

A Sutherland Belle

Tuscan Panzanella Salad

INGREDIENTS

- 1 loaf of Sour Dough or Ciabatta cut into 1-inch cubes
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt
- 2 ¼ lb ripe tomatoes I used vine-ripe tomatoes, cut into small wedges or cubes
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 3 garlic cloves minced
- ½ teaspoon Dijon mustard (optional)
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme optional
- Black pepper
- ¼ red onion or 2 Small shallots peeled and thinly sliced
- ½ cup packed fresh basil or mint torn
- 4 oz fresh baby mozzarella

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 400 degrees F.
2. In a large mixing bowl, combine bread cubes with a large drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and a generous pinch of kosher salt. Toss to make sure the bread is well coated (save the bowl for later use). Spread the bread cubes on a sheet pan and bake in heated oven for about 10 minutes or until golden (the edges should get crisp, while the bread gains some color and crisp but remains still a bit chewy).
3. Place a large colander over the same mixing bowl. Place the tomatoes in the colander and sprinkle with kosher salt. Toss briefly with your hand. Set aside for a few minutes to allow the tomatoes to release their juices in the mixing bowl.
4. When ready, move the colander with the tomatoes to the sink for now, and use the mixing bowl with the tomato juice to make the dressing. Add red wine, ½ cup extra virgin olive oil, garlic cloves, Dijon mustard, thyme, and a large pinch of black pepper. Whisk to combine.
5. Add the tomatoes, bread cubes, shallots, basil, and mozzarella (if using) to the mixing bowl and toss to coat with the dressing. Allow the salad to sit for 20 to 30 minutes before serving.
6. Give the salad a gentle toss and transfer to a serving platter. Garnish with a few more fresh basil leaves, if you like.