

Rustic Italian Bread Salad

Fruitful | July/August 2005



This make-ahead bread salad combines what's in season with dressing-infused croutons.

- 1 LOAF ITALIAN BREAD, CUT INTO 1-INCH CUBES
- 1/3 CUP OLIVE OIL
- 1/2 CUP WHITE WINE VINEGAR
- 8 CLOVES GARLIC, MINCED
- 2 TSP. DIJON-STYLE MUSTARD
- 2 TSP. ANCHOVY PASTE
- 2 TSP. SEA SALT
- 1 TSP. FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER
- 1 CUP OLIVE OIL
- 1 ENGLISH CUCUMBER, PEELED AND CUBED
- 2 LARGE TOMATOES, COARSELY CHOPPED
- 1/2 OF A RED ONION, THINLY SLICED (1 CUP)
- 1/2 OF A VIDALIA ONION, THINLY SLICED (1 CUP)
- 2 MEDIUM RED AND/OR YELLOW SWEET PEPPERS, SEEDED AND CUT INTO 1-INCH PIECES
- 3/4 CUP CHERRY TOMATOES, HALVED
- 1/4 CUP SNIPPED FRESH BASIL
- 1/4 CUP SNIPPED FRESH ITALIAN PARSLEY

In a large bowl toss together bread and 1/3 cup oil until all oil is absorbed. Spread bread in a shallow baking pan. Bake in a 425° oven 8 to 10 minutes or until golden brown, stirring once.

In a medium bowl, combine white wine vinegar, garlic, mustard, anchovy paste, sea salt, and black pepper. Slowly whisk in 1 cup olive oil in a steady stream until incorporated.

In a very large bowl combine cucumber, chopped tomatoes, red onion, Vidalia onion, sweet peppers, cherry tomatoes, basil, and parsley. Add toasted bread cubes and dressing; toss. Season to taste. Cover; chill 1 to 3 hours before serving. Makes 10 to 12 servings.

***TO MAKE AHEAD:** The day before, prepare the bread cubes, dressing, and vegetables; keep separate. Combine up to 3 hours before serving.