



Pane Cunziato (*Bruschetta*) ai Tre Sapori

Bruschetta with Three Different Toppings

THE BEST WAY to enjoy this piece of bread is as simple as this: choose an appropriate bread, grill it at just the moment you are ready to enjoy it, leave the inside soft and the outside not too hard. Good olive oil is a must; after that, it's whatever your heart tells you. Here are some ideas: chicken liver, grilled beef, cauliflower, broccoli, kale (I recommend Lacinato), roasted beets with goat cheese, chickpeas with olive paste, beans with grape tomato and a hint of truffle oil, meat of any kind (especially if it has been braised and then pulled, or grilled and thinly sliced), escarole, lentils, eggplant, peppers, zucchini, and any kind of seafood from grilled to braised.

I made this recipe easy to put together, without the hassle of cooking your own legumes or making your own olive purée. Organic canned chickpeas work great, just drain and rinse them. For the mushrooms, porcinis, chanterelles, or morels are my favored choices, but, of course, you can just see what the market has to offer for the money you have in your pocket.

SERVES 4 TO 6

BROCCOLI RABE TOPPING

1 lb broccoli rabe

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

3 garlic cloves, crushed

¼ tsp hot pepper flakes, as needed

Salt and freshly ground black pepper, as needed

¼ cup dry red wine

MUSHROOM-ASPARAGUS TOPPING

1 shallot, minced

2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

2 tsp chopped parsley

1½ cups sliced mushrooms

¼ cup white wine

1 lb white or green asparagus, peeled and blanched

2 hard boiled eggs, chopped

1 tsp chopped tarragon

1 tbsp lemon juice

CHICKPEA TOPPING

1½ cups chickpeas, cooked, unsalted, drained

1 tbsp prepared black olive purée (tapenade)

Salt and freshly ground black pepper, as needed

12 bread slices, preferably unsalted ciabatta

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 garlic clove, halved

GARNISHES

Extra-virgin olive oil, as needed for topping bruschetta

¼ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (for broccoli rabe topping)

3 oz fresh goat cheese, crumbled (for chickpea topping)

1. *For the broccoli rabe topping:* Rinse the broccoli rabe well, remove the hard stems, and cut into pieces small enough to fit on top of the bread slices. Heat the olive oil with the garlic and hot pepper flakes in a skillet over medium heat. Once the garlic starts getting a little bit of color, about 2 minutes, add the broccoli rabe, season with salt and pepper, and toss to coat evenly with the oil. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the wine and finish cooking until soft, about 5 to 6 minutes more.

2. *For the chickpea topping:* Drain the chickpeas well and rinse in cool water if using canned beans. Toss them with the olive purée, salt, and pepper, and set aside. Garnish with goat cheese just before serving.

3. *For the mushroom-asparagus topping:* Preheat a grill to medium-high or the oven to 450°F. Heat the shallot with half of the oil in a sauté pan over high heat for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the parsley and mushrooms and cook for 1 minute. Add the wine and finish cooking the mushrooms until they are tender and flavorful, about 5 minutes. Place in a bowl and set aside.

4. Blanch the asparagus spears in a large pot of boiling salted water. Cut off the hard stems

and then grill or roast them in the oven for 2 to 3 minutes until they are lightly browned. Slice them on a diagonal about ½ inch long and toss them with the mushrooms. Mix in half of the hard boiled eggs, the tarragon, lemon juice, and the rest of the oil. (Reserve the rest of the eggs to top the bruschetta just before serving.)

5. *To complete the dish:* Once the three toppings are ready, begin to get the bread ready. Brush the slices lightly with olive oil. Grill or broil the slices until golden on both sides but still soft on the inside. While they are still very hot, rub the garlic clove on each slice and set on a plate. Top each slice with the fillings and then add a garnish: For the broccoli rabe, sprinkle some Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese on top before serving. For the chickpeas, crumble some of the goat cheese on top. For the mushroom-asparagus, top with the remaining chopped egg. Enjoy.

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RECIPE NOTE

Broccoli rabe has a great, bitter flavor, which I like but you may not. To reduce the bitterness of the broccoli rabe, you may wish to blanch it first in a large pot of boiling salted water. Blanch for about 2 minutes, then drain, rinse in cool water, and squeeze to get rid of the excess water.

VIN COTTO

Vin cotto (cooked wine), *mosto cotto* (cooked must), and *saba* are all sweet vinegars that are used as sweeteners and condiments. They are made by cooking down the grape must left over from making red wine (winemakers refer to this sediment as the “lees”). These vinegars are sweeter than balsamic vinegar, but are used in much the same way.