

Menu Ideas

Fried Green Tomatoes

4 large green Florida tomatoes (may use firm pink tomatoes)
1/4 cup flour
1 tablespoon sugar
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
2 tablespoons bacon drippings or vegetable oil

Directions:

Cut green tomatoes into 1/2-inch thick slices; set aside. Combine flour, sugar, salt and black pepper. Lightly coat tomatoes on both sides with flour mixture. In a large skillet, heat drippings. Place tomatoes in skillet in a single layer. Fry until brown on both sides; remove to a hot platter and repeat with the remaining tomatoes, adding additional drippings, if needed.

YIELD: 6 portions





Tomatoes are the #1 vegetable associated with sandwiches on the menu.

Source: Food Beat™ Inc., for Produce for Better Health

Bruschetta with Tomatoes, Blue Cheese and Pecans

Bruschetta is Italian-style garlic bread, the perfect foundation for all sorts of wonderful toppings. This version uses a blend of cheeses and pecans, topped with fresh Florida tomatoes and basil. Serve as an appetizer, with soup, stew or pasta dishes. Be sure to use the best rustic country bread you can find!

6 ounces Blue cheese (Gorgonzola, Roquefort, etc.)
 6 ounces cream cheese, softened
 1 1/2 ounces (1/2-cup) coarsely chopped pecans
 12 slices crusty, firm-textured bread, cut about 3/4-inch thick
 2 cloves garlic, peeled and halved
 2 pounds (4 large) Florida tomatoes, sliced about 1/8-inch thick
 Freshly ground black pepper to taste
 Chopped fresh basil or dried basil as needed

Directions:

- In a small bowl, mash together blue cheese and cream cheese with a fork, leaving the mixture somewhat chunky. Mix in pecans. Set aside.
- Preheat broiler. Arrange bread on a baking sheet. Broil slices on each side just until golden, about 2 minutes.
- Rub one side of toasted slices with cut side of garlic.

To Make One Serving:

- Spread about 1 ounce of the cheese mixture on the garlic-rubbed side of 1 slice toasted bread. Arrange 2 or 3 overlapping tomato slices on top.
- Season bruschetta lightly with black pepper. Sprinkle basil on top.
 YIELD: 12 portions

Pan Bagnat with Fresh Tomatoes

Pan bagnat is a large, overstuffed sandwich from Provence, filled with tomatoes and other fresh vegetables, cheese, olives, and a vinaigrette dressing that seeps into and “bathes” the bread. In addition to or in place of the following, you may include canned tuna, watercress, finely chopped scallions and chopped hard-cooked eggs.

1 cup olive oil
 5 tablespoons red wine vinegar
 2-1/4 teaspoons Dijon mustard
 2 to 3 teaspoons minced garlic
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
 1 tablespoon (or 1 teaspoon dried) chopped fresh basil
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
 3 ounces (3/4 cup) red onion, minced
 3 loaves (1 pound each) French baguette or Italian bread*
 6 ounces pitted green or Italian olives, chopped to a paste
 ounces cucumber, peeled and thinly sliced
 18 ounces marinated artichoke hearts, drained and sliced
 6 ounces (1-1/2 cups) celery ribs, thinly sliced
 6 ounces green bell pepper, julienned
 2 pounds (2 and thinly sliced large) fully ripe fresh Florida tomatoes, cored
 1-1/2 pounds mozzarella or provolone cheese, sliced

Directions:

- In a bowl, combine olive oil, vinegar, mustard, garlic, parsley and basil. Whisk until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir in red onion.
- Split loaves lengthwise in half. With fingertips, remove soft crumbs from center of the top section, leaving a thick-crust shell. Spoon dressing over inside of shell. Spread with olive paste.

To Prepare Each Loaf

- On bottom half of each loaf, layer one-third of the cucumber, artichoke hearts, celery, bell pepper, tomatoes and mozzarella. Place bread top on the filling.
- Wrap the loaf in foil. Weight with tiles or a heavy skillet for up to 1/2 hour. Remove foil and slice loaf crosswise in quarters.
 YIELD: 12 portions
 * Individual hard rolls can be substituted for the loaves of bread.



US restaurants have experienced a 9% increase in sandwich orders over the last 14 years.

Source: NPD for Produce for Better Health



"The entrée salad section is one of the busiest on our menu."

Robert Okura, CEC
VP of Culinary Development &
Corporate Executive Chef
The Cheesecake Factory

- Sells over 13,000 salads each month
- Over 10 million salads per year

Source: Plate, The Soup & Salad Issue

Crostini Topped with BLT Salad

In this recipe, a popular combo is served salad style on top of crisp crostini. Turn this into an entrée salad by adding chunks of smoked cheese and chicken.

- 1-1/2 (1 pound each) baguettes
- 3 pounds (6 large) fully ripened fresh Florida tomatoes, cored and sliced into thin wedges
- 18 ounces Romaine lettuce, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 2 tablespoons (or 1 teaspoon dried) chopped fresh basil
- 1 pound bacon, coarsely chopped
- 7 ounces onion, chopped
- 9 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 6 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 400°F. Slice bread on the diagonal into 36 slices 1/2 inch thick. Arrange on a baking sheet. Toast in the oven until golden brown, 10 to 15 minutes.
- In a bowl, combine tomatoes, romaine lettuce and chopped basil. Set aside.
- In a sauté pan, over medium heat, cook bacon until crisp. Drain and reserve fat (about 1/2 cup). Drain bacon on a plate lined with a paper towel. Return bacon fat to pan and sauté onions until translucent.
- Remove pan from heat and stir in the vinegar, sugar and Dijon mustard. Add olive oil, stirring until well blended (makes about 1-1/2 cups dressing). Season to taste with salt and black pepper.
- Pour dressing over tomato mixture and toss well.

To Plate One Portion

- Arrange 3 toasted crostini on a plate, ends touching in the center. Arrange about 6 ounces of the dressed salad in the center. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon bacon bits on top. Serve at once.
- YIELD: 12 portions

Tomatoes are second—only to leafy greens—as the “most mentioned” vegetable among salad menu items. Source: Food Beat™ Inc., for Produce for Better Health

Capellini Alla Puttanesca

Long, thin angel-hair pasta has a wonderful way of absorbing this robust fresh tomato sauce.

9 pounds (18 large) cored, halved and seeded fully ripened fresh Florida tomatoes
1/2 cup, divided olive oil
1-1/2 ounces (4 teaspoons) garlic cloves, minced
2 ounces (12) anchovy fillets, mashed
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
4 ounces (6 tablespoons) tomato paste
1-1/2 cups red wine
1-1/2 ounces (3 tablespoons) brined-packed capers, drained
1 pound pitted Greek olives, coarsely chopped
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
3 pounds linguini pasta

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 450°F. Place tomatoes cut side down on sheet pan. Drizzle with 1/4 cup of the olive oil. Cook tomatoes until skins are lightly charred, about 25 minutes.
(Alternatively, char tomatoes under the broiler.)
- Drain off excess liquid. Put tomatoes in a food processor container, and pulse until they reach the desired consistency (chunky to smooth).
- In a saucepan that will hold all sauce ingredients, heat the remaining 1/4 cup oil over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté until aromatic. Stir in anchovy paste, red pepper flakes and tomato paste. Add red wine and simmer, stirring often, until the wine has reduced by one half.
- Stir in roasted tomato puree and 1 teaspoon ground black pepper. Simmer until thickened, about 30 minutes. Add capers and olives, and continue to simmer 15 minutes longer to blend flavors. Adjust seasoning as needed with salt and black pepper.
- Meanwhile, cook the pasta in abundant salted boiling water until al dente. Toss with sauce.
YIELD: 12 large portions



Tomato “Flowers” with Chicken Caesar Stuffing

Tomatoes team up with chicken breast, giving a fresh look to what arguably America’s favorite salad—the Caesar.

6 pounds (12 large) fully ripened fresh Florida tomatoes, cored
1 1/2 cups, divided Caesar-flavored croutons
2 cups creamy Caesar salad dressing
3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 pounds grilled chicken breast, cut in 1/2 inch strips
2 pounds celery ribs, sliced thin
6 ounces (24 whole) scallions, sliced thin
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1-1/2 pounds (9 cups) Romaine lettuce leaves torn in bite-size pieces
3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Directions:

- Place cored tomato, stem end down, on a cutting board. Create tomato “flower” by cutting into wedges but stopping about 1/2 inch short of the stem end.
- Coarsely crumble 3/4 cup of the croutons; set aside whole and crumbled croutons. In a small bowl, combine Caesar dressing and balsamic vinegar; set aside.
- In a large bowl, combine chicken, celery, scallions and half of the reserved Caesar dressing mixture; toss to coat. Season to taste with salt and black pepper, if desired.

To Plate One Portion:

- On a plate, place 3/4 cup lettuce; top with a tomato flower. Sprinkle tomato with 1 tablespoon of the crumbled croutons. Drizzle with about 2 teaspoons of the remaining salad dressing.
- Spoon chicken mixture in center of the tomato flower. Sprinkle with 3/4 teaspoon Parmesan cheese and 1 heaping tablespoon croutons.
YIELD: 12 portions



“The entrée salad is one of those unique menu items — generally a lower-priced meal for the customer, yet a higher profit item for the restaurant.”

Michael Dudley
Chef-Instructor, Arizona Culinary Institute

Source: Plate, The Soup & Salad Issue