

Courtesy of Hudson Rouse

STARTERS & SIDES Whoopsie's

Whoopsie's ratatouille-stuffed heirloom tomatoes

By Sarra Sedghi · Rough Draft Atlanta, 7/9/2025

Ingredients

- [ ] 4 large heirloom beefsteak tomatoes
- [ ] 1 small zucchini, finely diced
- [ ] 1 small eggplant, finely diced
- [ ] 1 small bell pepper, diced
- [ ] 1 small onion, diced
- [ ] 2 cloves garlic, minced
- [ ] 2 tbsp olive oil
- [ ] Salt and pepper, to taste
- [ ] A handful of any fresh herbs, such as basil, thyme, parsley, chives, oregano, and/or dill
- [ ] Freshly grated hard cheese, such as Pecorino or Parmesan
- [ ] Breadcrumbs, for garnish

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. Prepare the tomatoes: Using a serrated knife or chef's knife, slice off the top of each tomato and discard or save for another use. Scoop out the insides with a spoon and set the hollowed tomatoes aside. (Optional: chop and stir in some of the tomato pulp for the filling.)
3. Cook the filling: In a skillet over medium heat, heat the olive oil. Sauté the onion and garlic for 2 to 3 minutes or until soft. Add eggplant, zucchini, and bell pepper. Cook until tender, about 10 to 12 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, and a few pinches of chopped fresh herbs.
4. Fill the tomatoes: Spoon the ratatouille mixture generously into each hollowed tomato.
5. Bake: Arrange stuffed tomatoes in a baking dish. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the tomatoes are tender and the filling is hot.
6. Garnish and serve: Top with loads of chopped fresh herbs, a generous shower of grated cheese, and breadcrumbs for garnish.
7. Serve warm.

The story

This week, we're sharing Whoopsie's recipe for ratatouille-stuffed heirloom tomatoes.

Whoopsie's founder, Chef Hudson Rouse (Rising Son, Pure Quill Superette), said this recipe is based on a dish his mother used to make for the family.

"She would stuff [tomatoes] with herbs and breadcrumbs and top them with leftover cheese from the Chef Boyardee pizza boxes," Rouse said, adding that his family ate most meals at home but occasionally visited Wendy's on Sundays after church.

Back when he was a child, Rouse and his brother hated eggplant, one of their mother's favorite ingredients. He combined the memories when developing this recipe and opted to stuff a tomato with an eggplant ratatouille.

Rouse eventually learned to love eggplant, thanks to Tasty China's dry-fried eggplant. He also learned how to cook it correctly. "The thing about eggplant is you have to cook it enough," Rouse said. "If it's not cooked properly, it tastes like you're eating a dried sponge."

When in doubt, the gooier the eggplant, the better. "If it's not gooey, you're not cooking it right," Rouse said.

This dish, like Rouse's other recipes, highlights local and seasonal produce. Rouse recommends sourcing ingredients locally whenever possible. Rouse even sources his breadcrumbs locally, using the end pieces of the multigrain bread from Alon's Bakery. And, fortunately, the majority of the other ingredients for the dish are in peak season during the summer

Beefsteak tomatoes, also known as crimson cushion or red ponderosa, have a plump appearance and yield thick slices like you'd want in a tomato sandwich. If you aren't able to find beefsteak tomatoes, Rouse recommends the largest tomato you can find.

"We're in peak tomato season, so long as a tomato isn't traveling hundreds of miles to the table, [it] should be fine," he said.

When dealing with the tomatoes, Rouse uses a straight cut to remove the fruit's top and cores the interior with a spoon. This way, if you don't cut enough off the top, the recipe will still work. Save everything you can for the ratatouille stuffing later.

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