



Harissa Barbecue Eggplant with Lentils, Pickled Shallots, and Burrata

Time: 40 minutes

Serves 4

I think 4 ounces of burrata for 4 people is plenty, but some people in my house disagree, so I've offered a range.

1 ½ cups small black lentils

Fine sea salt

2 garlic cloves

7 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

1 medium shallot

1/2 teaspoon sugar

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, Champagne, or rice vinegar

2 medium eggplant (about 1 ½ pounds total)
¼ cup barbecue sauce
1 tablespoon harissa
4 to 8 ounces burrata
Flaky salt
Small handful mint leaves

Cook the lentils

In a medium saucepan, cover the lentils by 2 inches with water and add 1 teaspoon salt. Smash and peel the garlic cloves and add them to the water. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to medium so the water simmers.

Cover the pot partially and cook until the lentils are tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain the lentils and return to the pot. Stir in 3 tablespoons olive oil and taste. Season with more salt, if desired.

Meanwhile, prep the shallots, eggplant, and sauce

Cut the shallot in half lengthwise and peel it. Thinly slice the shallot into half moons. In a small bowl, toss the shallots with sugar and ¼ teaspoon salt, then stir in the vinegar. Let stand while you prep and cook the eggplant.

Remove the top stem from the eggplant. Cut the eggplant in half crosswise, then cut the halves lengthwise into ¼-inch-thick slabs. (If desired, you can peel the end pieces so only a few strips of skin remain.) In a large bowl, toss the eggplant with 3 tablespoons olive oil and 1 teaspoon salt.

In a small bowl, mix together the barbecue sauce, harissa, and 1 tablespoon olive oil.

Cook the eggplant

Light a grill and preheat over medium high heat or set a rack 2 to 3 inches from the broiler and preheat the broiler over high heat.

If you're grilling the eggplant, oil the grates well, then arrange the eggplant in a single layer on the grates. Grill until grill marks form and the bottom flesh is softer, about 4 minutes. Flip and grill until the eggplant is tender throughout, 3 to 4 minutes longer. Brush the top of the eggplant with barbecue sauce and flip the eggplant. Grill until the sauce forms a bronzed glaze and the edges of the eggplant become a little bit crispy, about 1 minute. Brush the top side with barbecue sauce and flip and cook again for about 1 minute longer. Transfer to a plate.

If you're broiling the eggplant, set a baking rack on top of a baking sheet and arrange the eggplant slices on top in a single layer. Broil the eggplant until it's well-browned on top, about 5 minutes. Flip the eggplant and broil until the other side is browned, 4 to 5 minutes longer.

Brush the top of the eggplant with barbecue sauce and broil until it looks deliciously glazed, about 1 minute. Flip and brush the other side with sauce and broil until glazed, about 1 minute longer.

Assemble the dish

Spoon the lentils onto a platter.

Top with the eggplant slices. Pull apart the burrata and arrange it around the platter on top of the eggplant. Sprinkle the burrata with flaky salt.

Scatter some of the pickled shallots on top. Tear up the mint leaves and garnish the dish, then serve, passing more pickled shallots at the table.

The short(er) version

- Cook the lentils in well-seasoned water with smashed garlic cloves. Dress with 3 tablespoons olive oil and season with more salt, if desired.
- Thinly slice the shallot and toss with the sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt, and lemon juice.
- Cut the eggplant in half crosswise, then into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick lengthwise slabs. Toss them with 3 tablespoons olive oil and 1 teaspoon salt.
- In a small bowl, mix together the barbecue sauce, harissa, and 1 tablespoon olive oil.
- Grill or broil the eggplant until tender, then brush one side with the sauce. Grill or broil until glazed, then brush and cook the other side.
- Pile the lentils on a platter. Set the eggplant on top. Pull apart the burrata and arrange on top. Sprinkle with flaky salt. Scatter some of the pickled shallots on top. Tear up the mint leaves and garnish the dish, then serve, passing more pickled shallots at the table.

Fun for kids

- Toss the eggplant with olive oil and salt.
- Mix together the pickled shallots.
- Mix together the sauce.
- Pull apart the burrata.
- Tear the mint and garnish.

Swaps

- Instead of black lentils, use lentils de Puy or serve with white beans warmed with olive oil.
- Instead of barbecue sauce, try ketchup. I did not try ketchup here, but I bet it would be pretty delicious.
- Instead of shallots, use a few tablespoons thinly sliced red onion.
- If you can't find burrata, just skip it. (Yes, you could try goat cheese or feta but it will be very different.)
- Instead of mint leaves, try basil.

Bonus points

- If you wanted to dress up the lentils with herbs or saute some more shallots or onion to toss with them, that would be delicious.
- You could also add the vinegar used to pickle the shallots to the lentils, if you like. I prefer it sprinkled on so you get some bites with the vinegar and some bites without, but I'll leave it to you!