

# Savory veggie stacks make a colorful splash as a side or main dish



Roasted Veggie Stacks

Photo Susie Iventosch

## By Susie Iventosch

We've enjoyed dining on these roasted veggie stacks that a couple of our friends have served, but finally got around to making our own the other day. It was a fun project and the great thing is that you can use whatever cheese and veggies you like, as long as it can all be stacked. We've had them with potatoes, too, which is also really good. We chose eggplant, onions, tomatoes, mushrooms, zucchini, and orange bell pepper for the veggies along with goat cheese, but I think a slice of summer squash would be fun on top with the scalloped edges ... kind of like a flower on top. It would also be fun to use a big slice of portobello instead of the smaller cremini, but I didn't think that one through before buying my veggies. I'd slice rounds from

the cap of each portobello for this recipe.

You can make the stacks well ahead of time and then do the final baking just before serving. I like to roast the veggies to al dente before stacking them. It's best to put the veggies that take longer to cook faster on another tray. I found that the eggplant took the longest amount of time and the tomatoes the least amount of time, with the onions, mushrooms, zucchini and bell pepper falling somewhere in between. As each kind of veggie is cooked to al dente, just remove it from the tray and place on a cutting board or platter while the rest continue to bake. Once the veggies are all removed from the oven and cool enough to handle, you can build your stacks. These make a delicious side dish, or a vegetarian main, and beautiful presentation on the plate!

## Roasted Veggie Stacks

(Serves 6 as a side dish)

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 large eggplant
- 2 red or yellow onions
- 2 large tomatoes
- 3 portobello mushrooms
- 1-2 orange or red bell peppers
- 1 large zucchini
- 6 medium basil leaves
- 4 oz. goat cheese (or fresh mozzarella, or Gruyere)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme leaves (or 1/2 tsp. dried)
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 6 fancy toothpicks (at 3-4 inches long)

### DIRECTIONS

Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Preheat oven to 400 F.

Blend olive oil with thyme, salt and pepper. Set aside.

Prepare veggies according to the directions below. Cut all of the veggies into slices between 1/4 and 1/2-inch thick.

**Eggplant** - lightly salt both sides of the slices and lay them on a rack to allow them to sweat for about 15 minutes. Pat them dry on both sides with a paper towel.

**Onions** - peel and slice

**Bell peppers** - remove stem and seeds from the bell pepper and cut into pieces that are about 2-3 inches wide.

**Tomatoes** - remove stem and slice.

**Zucchini** - slice into pieces about 3-inch long. You will need two slices per stack.

**Portobello caps** - clean caps and remove stem.

Lay all of the sliced veggies onto the two prepared baking sheets and lightly brush the tops with the olive oil mixture.

Roast veggies until al dente, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and cool. Once the veggies are cool enough to handle, line a baking sheet with a new piece of parchment paper and layer each stack on the parchment, beginning with eggplant on the bottom, then onions, tomatoes, mushrooms, bell pepper, goat cheese, and zucchini. Secure each in place with a toothpick through a basil leaf.

Bake before serving for about 20 minutes at 400 F or until veggies just begin to brown and cheese is soft and melty. If you want the basil leaf to look pretty when you serve it, put it on after baking the stacks.

*\*Note - you can place the veggies in any order you like, but I like to use the most firm ones on the bottom.*

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Photos courtesy Saurav Mohapatra

## Rites of spring - Holi Lamorinda

Submitted by Gayatri Krishnakumar

Many cultures around the world acknowledge the end of winter and the coming of spring. In the Indian subcontinent this welcome is the exuberant and sometimes riotous celebration of colors called Holi. The festival has evolved over the years, tacking on new traditions and symbolisms.

Urban centers see people from all backgrounds pour out into the streets and interact with each other. Greetings range from the genteel exchanges of colored powder (applied on the face, hair, or garments), running away from or running squirting colored water through a pichkari (a hand piston powered soaker) to rowdy, uninhibited revelries fueled by bhang (within known communities). Something about the bright colors that seems to unlock a sense of childlike abandon and mischief. At some point after everyone seems to be duly color checked, whatever color is left ends up thrown into the air. A grand finale to a festival filled with energy, laughter, and hope for the future.

This little bit of India was brought to Lamorinda on March 19 by a small group of volunteers from the Indian community who wished to share their own fond memories of the festival with their children, friends, and the Lamorinda community. After



Participants celebrate Holi at Orinda Community Park March 19.

much moving about due to the atmospheric river-soaked spring, the final venue at Orinda Community Park splendidly accommodated the festivities that included traditional sweets, food, music, games and colors (bleached flour with food coloring,

yummy ...cough, cough ...no don't eat that). The 100 or so festival attendees saved their appetite for the Vada pav (savory potato patty with buns) Jamuns and Jalebis. Yes, Mira. Yes, Alex. Today is your "Yes day." Sugar up. Go get your clothes dirty. Go spread joy.

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