

Squashed Cherry Tomato and Smashed Olive Bruschetta

What you are just about to do makes complete sense in cooking. Tomatoes need salt, olives are preserved in salt, you've squeezed the juice out of the tomatoes, which in return draws the salt and the smoky flavour out of the olives. This makes the olives very edible and the tomatoes damn tasty. Rip in as much basil as you can afford and even a handful of rocket (arugula) if you have some. Lovely. P.S. If you have any leftovers then toss them in with some hot spaghetti.

*2 handfuls cherry tomatoes
1 handful black olives
4 to 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon dried oregano
A drizzle herb vinegar
1 dried chile
A handful fresh basil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/2 ciabatta or other rustic bread, cut into thick slices
1/2 clove garlic
4 bocconcini
Parmesan, for shaving*

This is probably the quickest salad or bruschetta I make, but no less tasty for that. Very few ingredients, simple flavours, complete sense. Try to make use of the wider range of cherry tomatoes available now: yellow, tige, and plum cherry tomatoes for instance. And, as I always say, it's much better, taste-wise, to buy olives with their stones still in than without. Trust me.

Simply squash your tomatoes into a bowl. I always have to put one hand over the tomatoes as I do this as juice and pips go everywhere (generally on me). You can be as rough with the tomatoes as you like, as the salad looks much better rough and rustic than perfect and pretty. Then, gently smash the olives on a board with a hard object, like a cup or a rolling-pin. Remove the stones, throw the olives in with the tomatoes, and toss together. Add a few glugs of oil, the oregano, a drizzle of vinegar, crumbled chile, and rip in the basil. Season, to taste, and that's your salad.

Griddle or toast the slices of bread and rub with the garlic clove, pile on the tomatoes, and rip the mozzarella and lay over the top drizzle with a little bit more oil and finish with shaves of Parmesan.

Yield: about 6 to 8 servings

Prep Time: 5 minutes