

Salt and Serenity

Asparagus and Panzanella Salad

This salad is adapted from Chef Michael Symon's recipe. It will serve 4-6 as a side dish. Use fresh peas if you can find them at a Farmer's Market. Otherwise, frozen will be perfect.

½ large loaf of rustic bread, torn into 1 inch chunks
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 bunch green asparagus (fat spears are better)
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
½ teaspoon kosher salt
1 1/2 cups frozen peas

1 garlic clove, finely minced
½ teaspoon Dijon mustard
3 tablespoons Sherry or Red Wine vinegar
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon fresh black pepper

15 fresh mint leaves, coarsely chopped
4 ounces Ricotta Salata cheese, crumbled into small chunks

1. Preheat oven to 375° F. Mix bread chunks with olive oil and salt. Spread out on a rimmed baking sheet and bake for 12-15 minutes, until golden brown.
2. Preheat gas grill. Trim the ends of the asparagus, don't snap them. Snapping the ends results in too much waste. Place your knife on the bottom of the spear; you can feel where the spear turns from firm to tender. Local asparagus will need very little trimming. **Set aside 3 spears to keep raw.** Rub the remaining spears with olive oil and sprinkle on salt.
3. Grill the oiled asparagus on medium heat, about 3-4 minutes a side until slightly charred and tender.
4. Using a sharp vegetable peeler, peel the 3 raw spears of asparagus into long ribbons. Set aside.

5. Bring a small pot of water to a boil. Cook frozen peas for about 45 seconds. Drain and set aside.
6. Make the vinaigrette. Place garlic, mustard, vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper into a small jar. Screw on lid and shake well.
7. In a large mixing bowl, toss together toasted bread, peas, shaved raw asparagus, most of the dressing, salt and pepper to taste.
8. Arrange grilled asparagus on a large platter. Mound pea mixture on top of asparagus. Scatter chopped mint and Ricotta Salata crumbles on top of the salad. Let salad sit for at least 20 minutes for bread to soak up the dressing. Drizzle with remaining dressing before serving, if desired.