



Here's a great little bite for an afternoon snack or appetizer. It's fresh, juicy, crunchy, and light -- even with the bread! Servings depend on the length of the baguette and how thinly you slice it, but you could easily get a dozen bites from a pint of tomatoes and a medium sized piece of bread.

Garden Bruschetta

Three ingredients for my Garden Bruschetta grow on The Farm. The Farm is my suburban backyard plot that consists of three raised beds filled with herbs and veggies. In the greater scheme of things, it's a small space; however, I take big delight in harvesting food for our homemade meals. For the Garden Bruschetta, the tomatoes, basil and oregano all grow just outside my window. It's a little early in season, right now, for tomatoes, but that's okay. Buy good ones at the store. And here at home, by mid-summer, we'll be looking for a dozen different ways to use our crop. I offer one great suggestion!

Ingredients

- 1 pint cherry or grape tomatoes
- 4 scallions, white and green parts
- 2 small cloves of garlic, minced
- 6-8 large fresh basil leaves
- 10-12 fresh oregano leaves
- 1 large ball fresh mozzarella (optional)
- Salt and pepper
- Extra virgin olive oil – the everyday kind
- Extra virgin olive oil – a high quality, finishing oil
- 1 long baguette

Have a large bowl handy.

Cut the tomatoes in half long-ways, then cut them in half again long-ways. You want chunks of tomato that still look like tomato but won't be super big. Aim for the size that you often see in salsa. The tomatoes go into the bowl.

Thinly slice the scallions, and mince the garlic. Roll the basil and oregano into a tube shape and “chiffonade” or cut into thin ribbons. Then cut the herbs in half again, down the middle, so that the ribbons aren’t too long. All of this goes into the bowl too.

If you’re using mozzarella, cut it into small cubes, about the same size as your tomatoes. Add to the bowl.

Add salt and pepper to taste. Mix everything together well, and refrigerate.

I purposely have not added the high quality olive oil yet. The reason is that the salt you just added to the mixture will cause the tomatoes to lose some juice. Let the tomato mixture chill for an hour, then pour off any excess liquid, and THEN add the olive oil. Now is when you use the really good quality olive oil, about ¼ to ½ cup. You need to eyeball it, because you want the mixture to be loose, but not soupy. The tomatoes should glisten with olive oil, not swim in it. Start with a smaller amount of oil, and add if you need to. Mix well so that all ingredients are coated and evenly distributed. Taste for seasoning. Add salt and/or pepper if needed.

Slice the baguette into rounds about ½ inch thick (maybe a little less). Lightly brush one side of the bread with your everyday olive oil. On indirect heat, grill the bread rounds, oil side down for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Pay attention to your grill heat. I like the bread to be toasted on one side but still a little soft on the other so that it is easy to bite into. You can grill to the texture you prefer.

Top with a spoonful or two of the tomato mixture and enjoy!

NOTE: The “salsa” will last for 24-36 hours; however, it is best when served immediately. If you are going to serve it later, wait until just before your meal or event to add the good olive oil. Leftovers will work okay once within 24 hours. Drain off any accumulated liquid and add fresh good-quality olive oil, if needed. Refresh with fresh herbs too. After a day, I think the tomatoes lose too much texture to still be eye and palate appealing, but that’s a personal preference.

BONUS: This is a great vegetarian appetizer. The tomato mixture also is delicious on fish or grilled skirt steak.

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