

# Cashew-Stuffed Baby Eggplant

YIELD: 20 BABY EGGPLANTS

*For my wedding in 1999, my mother hired an older Gujarati woman to do all the cooking for the week-long festivities. She made a stuffed eggplant dish that even had my husband, who has never been a fan of this vegetable, asking for more. Though the original recipe calls for peanuts, I prefer cashews, which taste smoother and richer. Either way, this will be a dish you'll make again and again. It's truly delicious and incredibly easy.*

½ cup (69 g) raw cashews  
20 baby eggplants  
2 tablespoons oil, divided  
1 teaspoon cumin seeds  
1 teaspoon coriander seeds  
1 tablespoon sesame seeds  
½ teaspoon black mustard seeds  
½ teaspoon fennel seeds  
¼ teaspoon fenugreek seeds  
1 large yellow or red onion, peeled and diced (2 cups [300 g])  
1 (1-inch [2.5-cm]) piece ginger root, peeled and grated or minced  
4 cloves garlic, peeled and roughly chopped  
1–3 Thai, serrano, or cayenne chiles, stems removed, chopped  
1 teaspoon turmeric powder  
1 teaspoon grated jaggery (*gur*)  
2 teaspoons *garam masala*  
¼ tablespoon coarse sea salt  
1 teaspoon red chile powder or cayenne  
1 cup (237 mL) water, divided  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish

1. Soak the cashews in water while you prep the remaining ingredients.
2. Cut 2 perpendicular slits in each eggplant from the bottom, working toward the stem and stopping before you cut through the eggplant. They should stay intact. You'll have 4 sections when done, held together by the green, woody stem. Place them in a bowl of water while you prep the remaining ingredients. This will help open up the eggplants slightly so that you can better stuff them later.
3. In a heavy pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium-high heat.
4. Add the cumin, coriander, sesame, mustard, fennel, and fenugreek seeds. Cook until the seeds pop slightly, about 30 seconds. Don't overcook this—the fenugreek can get bitter.
5. Add the onion, ginger root, garlic, and chiles. Cook until the onion is browned, about 2 minutes.
6. Add the turmeric, jaggery, *garam masala*, salt, red chile powder, and drained cashews. Cook for another 2 minutes, until well blended.
7. Transfer this mixture to a food processor. Add ½ cup (119 mL) of the water and process until smooth. Take your time; you may need to stop and scrape down the sides.
8. The eggplants are now ready to be stuffed! Holding an eggplant in one hand, put about 1 tablespoon of the mixture in the core of the eggplant, covering all sides.
9. Gently close the eggplant back up and place it in a large bowl until you finish stuffing all the eggplants.