

BRUSCHETTA

I never paid too much attention to Bruschetta until I was having dinner with another pilot at an Italian restaurant in Dublin, Ireland of all places. He ordered Bruschetta as an appetizer to share, and it was truly amazing! Of course, I then had to spend several months trying to replicate the recipe and improve on it if possible. Here is what I found: 1) The more garlic the better. 2) Homegrown tomato's, if available, are the best, otherwise store bought Roma tomato's will do. 3) The bread is surprisingly important. If possible, use a chewy Artisan bread or Italian bread instead of a slice of French bread. 4) Add whatever toppings you want, like fresh mozzarella, prosciutto, etc.

INGREDIENTS:

8-12 Slices (1 oz. each) Artisan/Italian/French bread
4 Tablespoons Olive Oil, divided (2 Tablespoons for the tomato mix, and 2 Tablespoons to brush onto the bread)
3 Tomato's, about the size of tennis balls, cut into ½ inch chunks (about 1 ½ Cups)
2 teaspoons Minced Garlic (about 4 large cloves)
4-6 large Basil Leaves, finely chopped, about 1 ½ Tablespoons. (If you don't have fresh, ¾ teaspoons dried Basil will do)
½ teaspoon Salt
¼ teaspoon Black Pepper, freshly ground
More Salt and Pepper to taste when serving

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees*

Slice the tomato's into ½ inch pieces, about the size of your thumbnail, and place in a bowl. Finely chop Basil leaves and add to the bowl along with the minced garlic**. Drizzle 1 Tablespoon of olive oil on top, then add *at least* ¼ teaspoon salt and freshly ground black pepper. Taste it, then add more if you wish. Stir well and set aside.

Your oven should be pre-heated by now, so brush the bread with the remaining 1 Tablespoon of Olive Oil and place on a cookie sheet. Bake for 3-7 minutes (depending on your oven/rack height/moisture content of the bread) until it begins to brown, then remove from oven.

Stir tomato mixture and spoon evenly over the bread and serve...preferably with Red Wine.

* If you want to save some energy and time, you can simply put the bread in the toaster. If so, do NOT brush with oil!

** If you like the mellower taste of roasted garlic better (like Deeann does) put 1 Tablespoon of the Olive Oil and 1 ½ teaspoons garlic in a pan and sauté over low heat (just bubbling) 7-10 minutes or until straw colored. Be very careful not to overcook it or it will be bitter! Mix this with the tomatoes and basil along with the remaining ½ teaspoon raw minced garlic.