

The Art of Cuisine



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Grilled Vegetable Platter

Yield: 8 servings

Perfect for summer entertaining, make the spicy sauce ahead of time and grill the eggplant, celery and bell pepper as your guests are arriving.

Make Ahead Tip: Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days. Bring to room temperature before serving.

RECIPE INGREDIENTS

small celery bunch

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

Freshly ground pepper to taste

2 eggplants (each about 1 pound)

4 red bell peppers

1 small clove garlic, peeled

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

Romesco Sauce (see below)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat grill. (Alternatively, preheat oven to 450°F). Coat two 24-inch-long sheets of foil with cooking

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Trim root ends, outer leaves from celery. Starting at the stem end, make a lengthwise incision with a sharp knife to within about 1 inch of the root end. Make a second incision at right angles to the first one. Wash celery thoroughly, shaking to loosen any dirt. Pat dry. Place half the celery on one of the prepared sheets of foil. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Seal edges of foil around celery to form a packet. Repeat with remaining celery and prepared foil. Wrap each packet in a second sheet of foil.

Pierce each eggplant in several places with a fork.

Place the leek packets, eggplants and bell peppers directly on the grill. Cover and grill, turning eggplants and bell peppers frequently with tongs, for 20 to 35 minutes: Cook the celery until very tender and lightly caramelized on the bottom (open the packages to check); when done, unwrap packages and let the celery cool. Cook the eggplants until skin is blackened all over and flesh is very soft. Cook the bell peppers until blackened all over. (Alternatively, place celery packets on the middle shelf of the oven. Set bell peppers and eggplant on a baking sheet and place on a lower shelf. Roast for 20 to 35 minutes). As the eggplant and bell peppers are done, transfer them to a baking sheet; cover with a kitchen towel and set aside for about 20 minutes.

Stem and peel the eggplants. Cut in half lengthwise, then cut each half into quarters. Set aside.

Working under running water, slip skins off the bell peppers. Cut each one lengthwise into quarters, removing cores and seeds.

With the side of a chef's knife, mash garlic with 1/2 teaspoon salt. (Alternatively, mash garlic and salt in a mortar with a pestle). Transfer to a small bowl. Whisk in lemon juice and oil. Season dressing with pepper.

Arrange celery, eggplants and bell peppers on a serving platter. Drizzle dressing over vegetables and sprinkle with parsley. Serve with Romesco Sauce.

Romesco Sauce

Yield: about 1 1/2 cups

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As versatile as pesto, romesco sauce hails from Catalonia, Spain. It makes an exquisite accompaniment to a seafood stew or grilled fish or vegetables.

Make Ahead Tip: Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days.

RECIPE INGREDIENTS

2 dried mild New Mexican chiles, stemmed and seeded (see Note)

3 1/2-inch-thick slices baguette

4 cloves garlic, unpeeled

3 medium vine-ripened tomatoes, halved crosswise and seeded

1 small red bell pepper, halved lengthwise and seeded

2 tablespoons slivered blanched almonds, toasted (see Tip)

2 tablespoons coarsely chopped hazelnuts, toasted (see Tip)

1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

salt to taste

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Note: The New Mexican chile is a long green variety that turns red in the fall. It used to be known as the Anaheim, but it has been renamed because few chiles are grown near the city of Anaheim these days. Dried New Mexico chiles are sweet with a hint of spiciness.

Tip: To toast chopped nuts: Place in a small dry skillet and cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until fragrant and lightly browned, 2 to 4 minutes

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DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Coat a baking sheet with cooking spray. Arrange chiles, baguette slices, garlic cloves, tomatoes and bell pepper halves, cut-side down, on the prepared baking sheet and set in the oven. Toast the chiles until fragrant, about 5 minutes. Toast the baguette slices until light golden, 10 to 15 minutes. Roast the garlic until soft, 20 to 30 minutes. Roast the tomatoes and bell pepper until skins blister, 25 to 35 minutes.

Place the toasted chiles in a small saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, until tender, about 20 minutes. Drain. Roughly chop the chiles and set aside.

Meanwhile, squeeze flesh from the cooled garlic into a small bowl. Slip skins off the tomatoes and bell pepper.

Combine baguette, roasted garlic, almonds and hazelnuts in a food processor or blender; process until ground. Add the tomatoes, bell pepper, chiles and vinegar; process until smooth. With the motor running, gradually add oil. Season with salt. Transfer to a bowl and stir in parsley.

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