



Basic Crostini

Recipe courtesy Nick Ritchie, Signature Kitchen Suite

- 1-2 crusty baguettes, pending size
- 2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Pinch salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese**(optional)

Directions

1. Pre heat the oven to 375 degrees F. Using a sharp bread knife slice the bread into neat, even, thin slices. If the baguette being used is on the narrow side you can slice on a diagonal bias so the crostini aren't too small.
2. In a mixing bowl drizzle the olive oil over the bread slices while gently tossing to coat evenly, sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper (and the grated parmesan if using) and quickly toss again.
3. Arrange the seasoned and oiled crostini on a baking sheet and bake until crisp and golden brown on the outside, approx. 12 minutes. Make sure no moisture is left in the crostini or they will stall and soften while in storage.
4. Use immediately or allow to fully cool and store in an airtight container.

Chef's Notes:

*When using these crostini for canapés or antipasti I prefer them plain with just olive oil salt and pepper. If I am using them as a compliment to a soup or salad that is when I will add grated parmesan to them. But that choice is all yours!

*For crisp bruschetta follow the same instructions but use larger ciabatta or batard type loaf. Cut the bread thicker approx. 1/3-1/2 inch and cook approx. 15-16 minutes.

*Alternately for fresh bruschetta that is crisp outside and soft inside the thick sliced bread can be quickly grilled or broiled, but this version does not store well and needs to be consumed immediately.



Parm Dip

Yield: 2.5 cups

Recipe courtesy Nick Ritchie, Signature Kitchen Suite

- 8 ounces parmesan cheese, broken into 1" chunks
- 8 ounces asiago cheese, broken into 1" chunks
- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped basil
- 2 tablespoons chopped scallions
- 1 tablespoon pepper flakes
- 1-1/2 cups extra-virgin olive oil

Directions

1. Place all of the ingredients in the bowl of a food processor. Pulse for about 10 seconds, to break the cheese into small granules. (Use a rubber spatula to scrape down and recombine between every couple of pulses.)
2. Transfer the salsa to a sealed container and refrigerate for up to a week. Bring to room temperature before serving.

Chef's Notes:

*This is addicting! Serve it as a topping for fresh bread, crostini, bruschetta, toss with pasta, spoon over fresh sliced tomatoes, add to a salad, the possibilities are endless.

*using parmesan and asiago will provide some contrast in flavor and a slightly milder dip. If a stronger all parmesan flavor is preferred just substitute more parm for the asiago.

*Spicy variation- add 1 tablespoon of Calabrian chili paste



Tuscan White Bean and Artichoke Spread

Yield: 2.5-3 cups

Recipe courtesy Nick Ritchie, Signature Kitchen Suite

14-15.5 ounce can white beans, (preferably Canellini beans) drained and rinsed (about 1 1/2 cups cooked white beans)

12-14 ounce jar marinated artichokes hearts (about 1 1/2 cups), drained, save the marinade

2 cloves garlic, minced

2 sprigs fresh thyme or rosemary, chopped

1 teaspoon red chili flakes

1 large lemon, (preferably Meyer) zest and juice

2 tablespoon olive oil

Garnish: zest of 1 lemon, drizzle olive oil, sprinkle of chili flakes and chopped herbs

Directions

1. Using a colander, drain the white beans and rinse them under cold water. Allow to fully drain and dry off, then drain the artichokes but reserve the artichoke juices and marinade from the jar.
2. In a medium size sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the minced garlic and cook quickly while stirring, when it is nicely golden brown add the minced herbs and chili flake until they begin to crackle in the oil and release their fragrance. Add the drained beans and sauté for 1-2 minutes with the garlic, chili and herbs.
3. Add the sauté pan of beans to the bowl of a food processor or vita mix blender. Allow the steam to leave the beans and then add the artichokes, lemon zest and juice. Blend on high until smooth while slowly drizzling in both the artichoke juices and the remaining olive oil. Taste for seasoning and add salt and more lemon juice if needed.
4. This can be stored in a jar or other air tight container refrigerated for up to a week. Bring to room temperature before serving and present spread in a large shallow bowl. Drizzle some nice olive oil and sprinkle with chili flakes, fresh herbs and lemon zest. Serve with crostini, bruschetta, crackers or fresh crusty bread.

Chef's Notes:



*strain the artichokes over a bowl or container to catch all of the marinade from the jar. Reserve marinade for the preparation.

*dried white beans can also be cooked and used for this recipe. If using freshly cooked beans use approx. 1.5 cups of freshly cooked beans that have been drained of cooking juices.



Original Eggplant Caponata

Makes about 2-2.5 cups

Recipe courtesy of Nick Ritchie, Signature Kitchen Suite

Ingredients:

- 1 eggplant-peeled and small diced
- 1 ½ cups onion, small diced
- 1/3-1/2 cup pure olive oil
- ½ cup roasted bell peppers, drained and small diced
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon capers, drained and chopped, juice reserved
- 1-2 tablespoons caper juice
- 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons fresh orange zest
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon red chili flake

1. Heat 2 large nonstick sauté pans over high heat. Divide the olive oil between the two pans, when the oil is hot add the eggplant and season with salt and pepper. Saute over high heat for about 6-8 minutes or until golden brown. Remove to a colander and allow the excess oil to drain into a bowl. Reserve the eggplant in a mixing bowl.
2. Add the strained oil back to one of the sauté pans over medium high heat. Add the garlic and cook until golden brown, then add the onion. Sauté for about 3 minutes or until starting to brown, turn the heat down to medium and add the thyme and chili flakes. Cook until soft and caramelized about 8 minutes then add the caper juice and balsamic vinegar together scraping the bottom of the pan to release any caramelized onion fond. Reduce until thick and the onions have absorbed the vinegar, about 2 minutes.
3. Pour the balsamic onion mixture over the bowl of cooked eggplant; add the roasted peppers, chopped capers, orange zest and parsley and gently mix while still warm. Allow to cool to room temperature before serving.
4. Serve as is or topped with fresh crumbled goats cheese on crostini or bruschetta.