

SPIGA'S TUSCAN-STYLE CHILLED TOMATO SOUP

(PANZANELLA MEETS GAZPACHO)

Cool off in Tuscany with this chilled tomato soup that requires no cooking. The panzanella salad, here used as a garnish, is firmly rooted in the cuisine of Tuscany where it was developed as a clever use for day old bread and a surplus of ripe tomatoes. Toss the ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth and out comes a dish very reminiscent of the gazpacho of Spanish Andalusian cuisine.

To satisfy your cravings you can often find this dish at Spiga Ristorante, or you can try to make it yourself with the freshest and ripest ingredients you can find all summer long here at Volante Farms.

For four to six portions of soup you will need...

1	pound	very ripe tomatoes
1/2	medium	cucumber, deseed if preferred
1/2	small	red onion
1/2		red bell pepper, cleaned and deseed
1/2		jalapeño pepper, cleaned and deseed
1/2	clove	garlic
2	ounces	day old bread
6	ounces	very good extra virgin olive oil
1	Tablespoon	red wine vinegar
		salt and pepper
		basil for garnish

Procedure for the soup:

Wash vegetables and rough cut all ingredients to help fit in blender. Add red wine vinegar (use more if a more acidic bite is preferred), extra virgin olive oil and salt and pepper to your liking and blend on high for a minute or so until mixture is smooth. (Add about 2 ounces of water for a thinner soup if desired.) Pass through mesh sieve to remove residual pulp for a more refined soup — or alternatively, to prepare a more rustic soup, grind through a food mill. Chill in refrigerator for several hours.

For the panzanella salad garnish:

Use the remainder of the vegetables left from making the soup (i.e., the other halves of the cucumber, red onion, red bell pepper, jalapeño and garlic) plus a few more ingredients:

- 1 medium ripe tomato, diced
- 2 ounces bread, cubed and toasted lightly, if desired
- extra virgin olive oil
- red wine vinegar
- salt and pepper

Procedure for the panzanella garnish:

Deseed and dice the jalapeno, red pepper and cucumber. Dice the red onion and tomato. Combine in a bowl with the lightly toasted bread. Toss all ingredients with oil and vinegar, salt and pepper.

To serve:

Pour about six to eight ounces of the chilled soup into each bowl, garnish with a spoonful of panzanella, drizzle with a little more olive oil and chiffonade of basil (and a small amount of additional crumbled bread, if desired.)

Robert DeSimone
Chef at Spiga



Chef Robert DeSimone brings a creative passion and an intuitive native Italian approach to the kitchen. Extensive world travel, a Masters degree in Middle Eastern Archeology and intense study both locally and internationally have shaped his culinary style which is, in its most pared down form, clean, simple and delicious.

A dual-citizen of Italy and US, DeSimone's love of food started in the kitchen with his Napolitano family. He completed formal study at Cambridge School of Culinary Arts and at ICIF, the Italian Culinary Institute for Foreigners in Asti, Italy. Following his studies, he worked under the direction of Chef Moreno Cedroni, uncovering wildly creative marine dishes and surprises at the two Michelin-starred restaurant Madonnina del Pescatore, in Senigalia, Italy.

Returning from Italy, DeSimone collaborated with Marisa Iocco at one of the North End's finest fine dining restaurants, Bricco. Inspired to bring true Italian food to a "red sauce" neighborhood, he then opened and created a menu based on Le Marche cuisine for the original concept of Sagra in Somerville. Returning to Italy for a six month sabbatical, he traveled throughout the country and islands on a Slow Food pilgrimage. A year with the Aquitaine Group upon returning to the US provided a welcome bit of stability to complement his strong kitchen management skills.

Craving a platform to share the recipes and ideas from his travels to Italy, DeSimone now leads the kitchen at Spiga and looks forward to sharing new ideas with you.

Recipe as presented at Volante Farms in Needham on July 30, 2011