



Tasty Tomato Panzanella Salad

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 25 / **Cook Time** 5 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

slice: to cut into thin pieces using a sawing motion with your knife.

knife skills: Bear Claw (growl), Pinch, Plank, and Bridge (look out for trolls) and Rock and Saw.

tear: to pull or rip apart a food, like basil leaves, into pieces instead of cutting with a knife; cutting breaks cell walls more, so herbs can discolor faster.

toast: to brown and crisp food in a heated skillet or oven, or in a toaster.

toss: to lightly lift and drop food items together or coat food items with flour, or a sauce or dressing, as in a salad.

whisk: to beat or stir ingredients vigorously with a fork or whisk to mix, blend, or incorporate air.

Equipment

- Large skillet
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife
- Dry measuring cups
- Colander
- Medium bowl
- Measuring spoons
- Wooden spoon
- Large bowl

Whisk

Ingredients

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Bread croutons:

3 C torn crusty baguette bread, about 1/2 large baguette ******(for CELIAC/GLUTEN ALLERGY sub 3 C torn gluten-free/nut-free white bread)******

2 T olive oil

1 pinch salt

1 pinch ground black pepper

2 garlic cloves

Salad:

2 C cherry tomatoes ******(for NIGHTSHADE/TOMATO ALLERGY sub 2 C chopped beets)******

1 tsp salt

2 T red wine vinegar

2 T olive oil

1/2 tsp sugar, honey, or agave nectar

salt and ground black pepper, to taste

2 sprigs fresh basil leaves

fresh mozzarella cheese, optional ******(Omit for DAIRY ALLERGY or sub dairy-free/nut-free mozzarella shreds, like Daiya brand)******

Food Allergen Substitutions

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Celiac/Gluten/Wheat: For 3 C torn crusty baguette bread (about 1/2 large baguette), substitute 3 C torn gluten-free/nut-free white bread.

Nightshade/Tomato: For 2 C cherry tomatoes, substitute 2 C chopped beets.

Dairy: Omit optional mozzarella cheese or substitute dairy-free/nut-free mozzarella shreds, like Daiya brand.

Instructions

Tasty Tomato Panzanella Salad

intro

"Benvenuto" or "Welcome" in Italian! We're making "panzanella" (PAHN-tzah-nehl-lah) or bread salad! We will tear basil leaves today instead of cutting them with a knife. Cutting breaks cell walls more, so herbs can discolor faster. If you want to try an experiment, rip some herbs and cut some herbs with a knife, wait a bit, then see, smell, and taste if there's a difference!

slice + toss + drain

Slice **2 cups of cherry tomatoes** in halves or quarters and place them in a colander set over a bowl. Season with **1 teaspoon of salt** and toss to coat the tomatoes in the salt. This will get some of the juices out of the tomatoes and intensify the tomato flavor. Set the colander aside at room temperature to drain, tossing occasionally, while you prepare the bread.

tear + drizzle + add

Have kids tear about 1/2 large baguette to yield **3 cups of crusty baguette bread** pieces and place the torn bread cubes in a large skillet on your stovetop. Drizzle bread cubes with **2 tablespoons of olive oil** and season with **1 pinch of salt** and **1 pinch of black pepper** to taste. Lightly toss the bread cubes to coat.

add + toast + cool

Add **2 peeled garlic cloves** to the skillet (you will take them out before serving the salad). Toast the bread in your skillet on medium heat for 2 to 5 minutes, stirring constantly, until croutons are golden brown and crunchy. Remove and discard the garlic cloves, take the toasted bread croutons from the skillet, and set them aside to cool.

mix + measure

Time to make the dressing! Mix and measure **2 tablespoons red wine vinegar**, **2 tablespoons olive oil**, and **1/2 teaspoon sugar or honey** into the bottom of a large bowl and let kids whisk.

stir + tear

Have kids add the tomatoes to the bowl with the dressing and stir to combine. Allow the mixture to sit for at least 10 minutes. Have kids tear **2 sprigs of basil leaves** into little pieces directly into the bowl.

top + toss

Top the salad with the cooled and toasted bread. If using the optional mozzarella, have kids chop up the cheese and add to the salad. Toss and taste to adjust flavors if necessary. For an extra taste of basil, try drizzling our **Best Basil Emulsion** over your salad. "Buon appetito" or "Enjoy" in Italian!

