

Caponata di verdure

Sweet and Sour Vegetables

Serves 4

PREP TIME

20 minutes

COOK TIME

45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp. pine nuts

2 red onions

1 stalk celery

1 grilled red bell pepper (see p. 24)

3 eggplants

4 ½ cups (1L) vegetable oil for deep-frying

2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

4 anchovy fillets

2 cloves garlic

1 tsp. peperoncino flakes

A scant ½ cup (100 ml) vegetable stock (see p. 267)

1 ¾ oz. (50 g) golden raisins

1 ¾ oz. (50 g) Taggiasca olives

¼ cup (60 ml) San Marzano tomato passata (pureed, strained tomatoes)

2 tsp. Crema di Balsamico

2 tbsp. red wine vinegar

Fine sea salt

Freshly ground pepper

Fresh basil

Caponata is an ideal summer dish; although it is a simple vegetable dish, the olive oil makes it a filling meal. Caponata tastes delicious when eaten with bread or as a side dish with fish and meat. Like many foods on the island of Sicily, it is eaten lukewarm, a result of the high summer temperatures. Eating lukewarm dishes is a surprisingly pleasant experience, and you will definitely want to give it a try. Agrodolce, the combination of sweet and sour, is also enjoyable; it is created here using vinegar and raisins, but sometimes a little sugar is used, too. Agrodolce owes its existence to the Arab rule over Sicily from the 9th to the 11th centuries. The recipe varies depending on the region—sometimes pine nuts or almonds are sprinkled on top before serving, sometimes it is made with tomatoes, sometimes without.

Toast the pine nuts in a pan without oil and set aside. Peel and dice the red onions. Finely dice the celery, peppers, and eggplants.

In a pot, heat the vegetable oil and deep-fry the diced eggplant in it. Once the eggplant is soft, remove and dab with a paper towel.

In a pan, sauté the red onion in 2 tablespoons of olive oil, then add the finely chopped anchovy fillets, celery, and peppers. Chop the garlic and add it to the pan along with the peperoncino. Pour in the vegetable stock and simmer for 10–15 minutes.

Then add the raisins, pine nuts, and Taggiasca olives, pour in the *passata*, add the Crema di Balsamico, and simmer for ten minutes. Add some stock if needed.

Once the celery is soft, add the fried eggplant cubes and pour in the red wine vinegar. Season to taste with salt and pepper and simmer for another five minutes.

Garnish with the pine nuts and basil and eat lukewarm.

OUR TIP Caponata tastes delicious on toasted bread with burrata. In addition to the basil, you can also add chopped flat-leaf parsley and mint to the caponata. We recommend a dry, fruity red wine that does not contain a lot of tannins and has a pleasant red berry flavor, such as a Nero d'Avola from Sicily.

