Ratatouille (The Proper Way)

Ingredients:

- 2 large Aubergines (cut into 2cm cubes)
- 3 medium Courgettes (sliced into thick rounds or half-moons)
- 2 Bell Peppers (Red and Yellow, de-seeded and chopped into chunks)
- 4-5 large Ripe Tomatoes (peeled and chopped, or a tin of high-quality plum tomatoes)
- 1 large Onion (thinly sliced)
- 4 cloves Garlic (finely sliced)
- Fresh Herbs: 2 sprigs of Thyme, 1 Bay Leaf, and a handful of fresh Basil.
- Olive Oil: A generous amount of high-quality extra virgin oil.
- Salt & Black Pepper

Method:

1. **The Individual Sauté** - Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large, heavy-based casserole pot or deep frying pan.
    a. **The Aubergine:** Fry the aubergine cubes in batches until golden brown on all sides. They will soak up oil like a sponge—don't be afraid to add a little more. Remove and set aside on a plate.

b. **The Courgette:** Add a little more oil and fry the courgettes until they have some colour but are still firm. Remove and set aside.
c. **The Peppers:** Fry the peppers until they start to soften and char slightly. Remove and set aside.

2. **The Aromatics** - Lower the heat. Add another splash of oil to the same pot. Add the onions and cook slowly for about 10 minutes until soft and translucent (but not browned). Stir in the garlic, thyme, and bay leaf, cooking for another 2 minutes until fragrant.
3. **The Tomato Base** - Add the tomatoes to the onions. Season with a good pinch of salt and pepper. Simmer for about 10-15 minutes until the tomatoes break down into a thick, rich sauce.
4. **The Marriage** - Return the fried aubergines, courgettes, and peppers to the pot with the tomato sauce. Stir very gently to combine so you don't break the vegetables.
5. **The Slow Simmer** - Cover the pot and simmer on the lowest possible heat for 20–30 minutes. You want the flavours to meld, but you want to see the distinct shapes of the vegetables.
6. **The Finish** - Remove from the heat. Stir in the fresh basil (torn by hand) and a final drizzle of raw olive oil.

Three Pro-Tips for Success:

Temperature: Ratatouille is actually better the next day. It is traditionally served warm or at room temperature, but rarely “piping hot,” which can mask the delicate flavours of the summer veg.

Peeling Tomatoes: If using fresh, score an ‘X’ on the bottom, dunk in boiling water for 30 seconds, then ice water. The skin will slip right off.

The Texture: If the mixture looks too watery at the end, simmer it uncovered for the last 10 minutes to reduce the juices into a syrupy glaze.

A Healthy Summer Tip

The Ratatouille is an excellent way to hit your “5-a-day” in one sitting, as it is incredibly dense in Vitamin C (from the peppers and tomatoes) and Potassium (from the aubergines). If you are looking to lower the calories in the Clafoutis, you can swap the whole milk for semi-skimmed, though the texture will be slightly less “custard-like.”