

Salt and Serenity

Halloumi Panzanella Salad

Recipe adapted from thefeedfeed.com

It's pretty to get an assortment of tomatoes in various colours and sizes. I used 2 large heirloom tomatoes, 2 pints grape tomatoes and 1 pint tiny "tomberry" tomatoes.

Some brands of Halloumi cheese are very salty. Taste a tiny piece and if it's super salty, soak in cold water for about an hour before slicing.

Serves 4

Croutons:

400 grams (about half a large bread) sourdough or other artisan bread, a few days old is better, sliced 1-inch thick

66 grams (1/3 cup) extra-virgin olive oil

6 grams (2 teaspoons) Diamond Crystal Kosher salt

Salad:

1/4 red onion, thinly sliced, soaked in ice water for 30 minutes, drained and squeezed dry

600 grams cucumber (about 2 English cucumbers or 8 Israeli/Persian cucumbers cut into 1-inch chunks, (you will end up with about 4 cups chopped)

900 grams tomatoes, cut into 2-inch chunks or wedges, or halved if small

1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil (or basil oil, recipe below)

2 Tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

2 Tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon Diamond Crystal Kosher salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

340 grams halloumi cheese, cut into 1/2 inch thick slices

1 Tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

100 grams arugula (about 4 cups), washed and dried

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup loosely packed Italian parsley leaves, coarsely chopped

1/4 cup loosely packed basil leaves, coarsely chopped

1/3 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and halved

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Tear bread slices into rough 1-inch chunks. Place bread on large rimmed baking sheet and toss with olive oil and salt. Bake for about 10 minutes. Rotate the baking sheet and toss the croutons. Bake for a further 10-12 minutes until golden brown. They can still have a bit of chew to them. You don't want them completely dried out.

2. Place drained and squeezed red onion, cucumber and tomato in a large mixing bowl. Whisk together olive oil or basil oil, if you are using it, lemon juice, red wine vinegar, salt and pepper. Pour half the dressing over the vegetables. Stir to coat and set aside.
3. Cook the halloumi: Line a baking sheet with paper towels and lightly coat a non-stick pan with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Heat oil over medium heat. Working in batches, cook the halloumi slices on both sides until golden-brown. It will take about 1-2 minutes per side. Remove to the paper towel lined baking sheet to drain.
4. Just before serving, heap the arugula onto a large serving platter. Mix croutons into the bowl of dressed tomatoes, cucumbers and onion. Taste and add additional salt and pepper if needed. Spoon croutons and veggies over the arugula. Scatter herbs and olives over the top. Arrange halloumi slices on top of the salad. Serve with extra dressing on the side.

Basil Oil

1. Place ½ cup basil leaves, (loosely packed in measuring cup) and 1 cup extra virgin olive oil in a high-speed blender.
2. Blend on high for 10 to 30 seconds. Transfer to a small saucepan and bring to a simmer. Gently simmer the oil for 1 minute to set the color.
3. Pour the oil into a fine mesh strainer, set over a bowl and lined with cheesecloth. Allow to drain for 5 minutes. Transfer to glass jar and allow to cool. Once cooled, it can be stored the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks.