

Classic Italian Tomato Bruschetta

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Ingredients:

Baguette

- 1 Baguette, cut into 1/2" thick slices
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 whole clove garlic, cut in half

Tomato Mixture

- 3 – 4 vine ripened, bright red tomatoes
- 1 – 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar (*optional*)
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper (*optional*)
- 8 – 10 fresh basil leaves, chiffonade
- 2 tablespoons olive oil



Directions:

To prepare the baguette, you can place the sliced bread on a broiler pan and lightly char the bread on each side under a hot broiler. Watch carefully not to burn the bread. I prefer to grill the bread on top of the stove. When lightly browned on both sides, rub each toasted slice with the cut end of a clove of raw garlic and drizzle or brush lightly with olive oil. Don't skip the step of rubbing the fresh garlic on the grilled bread. It is so delicious and makes a big difference in creating the perfect bite.

The quality of this recipe completely depends on the quality of the tomatoes. Get the ripest, juiciest tomatoes you can find. If you cannot get tomatoes from a garden or farmers' market, another option would be to use canned San Marzano Tomatoes from Italy.

Basil is one of those herbs I always have on hand. During the spring, summer and fall, I have it in my garden. During the summer when the plants are full, I chiffonade the leaves and freeze them in ice cube trays in chicken stock, olive oil and water. If you don't grow basil, when you go to the grocery store you can find it in small plastic bags in the produce department, but if you look around, grocery stores also sell small, fresh basil plants which is close to the same price as the bag but bigger and lasts longer. To chiffonade the basil, stack the basil leaves in a neat pile so they are curling upward. This makes them easier to roll. Roll the basil leaves tightly like a cigar. Using a sharp knife, slice the leaves into thin, evenly sized strips.

Prepare the tomato mixture at least one hour ahead of time so that all of the delicious flavors marry and blend nicely. Chop the tomatoes, drain lightly and place into a bowl. Add minced garlic, olive oil, salt and pepper. Drizzle with red wine vinegar (*optional*). Some people add balsamic vinegar to their bruschetta, however red wine vinegar is traditional and I prefer it because it doesn't overpower the tomatoes. Sprinkle with freshly chiffonade basil and toss lightly.

To serve, give the tomato mixture a final stir and then spoon generously over the slices of bread toasts or set it out in a bowl surrounded by bread toasts. Enjoy!