

# Ajvar

Contributed by Tanja

Ajvar is popular appetizer or side dish made of roasted paprika, ripe tomatoes, and even string

beans can be combined into ajvar.

Ajvar is a seasonal dish in Macedonia, always made in late

summer and early autumn, just after the paprika harvest, when many

households also can or bottle their own ajvar for use throughout the

winter season.

- 8-12 fresh red paprika (mild or medium-hot, to taste)
- 4 medium-size eggplants
- 1/2 to 3/4 cup olive oil
- 1 large onion, minced
- 3 large garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 to 2 tablespoons lemon juice (or 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

Roast the paprika and eggplants over charcoal or a gas flame, or bake

them in a preheated 475 F oven, until the skin is blistered and

darkened. Place the roasted vegetables in a paper bag and let them steam in their own heat for 10 minutes. Peel off and discard the burnt skin along with the stems and seeds. Mash the peppers and eggplant pulp together to form a slightly chunky mass. You can do this with a fork or in a food processor.

Heat 3 tablespoons of oil in a large skillet and saute the onion until very soft. Add garlic and cook for 2 more minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the pepper-eggplant pulp, mixing well. Slowly drizzle the remaining oil into the mixture, stirring constantly to incorporate all of the oil. Add lemon juice or vinegar, and salt and pepper, to taste. Transfer to a serving bowl and garnish with parsley.

Serve as an appetizer to spread on thick slices of country-style white bread or flat pita bread with chunks of feta cheese, or use as a side dish to accompany grilled or roasted meats.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings, as an appetizer or side dish.