

Panzanella Salad

Swick

Serves 6 to 8 | Active Time: 25 minutes | Total Time: 25 minutes

Step 1: Preparing the Bread

- 1 loaf rustic bread (Italian or French, with large holes)
- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 tsp sea salt (such as fleur de sel), or to taste

To start, preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C).

To cut the bread, you can trim off the crust or you can leave just a bit of it on for a different texture. Depending on the size of the loaf, cut it into about 4 pieces lengthwise. Then cut again into a few slices lengthwise and tear into approximately 1 1/2" pieces.

Toss the bread with a bit of olive oil and salt. Add just enough so that the bread is just lightly seasoned and coated. Then place onto a tray and bake for about 12 to 15 minutes, or until the bread just starts to brown and crisp up on the outside but is still a bit soft in the middle. Toss the bread halfway through to ensure that it's crisp on all sides. Set aside to cool, while you make the vinaigrette.

Step 2: Preparing Your Mise en Place

- 2 lbs heirloom tomatoes (or any variety of ripe tomatoes)
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1/4 red onion, thinly sliced (optional)
- 1/3 cup black Kalamata or green olives (optional)
- 8 oz Plant-Based Mozzarella Cheese
- 1/2 cup fresh basil (approx.)

To prepare the salad, first, wash the tomatoes. We use a variety of local heirloom tomatoes, but you can use any kind of tomatoes. Just remember the more flavorful the tomatoes are, the better the salad will be. Remove any stems from the tomatoes and core them if needed. Cut into wedges or bite-size pieces. Transfer the tomatoes to a colander that has been set over a bowl (to catch the juices) and sprinkle the tomatoes with the salt and gently toss. Allow the tomatoes to drain for about 15 minutes.

If using, thinly slice the red onion — we typically just use the shallots in the dressing and skip the red onions. Again, if using, pit the olives and tear them in half. Tear the Mozzarella Cheese into bite-size pieces. Gather the basil and you can now begin to assemble the salad.

Step 3: Making the Vinaigrette

- 1 1/2 tsp minced garlic (approx 2 cloves)
- 2 tbsp minced shallots (approx 1/2 shallot)
- 3 tbsp red, sherry, or white wine vinegar
- 9 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 tsp sea salt, or to taste
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper, or to taste

To prepare the vinaigrette, add the tomato liquid from the below the colander to a bowl or jar and mix together with the garlic, shallots, vinegar, and olive oil.

Make sure to use a quality olive oil as this salad is all about quality and fresh ingredients. Finish with a good pinch or two of salt and pepper. The vinaigrette should taste a tiny bit salty, as this is what will ultimately season the entire salad. Then either whisk or shake to emulsify the vinaigrette and set aside.

Step 4: Assembling the Salad

Assemble the salad by layering together the different components and tossing each layer with a bit of the vinaigrette (see notes on the above images for more detail).

Any leftover dressing will keep in the refrigerator for a couple of days. Once all of the ingredients have been added, toss the salad again and taste for seasoning. If desired, allow the salad to sit for 15 to 30 minutes to really soak up the dressing — tossing once or twice to ensure the bread really soaks up the vinaigrette. This salad is delicious on its own, but it also makes a great appetizer or side dish.

Chef's Notes

This salad is typically made with leftover, day-old bread. However, you don't have to have day-old bread in order to make it. Fresh bread is fantastic. You just need to dry it out a bit in the oven so it doesn't become soggy from the vinaigrette and the juice from the tomatoes.