



September 14, 1999

This is the best time of year for making Tuscan Bread Salad, the season of heirloom tomatoes and fresh basil. For this recipe, I use Levain bread from the Acme Bread Co. and I've added sauteed chicken breast to make this an easy and delicious supper dish. Try it. You'll like it!

Tante Marie's Panzanella with Chicken (Tuscan Bread Salad)

Ingredients

2 boneless, skinless half chicken breasts (1 lb.)
 olive oil
 coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper
 1 lb. crusty country bread, cut into 1 inch cubes
 2 to 3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
 1/2 cup olive oil
 3 large red tomatoes
 1 large red onion, chopped
 1/2 cup black olives, pitted
 1 bunch whole basil leaves, torn in 1/2-inch pieces
 2 Tbs. Balsamic vinegar
 2 Tbs. red wine vinegar
 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

Instructions

Lay the chicken breasts on a flat ceramic plate, coat each side with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Keep at room temperature until ready to cook.

In a large bowl, place the garlic and the olive oil. Toss in the bread all at once and stir rapidly to coat evenly. Place the bread on a baking sheet in a 350 degree oven and bake until golden.

Return the croutons to the bowl, add the onions, olives, and basil. Hold each tomato over the bread and cut into 1 - inch pieces with a small sharp knife, so that the juices fall into the salad.

Heat a medium-sized non-stick frying pan over medium high heat. Add the chicken breasts, cover with a pot top or weight, slightly smaller than the frying pan, and cook until the edges of the breasts turn white. Turn the chicken breasts over with tongs and cook on the other side, until the chicken is firm to the touch. Remove to a clean plate and let rest. Add 1/2 cup cold water to the frying pan to dissolve any chicken juices and pour these over the bread salad.

Add the vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper to the salad. Cut the chicken into strips 1/2 inch by 1 inch and add to the salad. Toss the whole thing with your hands. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

Serves 4.

© Mary S. Risley