pulpy green-tomato texture was so great, I've been using them ever since. This preparation is easy and versatile; it's great tossed with hot pasta, as a pizza topper, or over grilled fish or meats, but I put it in the starters chapter because I usually just eat it spooned over crusty bread. If you wind up with leftovers, store them in the fridge where the flavors will continue to develop over a day or two, making it even better.

1 Japanese eggplant
(about 2 pounds)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup finely diced onion
2 garlic cloves, minced

Salt
Freshly ground black pepper
½ fresh poblano pepper,
thinly sliced

2 cups diced fresh
tomatillos (see Ingredient
Spotlight, page 26)
1 cup grape tomatoes,
halved
2 tablespoons sugar

2 tablespoons white wine
1 tablespoon champagne
vinegar or white wine
vinegar

1. Cut the eggplant lengthwise and then crosswise in ½-inch half-moons.

2. Heat a large sauté pan over medium-low heat. Add the olive oil, then the onion and garlic, and sweat until the onion is translucent, about 3 minutes. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

3. Increase the heat to medium-high, add the poblano pepper, and cook until softened, 2 minutes more.

4. Add the eggplant, tomatillos, and tomatoes and stir to thoroughly coat the vegetables with the oil. Cook until the vegetables start to soften, about 3 minutes more. Season lightly with salt and pepper, then add the sugar, wine, and vinegar. Cook for 3 minutes, then reduce the heat to medium-low. Continue cooking until the liquid has been soaked up by the vegetables and they have broken down to be nice and soft, 8 to 10 minutes. Adjust the salt and pepper, let the mixture cool to room temperature, and serve.

DRINK TIP

Rosé wines are as much a sign of spring in the wine world as asparagus is in the food world. Not only is this a great pairing of fresh, spring flavors, but the strawberries bring out the natural strawberry flavor in rosés.