

Peach Panzanella

I always know that summer has arrived when I see the first peaches and nectarines in the Farmers Market. And I eat them until the season is over. Several years ago, my niece gave me a cookbook called *The Forest Feast Gathering, Simple Vegetarian Menus for Hosting Friends & Family* by Erin Gleeson. The art work in this book is stunningly beautiful and invites you into the redwoods near where I live. The vegetarian recipes are simple but delicious. The Peach Panzanella salad I made was mouthwatering fantastic. My husband and I loved it.

A classic Tuscan bread salad is made with ripe tomatoes, dried Italian bread, and a simple tangy dressing. The best bread for this salad is a crusty loaf with a chewy center and a good crunchy crust. I used a baguette I already had, but might use ciabatta the next time. You want the bread to absorb the dressing without it becoming too soggy. It will help if you cut the bread into pieces and let it dry overnight. Salt your tomatoes first to draw out the juices. This intensifies the flavors in the tomatoes and gives you some juice for the dressing. This salad makes a perfect lunch or light dinner. We had it with oysters.

Ingredients:

½ to 1 crusty baguette cut into 1-inch cubes
3 peaches or nectarines, cubed
3 tomatoes
8 oz (225) fresh mozzarella cubes, halved
15 basil leaves sliced
⅓ + 3 TBS olive oil
3 TBS red wine vinegar
1 clove garlic, minced
salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Dry the baguette for a few hours if you have time. Preheat the oven at 350° (175 Celsius). Drizzle the bread with 3 TBS olive oil, sprinkle with salt and bake in the oven for about 15 minutes. Cut the tomatoes, sprinkle them with some salt and drain them in a sieve. Make the vinaigrette by mixing the olive oil with the vinegar and the garlic. Toss all the ingredients with the vinaigrette and tomato juice from the drained tomatoes. Let the salad sit for about 15 minutes, then serve.

Guten Appetit!

Recipe from *the Forest Feast Gathering*

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