Featured Ingredient: Tomato!

Hi! I'm Tomato!

"I'm a beautiful, juicy red Tomato. Do you pronounce my name: "tuh-may-tow" or "tuh-mah-tow?" Either way you slice it (or say it), we tomatoes are wonderfully adaptable. You'll find us fresh or cooked on sandwiches, in salads, tacos, soups, stews, sauces, and much more."

History & Etymology

The tomatoes we have now descended from the pea-size fruit of wild plants that grew in western South America. Mesoamericans were the first to domesticate the tomato plant sometime before 500 BCE. Hernán Cortés, a Spanish conquistador, may have brought tomatoes back to Europe in the 16th century after conquering the Aztec city, Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City).

Tomatoes cultivated in North American colonies in the early 1700s may have been introduced from the Caribbean. Thomas Jefferson also brought tomato seeds back from France. Before tomatoes were used in cooking, the plants were used ornamentally due to some people's beliefs that they were poisonous. One reason for this error was that tomatoes come from the nightshade family, including the belladonna plant (or deadly nightshade), which has highly toxic leaves and berries. Another reason may be that the pewter plates they used back then adversely reacted to the acid in tomato juice.

China is by far the largest producer of tomatoes in the world. In the United States, California and Florida produce the most tomatoes.

The American and British pronunciations of "tomato" were made famous by an Ira and George Gershwin song from 1937 called "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off." Americans pronounce the word "tuh-may-tow," and the British say "tuh-mah-tow."

The word "tomato" comes from the Spanish, French, or Portuguese "tomate," from the Nahuatl "tomatl."

Anatomy

The tomato is a berry from the tomato plant (*Solanum Lycopersicum*), a perennial vine. It is part of the Solanaceae family, like the potato, pepper, eggplant, and petunia. Since it is a berry, it is a fruit, although mainly used as a vegetable.

A tomato's color is usually red but can also be yellow, orange, green, or purple. Tomatoes can be spherical, oval, or pear-shaped. Their flesh is pulpy with cavities, called locules, that hold the seeds.

There are more than 10,000 tomato varieties. Some are hybrids, and some are heirlooms. An heirloom tomato is a variety that has been grown for generations on a family farm rather than commercially.

Unfortunately, in the past 40 years, many heirloom varieties have been lost, along with the smaller family farms that grew them. However, hundreds of heirloom tomato varieties are still available.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

If you are growing your own tomatoes, pick them from the vine while still firm, with a slight give, and before their ripe color (usually red) deepens too much. While holding the fruit, twist it off the stem until it snaps off. The leaf on top of the tomato (the calyx) and part of the stem will come with it. You can also snip it off using garden scissors.

When you choose tomatoes at the store, pick fruit that has smooth, brightly colored skin with no cracks or bruises, is firm but gives with slight pressure, is heavy for its size, and has a pleasant, aromatic smell.

Avoid tomatoes with pale or dark spots.

Store tomatoes at room temperature, as their flavor will decrease in a refrigerator's cold temperature. Wait to wash them until you are ready to use them.

If you plan to make a tomato sauce or soup using fresh, raw tomatoes, you will want to peel them first. This can be difficult without some preparation: First, put a pot of water on the stove to boil and fill a large bowl with cold or icy water. Next, after washing the tomatoes, use your knife to cut a shallow 'X' through the skin at the top or bottom of each one. Then use a slotted spoon to place the tomatoes into the boiling water until the skin begins to loosen and peel back at the incision, about 30 to 60 seconds. Finally, immediately dunk them into the ice water. The skin should peel easily now. You can also remove the seeds by cutting the peeled tomatoes in half and scooping the seeds out with a spoon.

Tomatoes are versatile vegetables for cooking. Ripe tomatoes can be prepared fresh, stuffed, baked, boiled, or stewed, and they are the base for many sauces. You can also pickle green, unripe tomatoes, add them to salsa or bread and fry them.

Nutrition

Tomatoes are a moderate source of vitamin C, and cooked tomatoes are high in lycopene, an antioxidant, which may help protect your body's cells from damage, strengthen your immune system, and prevent some diseases.