



Strawberry Panzanella Salad

This is my version of panzanella (or Italian bread salad) that's perfect for summer. Sweet, juicy strawberries and fresh greens from the farmer's market are perfect paired with creamy bocconcini (small mozzarella balls packed in water) and a tangy balsamic dressing. For easy summer entertaining, simply increase the recipe and try grilling the bread instead, which adds a nice, charred flavor to the dish.

1 cup day-old French bread, cut into 1-inch cubes

Balsamic Vinaigrette

2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar

1 teaspoon honey

Salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Handful of lettuce (or other garden greens), washed and dried

1 cup fresh strawberries, washed and hulled (larger ones cut in half or quartered)

5-6 bocconcini (or fresh mozzarella cheese, cut into 1-inch cubes)

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Place bread cubes on baking sheet and bake for 5-10 minutes, turning occasionally, until lightly golden brown on all sides. Set aside to cool.
2. In a small bowl, combine balsamic vinegar and honey and season with salt and pepper. Slowly whisk in olive oil until dressing is emulsified and thickened.
3. Place lettuce on bottom of a serving plate. Top with bread, strawberries and bocconcini. Pour desired amount of dressing over top, season with salt and pepper and serve.

Serves 1.

Note: Traditionally the bread is tossed with some of the dressing ahead of time and allowed to softened up a bit, but I like the bread cubes to have a little crunch left to them. For softer bread, simply toss 1/2 of the dressing with the bread cubes after they've cooled for about 10 minutes before serving.

Recipe and photo by Karen Covey and used with permission.