

# Culinary Cinema

## *Big Night* (1996) Review and *Caponata* Recipe

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A bittersweet story of two brothers in search of the American dream. Primo and Secondo Pilaggi are Italian immigrants who settle on the New Jersey shore and open a restaurant, the Paradise, hoping to strike it rich. Primo, the elder brother, is a master chef from the Old World who is concerned only with quality and authenticity in the kitchen. Secondo, the younger brother and business manager, is all too eager to compromise if it means more customers and more cash.

Teetering on the brink of failure, the brothers learn that the famed Italian-American musician Louis Prima is performing in the area and they contrive to host a dinner in his honor. Hoping that a big night built around a celebrity like Prima will get them publicity, the brothers pool all their talent, energy and every cent they have to plan a sumptuous banquet of unsurpassed ambition. What follows is a culinary adventure that will teach them a lot about themselves, each other, and their different definitions of life, love and success.

### **Caponata – Sicilian Eggplant Relish**

#### *Ingredients*

1 large eggplant, diced  
1 large onion, sliced  
1 cup celery, chopped  
28 oz canned plum tomatoes, crushed  
1 tbsp. capers, rinsed and drained  
1 tbsp. pine nuts  
1 1/2 tbsp. sugar  
3 tbsp. wine vinegar  
1/2 cup olive oil  
Salt and pepper, to taste

#### **Directions**

Wash and dry eggplant. Dice into 1-inch cubes. In large skillet, heat oil, brown eggplant about 8 to 10 minutes until soft and slightly browned. Don't let eggplant get too soft. Remove and place in large saucepan. Saute onion in same skillet, until onions are wilted. Add celery and tomatoes, crushing slightly. Simmer about 15 minutes until celery is tender.

Add capers and pine nuts. Combine mixture and add to eggplant in saucepan. Dissolve sugar in vinegar, salt and pepper to taste and heat slightly. Add to eggplant, cover, simmer over low until tomato is cooked and vegetables are tender but not mushy. Stir often during cooking.

Allow to cool before refrigerating. Can be prepared several days ahead. Can be frozen. This appetizer should be served at room temperature. It is good served as part of a buffet or to side grilled fish. Can also be served with mixed greens for a salad entree.

*Servings: 6*

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The recipe is from Stanley's Tucci's mother, who served as adviser on the film, "Big Night" (1996). Tucci both directed and starred in the film.

The review is from Yahoo! Movies.