

Recipe

Crostini with Charred Grapes & Herbed Ricotta

Ingredients & Directions

For crunchy, olive-oil crostini

1/2 loaf of rustic Italian bread or sourdough, sliced
1/3 cup of extra virgin olive oil

- Preheat the oven to 425
- To make the crostini, toss the bread slices in a large mixing bowl with the olive oil. Gently toss them until both the top and the bottom of the bread glisten with the yellow-green oil
- Place the slices, flat, on a baking sheet (you can cover it with aluminum foil or parchment paper); be sure the slices are separated by 1/2 to 1 inch
- Bake for 15-20 minutes (or until golden brown and crispy on both sides)
- If your loaf of bread is very fresh, it may take longer to brown. If the loaf is a little stale, it may take a few minutes less to brown
- If your oven has the option between convection and conventional, go with conventional
- Check on the toasts after 12 minutes to ensure they're not burning. (If they're already golden-brown, remove from the oven)
- Allow to cool at room temperature before handling.

For charred grapes

1 bunch of red, seedless grapes (still on the vine or stem)
1 tsp extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp pepper
1/4 cup of red or white wine
2 Tbsp of balsamic vinegar
2-3 stems of fresh rosemary



- Toss the grapes (still on the vine or stem) in the olive oil
- Transfer the glistening grapes (no need to remove from the stem) to a metal or glass baking dish
- Tuck a few twigs of rosemary under the grapes
- Season the tops of the grape bunch with the salt and pepper
- Pour in the red wine and balsamic vinegar until it coats the bottom of the pan or baking dish
- Bake at 425 for 20-25 minutes until the grapes begin to wrinkle or burst, with a bit of char on top (The liquid will bubble and reduce, thickening into a pan sauce)
- Cook the grapes in the same oven as the crostini; typically, the crostini will finish before the grapes
- Allow to cool at room temperature for 5-7 minutes before handling

For herbed ricotta spread

1 1/2 cup of whole-milk ricotta
1 tsp of sea salt
1 tsp of fresh-cracked black pepper
1/2 tsp red chili flake (skip if you don't like a bit of heat or spices)
1 Tbsp of fresh basil, chopped
2 tsp of fresh mint, chopped
2 tsp of flat-leaf parsley (aka "Italian parsley"), chopped

- Rough chop the herbs and set aside
- Scoop 1 cup of ricotta into a bowl
- Stir in the chopped herbs, salt, pepper and red chili flake
- Mix until everything is thoroughly combined. (It will look a bit like a scallion cream-cheese schmear for a bagel...yum!)

Prepare

- Place the golden-brown toasts, once cooled, on a serving tray
- Schmear a thin layer of the herbed ricotta mixture atop each toast
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- Crown each toast with 4-6 roasted grapes (cooled), depending on the size of the toasts
- Drizzle a bit of the pan juices on top as a finishing savory-sweet touch

Chef's Notes

