LAMORINDA WEEKLY



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# Tomato Time

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Haitloon Tomatos at the Moraga Farmers Market, Swank Farms Produce, Hollister Photo Andy Scheck

This Mediterranean salad usually consists of crusty Tuscan bread and tomatoes in addition to fresh garden vegetables. Veggies can include bell peppers of any color, cucumbers, and onions. Garlic, capers, black olives, and anchovies are added to the salad for extra punch. Use good quality olive oil and white or red wine vinegar. Panzanella originated in Italy and was a good way for Italian cooks to make a meal out of stale bread and homegrown vegetables. It is also one of many examples of how red, white and green foods are used together in Italian cuisine to represent the nation's flag. The written records of panzanella go back centuries, according to www.hungrymonster.com. In the 1500s, a poem by the famous artist Bronzino described the salad. At that time, the tomato was quite a few years from being introduced into the Italian kitchen, so the ingredients were limited to cucumber, onion, basil, arugula, and bread. Just like yesteryear, practically every modern family has some amount of stale bread lying around the house, but we like to use fresh Ciabatta, slightly toasted to give the salad the freshest taste possible. We also have added feta cheese - a flavor that maintains the Mediterranean flair, but adds a little more substance to the meal. For more information on panzanella salad go to: http://www.hungrymonster.com/FoodFacts/Food_Facts.cfm?Phrase_vch=Salads&fid=7043 and http://www.divinacucina.com/code/panzanella.html Panzanella Salad (serves four as an entrée or six as a side dish) Salad Fixin's 6 one-inch slices of Ciabatta or crusty Italian bread, cut into one-inch cubes 1 head romaine lettuce, (or mesclun) ? bunch basil (red leafy basil is especially pretty in

this salad, but traditional green works) *3 large tomatoes, (any combination of red, orange and yellow) 1 red bell pepper ? cucumber, peeled and sliced into ?-inch thick slices, then quartered ? cup feta cheese, crumbled ? cup antipasto olives, Kalamata or spiced Italian olives, drained 1 Tablespoon capers, drained (optional) * Use only the freshest, ripest tomatoes for this salad! Dressing 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil 5 Tablespoons red wine vinegar 1 clove garlic, minced (use more if you love garlic) ? teaspoon anchovy paste ? teaspoon Kosher or sea salt ? teaspoon (more if you like) freshly ground pepper 1 Tablespoon juice from tomatoes used in salad Mix well and store in a jar until ready to use. To Assemble Salad Place bread squares in toaster oven at low temperature for about 30 minutes, or until crusty. Remove and cool to room temperature. Place bread in bottom of large salad bowl and layer the rest of the ingredients on top, beginning with lettuce, followed by cucumber, bell pepper, basil, feta, olives and capers. Pour dressing over top and let drain down to bread. Gently toss and serve. *Can simply use stale bread, cut into cubes with or without first toasting.

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