Caponata

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Recipe by: Laura Vitale

Serves 4-6

Prep Time: minutes
Cook Time: minutes

Ingredients
__3 Tbsp Olive Oil
__1 cup Chopped Celery
__1 Medium Onion, chopped
__1 Red Bell Pepper, chopped
__1 Large Eggplant, cut into 1 inch cubes
__1 28oz Can of Diced or Chunky Crushed Tomatoes
__¼ cup Raisins
__3 tbsp Capers
__½ cup Pitted Kalamata Olives, cut in half
__1 pinch of Hot Pepper Flakes
__1 Tbsp Sugar
__2 Tbsp Red Wine Vinegar
__Salt and Pepper, to taste
__Fresh Basil

1) Put the eggplant in a large colander and sit the colander on a plate or bowl to catch all the liquid. Take about 3 tbsp of salt and sprinkle it over the eggplant and toss it all together to make sure every piece of eggplant has salt on it.

2) Put a plate directly on top of the eggplant and add weights on top of that, Things like cans of tomato sauce, a brick or anything heavy. Let sit for 1 hour.

3) After 1 hour discard the water and wash the eggplants very well, drain them on a kitchen towel and dry them well to make sure they are not soaking wet. Set them aside wile you start sautéing your veggies.

4) In a large non stick pan, over medium high heat sauté the chopped onion, pepper and celery with the olive oil for about 5 minutes, or until the veggies start to cook down and get translucent. Then add the eggplant and a pinch of hot pepper flakes and cook for about 3 minutes.

5) Add the canned tomatoes and raisins and reduce the heat to medium. Cook for 20 to 25 minutes, until all the veggies are cooked and the stew is nice and thick.

6) Add the remaining ingredients and cook for about 1 more minute. Taste and season well with salt and pepper and enjoy!

This dish is so fabulous to eat over some rigatoni cooked al dente or over some smooth polenta full of parmiggiano reggiano. But my favorite way is to eat it with a ridiculously large chunk of crusty Italian bread for the best sandwich you will ever have. By the way this dish just gets better and better as it sits, leftover are a real joy.