



NICHOLAS RIZZO'S ITALIAN TOMATO SALAD

A classic appetizer at Italian tables, tomato salads come in many varieties. These include ones with different color tomatoes, green pepper, red pepper, garlic, thyme, cucumbers, mozzarella and even bread.

This recipe keeps it simple, adds a bit of parsley for flavor, and substitutes the garlic with shallots for a more delicate profile.



Ingredients

12 to 16 ounces of grape tomatoes, halved lengthwise
3 to 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (Trader Joe's California Estate® brand if possible)
1 ½ to 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 to 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
Kosher salt
2 medium shallots, sliced in rings
½ to ¾ ounce fresh basil (about 2 to 3 tablespoons), sliced in thin strips (chiffonade*)
2 teaspoons fresh Italian flat leaf parsley, very finely chopped



Directions

1. Put the tomatoes into a colander and season with a good pinch of salt and toss. The salt won't be drawn into the tomatoes; instead it will draw any excess moisture out, concentrating the flavor. Leave the tomatoes in the colander on top of a bowl to stand during the next steps, and then discard any juice that has come out of them.
2. In a large bowl add the vinegar, oil, a pinch of salt and a few healthy grinds of black pepper. Whisk until the salt is dissolved. Taste and adjust salt, if needed. Add the tomatoes and remaining ingredients and toss until coated.
3. Refrigerate for at least an hour. Let sit at room temperature for 5 minutes before serving.

*Chiffonade is a cooking technique in which herbs or leafy green vegetables (such as spinach and basil) are cut into long, thin strips. This is accomplished by stacking leaves, rolling them tightly, then cutting across the rolled leaves with a sharp knife, producing fine ribbons. The technique can also be applied to crepes or thin omelets to produce strips.

"Chiffon" is French for "little rag" referring to the fabric-like strips that result from this technique. To chiffonade simply means to turn into rag-like strips, as seen in the picture.



This technique is unsuited to small, narrow, or irregularly-shaped herb leaves such as parsley, thyme or rosemary due to there being less surface area for the knife to do a practical job.

Lastly, in general, herbs should be washed and dried before cutting or chopping. Fresh herbs almost always cut more easily when dried off.