

Panzanella



Serves four

Ingredients:

4 cups bread cubes, approximately one inch by one inch by one-half inch (French bread works the best), lightly toasted

1 cup cucumber, peeled, split in half lengthwise, seeded and cut into one-half inch pieces

2 cups fresh tomatoes: cored and cut into pieces about the same size as the bread cubes. (If possible, use an assortment of colors and sizes for the tomatoes in this salad. In season heirloom tomatoes are delicious.)

½ cup red onion, peeled and cut into thin slices

½ teaspoon kosher salt

½ cup black olives, pitted (Kalamata or Nicoise work well)

½ cup fresh basil leaves, torn

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, good quality

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, good quality

1 teaspoon lemon juice, freshly squeezed

½ teaspoon black pepper, freshly ground

1 scant teaspoon sea salt, good quality, flaky (optional)

1 - 2 ounces parmesan cheese, shaved or grated

Instructions:

1. Bring all ingredients to room temperature. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Scatter bread cubes in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake in the oven for eight to ten minutes until cubes are slightly crusty. Be careful not to over bake and turn cubes into croutons. Remove from oven and cool to room temperature.

2. Combine tomatoes, cucumber, and red onions in a large bowl. Sprinkle with kosher salt and gently mix. Allow to stand at room temperature while prepping the other ingredients. Add black olives, basil, extra virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar, lemon juice, and black pepper. Mix gently to combine. Toss in bread cubes. Serve immediately. Individual portions can be sprinkled with one-eighth to one-fourth teaspoon of the flaky sea salt to add a little extra crunch and topped with shaved parmesan cheese.