

EGGPLANT INVOLTINI *with* RICOTTA *and* SCALLIONS

Involtini di Melanzane

These are spectacularly simple and yet will look as if you've been cooking all day. Just one thing: it would be better to overcook them by five minutes than to undercook them by one.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

2¼ cups EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

3 medium EGGPLANT, sliced lengthwise into ½-inch-thick slices

1 cup fresh RICOTTA

1 large EGG

2 SCALLIONS, thinly sliced

¼ teaspoon freshly grated NUTMEG

SALT and freshly ground BLACK PEPPER

2 cups BASIC TOMATO SAUCE (page 71)

¼ cup whole PARSLEY LEAVES

1. In a 10- to 12-inch sauté pan, heat 2 cups of the olive oil over medium-high heat until it reaches 370°F. Add the eggplant slices 3 or 4 at a time and fry, turning once, until soft and light golden brown, about 2 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain.

2. Preheat the oven to 375°F.

3. In a medium bowl, combine the ricotta, egg, scallions, and nutmeg and mix well. Season with salt and pepper. Lay the eggplant slices out on a work surface and place 1 tablespoon of the ricotta filling at the base of each slice. Roll the eggplant up around the filling to form a neat roll and set seam side down on the work surface.

4. Lightly oil a baking dish just large enough to hold the eggplant roll-ups. Pour the sauce into the dish and place the rolls seam side down in the sauce.

5. Bake until the cheese starts to melt out of the rolls, about 15 minutes. Drizzle with the remaining ¼ cup olive oil, sprinkle with parsley, and serve.