

Bread Salad with Corn, Cherry Tomatoes & Basil

By Tasha DeSerio Fine Cooking Issue 52



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Servings: four to six.

Stale bread is traditional for bread salad, but here I use fresh bread that's toasted in a hot oven. The outside gets crisp; the inside stays slightly chewy. Juicy tomatoes are key; if you can't find cherry ones, use beefsteak tomatoes. Grape tomatoes aren't juicy enough for this salad. If your corn is exceptionally sweet and tender, you can skip the blanching step.

Ingredients

1 shallot, lobes separated and cut lengthwise into very thin slices

1 small clove garlic

Kosher salt to taste

2 Tbs. red-wine vinegar; more to taste

1/2 cup packed fresh basil leaves

1/2 loaf (8 oz.) rustic French or Italian peasant bread (choose a firm, chewy loaf, not an airy one), crusts trimmed and bread cut or torn into rough 1/2- to 3/4-inch cubes

1/2 cup plus 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

3 cups corn kernels (from 4 to 6 ears) (see [How to get fresh corn kernels off the cob](#))

12 oz. juicy cherry tomatoes, cut in half and lightly salted, or 2 small beefsteak tomatoes, cut into large dice and salted

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Preparation

Heat the oven to 400°F. Put the shallot slices in a small bowl filled with ice water. Using a mortar and pestle or the flat side of a chef's knife, mash the garlic to a paste with a pinch of salt. Put the paste in a small bowl (or keep it in the mortar, if using) and whisk in the vinegar. Bruise two of the basil leaves with the back of a knife to release some of their flavor. Add the leaves to the garlic.

Put the bread cubes on a baking sheet and toss with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Bake until the cubes are crisp and light golden brown outside but still soft inside, about 10 min. Set aside to cool.

Bring a small pot of water to a boil. Add the corn kernels and blanch for 1 min. Drain and set aside.

Remove the two basil leaves from the garlic mixture and discard. Whisk the remaining 1/2 cup olive oil into the vinegar mixture. Drain the shallots. Put the corn kernels, shallots, and tomatoes in a large bowl. Season to taste with salt. Add the bread and toss with the vinaigrette. Taste again and season with salt and pepper. Let sit for at least 15 min. but no longer than 30 min. to let the bread absorb the juices. Taste again and, if needed, season with more salt, pepper, and vinegar. Just before serving, roughly chop the remaining basil and toss it with the salad.

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