

Caponata – Eggplant Relish

Yields: 8-10 as an appetizer

Ingredients:

- 1 globe Eggplant, about 1 lb., diced
- Salt
- 4 Tbsp. Vegetable oil, divided
- 1 small Onion, minced
- 1 Celery Stalk, minced
- 1 Garlic clove, minced
- 4-6 Plum Tomatoes, finely chopped
- ½ C Pitted Green Olives, finely chopped
- ¼ C Pine Nuts, toasted
- 2-3 Tbsp. Small Capers, drained
- 1 tsp. Red Pepper Flakes
- ¼ C Red Wine Vinegar
- 2-3 Tbsp. Sugar
- 1 Tbsp. Tomato Paste
- ¼ C Chopped Basil

Procedure:

1. Toss the diced eggplant with about 2 tablespoons salt and put into a large bowl. Cover the bowl with a plate that just about fits the bowl and weigh it down with a heavy can. Let this sit for 1 hour. Drain the eggplant, rinse with fresh water and pat dry with paper towels.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and celery, season with salt. Cook, stirring occasionally until the onion begins to soften – about 5 minutes. Add the garlic. Cook for 1-2 minutes more. Remove from the skillet and set aside.
3. Wipe the pan with a paper towel, turn the heat to high and add the remaining vegetable oil. Let this heat until the oil is nearly smoking. Add the eggplant and spread it out in as thin a layer as you can in the skillet. Let this sizzle for 1-2 minutes before stirring, and then let it sit for a full minute before stirring again. Cook like this for 5-6 minutes.
4. Add the onion-celery mixture, the tomatoes, olives, pine nuts, capers, and red pepper flakes. Stir well. Add the vinegar, sugar, and tomato paste and stir once more. Cook, stirring occasionally until eggplant is very soft, about 8 minutes.
5. Remove from heat and let cool to room temperature. Mix in the basil. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Caponata can be refrigerated, covered, for up to 5 days.

Chilled Garden Harvest Gazpacho

Yield: 1 Gallon

Ingredients:

12		Vine ripened tomatoes, washed and core removed then chopped
5		Garlic cloves
3		Red bell peppers, divided and seeds and core removed, chopped
6		Celery stalks, washed & chopped
½		English cucumber, peeled and chopped
2		Tomato juice cans (46 oz each)
4		Petit pain or rolls baked, sliced for easily absorbing or mashed potatoes
½	C	Olive oil
4	T	Mayonnaise
1	T	Red wine vinegar

Garnish:

1		Yellow pepper, fine diced
1		Red pepper, fine diced
1		Tomato, peeled, seeded, and diced
1		Celery stalk, fine diced
1	T	Parsley, finely chopped
		Olive oil, enough to gently coat
1	C	Croutons

Procedure:

1. Combine the first 8 ingredients in a blender and puree until smooth. Pass through a China cap.
2. Combine mayonnaise and vinegar in a small bowl with a whisk. Gently add some of the pureed mixture into the bowl causing it to emulsify. Readd this mixture to the pureed mixture. Adjust the thickness with tomato juice to desired consistency. Adjust seasoning.
3. Prepare the garnish. Chill desired bowls.
4. Pour finished gazpacho into chilled desired bowl or glass then place a spoonful of garnish on top. Add 4-5 pieces of croutons on top and serve.

Savory Tomato Cobbler

Makes 6 to 8 servings

- 1 medium-size sweet onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 large tomato, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 pounds assorted small tomatoes (such as cherry or grape), divided
- 1 tablespoon Champagne vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
- 1½ cups self-rising soft-wheat flour (such as White Lily)
- ½ cup stone-ground yellow cornmeal
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ cup cold unsalted butter, cut into ¼-inch-thick cubes
- ¾ cup freshly shredded Jarlsberg cheese (or Swiss)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 1¼ cups buttermilk

Preheat oven to 375°F. Sauté onion in hot oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat 5 to 6 minutes or until tender. Add chopped tomato, garlic, and 1½ cups small tomatoes, and sauté 10 minutes or until tomatoes are softened. Remove from heat, and stir in vinegar and next 4 ingredients.

Place remaining small tomatoes in a greased 13- x 9-inch baking dish. Spoon onion mixture over tomatoes, and gently toss to coat. Bake at 375° for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, stir together flour, cornmeal and baking powder in a large bowl. Cut butter into flour with a pastry blender until mixture resembles small peas; cover and chill 10 minutes.

Stir in cheese, basil and chives into cold flour mixture. Add buttermilk, stirring just until dry ingredients are moistened. Dollop mixture by ½ cupfuls onto tomato mixture. Do not spread.

Bake at 375°F for 30 to 35 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack 30 minutes before serving.

Cook's Note: Stone-ground cornmeal adds texture to the biscuit-like crust, but you can use plain cornmeal also.