

Panzanella Bread Salad

Use a firm bread and make sure it's at least one or two days old – if the bread is too fresh, it will disintegrate as soon as the liquids are added. This makes a great barbecue salad to serve with a juicy beef steak.

SERVES 6–8

1 red (bell) pepper
1 yellow (bell) pepper
8 tomatoes
½–¾ red onion
1 spring onion (scallion)
300–400g (11–14oz) day-old crusty country bread (e.g. Pain au Levain, page 58)
4 tbsp white wine vinegar
1 cucumber
60–125ml (¼–½ cup) extra virgin olive oil
2 small cloves garlic, crushed
bunch of fresh basil, torn into small pieces

Blacken (bell) peppers over a gas hob (stove) or using a kitchen blowtorch, then put in a plastic bag and leave to sweat for 20 minutes.

Cut tomatoes into large chunks. Slice red onion and chop spring onion (scallion) into 1cm (½in) pieces. Place tomatoes and onions in a bowl, season with a few good pinches of salt and set aside to macerate.

Cut bread into chunks of similar size to the tomatoes. Put in a large mixing bowl, add vinegar and toss together. Set aside.

Scrape as much black skin off the peppers as you can, remove the seeds and core, and cut peppers into long strips. Cut cucumber into large chunks of a similar size to the tomatoes and bread.

Whisk olive oil and crushed garlic together, and season with salt and pepper.

Place all the prepared vegetables in the bowl with the bread. Pour the olive oil mixture over, add basil, toss all the ingredients together and let marinate, covered, for at least 30 minutes and up to 1 hour.

Serve at room temperature.