

Roasted Pepper Panzanella

Serves 4 : ~50 minutes : recipe by Joshua McFadden

Ingredients:

Croutons:

- 4 large, thick slices country loaf*
- 4 tblsp extra-virgin olive oil
- salt & freshly ground black pepper

Panzanella

- 4 large red or orange bell peppers
- ½ small red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 tblsp red wine vinegar
- ¼ tsp dried chile flakes
- salt & freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tblsp oregano
- 1 tblsp savory (or more oregano)
- ¼ cup lightly packed mint leaves
- extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 oz thinly sliced spicy salami (such as soppressata), roughly chopped
- torn croutons
- 4 oz fresh mozzarella, preferably buffalo, torn into pieces

Instructions:

Make the Croutons:

- Heat the oven to 400°F.

- Tear the bread, crust & all, into bite-size pieces.
- Toss the torn bread with the olive oil & a light sprinkling of salt & pepper.
- Spread the croutons on a baking sheet in a single layer & bake until golden brown, checking every 4 to 5 minutes & moving the outside croutons to the center of the pan so they cook evenly.
- **Don't let them get rock hard; leave a little bit of chew in the center.** The total baking time will depend on the type and density of bread you're using, but most likely will be 10 to 20 minutes.
- Slide onto paper towels to absorb any extra oil & season again lightly with salt & pepper.
- Store the croutons in an airtight container.

Make the Panzanella:

- Heat the broiler*.
- Arrange the whole peppers on a baking sheet & broil them, turning occasionally, until the skins are blackened in spots & blistered all over, 10 to 12 minutes.
- Transfer the peppers to a large bowl, cover with a kitchen towel, & let them sit for about 15 minutes to steam. This will allow the flesh to fully soften and the skins to be peeled off easily.
- When the peppers are cool enough to handle, peel & seed them. Then cut them into 1-inch-wide strips.
- Toss the peppers in a large bowl with the onion, garlic, vinegar, chile flakes, 1 tsp salt, several twists of black pepper, the oregano, the savory, & **half** the mint.
- Add ¼ cup olive oil, toss again, & set aside.
- Add the salami & croutons* to the large bowl and toss to mix.
- Let the salad rest for at least 15 minutes; you want the juices from the peppers to soak into the bread.
- Arrange the salad on a platter & distribute the mozzarella on top.
- Shower with the remaining mint.
- Serve at room temperature or slightly chilled.

recipe notes:

- I always make extra croutons for snacking on! Too good.
- If you have another favorite method for charring peppers (like on a grill or pizza oven) feel free to use it.
- I really like the croutons to stay a little crunchy, so if you expect to have any leftovers of this dish, try only mixing half of it together. Then you can save the rest for later & it won't be soggy.

recipe notes:

- I had never charred peppers before! It was nice to learn how to do that as well as steam them to help the skin come off easily.