

PANZANELLA

Courtesy of Chef Chris Prospero, Metro Bis, Simsbury, www.metrobis.com

Start with a variety of tomatoes to create the two cups, toasted croutons (you can even use store-bought ones), red onion, fresh basil, and feta cheese. The recipe for the dressing will make more than you need and is great on a tossed salad the next day.

- 2 cups chopped tomatoes, 1-inch cubes
- 2 cups croutons
- ½ cup thinly sliced red onion
- 12 large basil leaves, chopped
- ½ cup feta cheese, crumbled
- 2 tablespoons capers—optional
- 4–6 tablespoons dressing
- 1 head romaine heart lettuce, sliced thinly

In a large mixing bowl combine the chopped tomatoes, croutons, red onion, basil, crumbled feta cheese, and capers. Then toss with 4 tablespoons dressing and taste. Add more dressing if necessary, up to 6 tablespoons. Arrange sliced romaine lettuce on the bottom of a large platter. Top with tossed panzanella and serve.

Serves 4–6

Dressing:

- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 egg yolks
- 2 tablespoons capers
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 6 large basil leaves
- 1 cup olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Place garlic, Dijon mustard, egg yolks, capers, Worcestershire sauce, balsamic vinegar, and basil leaves in the beaker of a blender. Then while the blender is running, drizzle the oil in a slow steady stream. Season with black pepper and reserve. Keeps for up to one week in the refrigerator.

LOCALLY GROWN SUMMER SALAD

WITH SPICY PECANS, AGED BLUE CHEESE, FRESH BERRIES, AND MAPLE-BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE

Courtesy of Chef Mike Truss, the Waterbury Club, Waterbury, www.waterburyclub.com

For the salad:

- 1 pound locally grown spring mix
- ½ pint strawberries
- ½ pint blackberries
- ½ pint blueberries
- 1 red onion, peeled and thinly sliced
- 8 ounces Black Ledge aged blue cheese
- Salt and cracked black pepper to taste

For the spicy pecans:

- 1 quart water
- 1 cup sugar
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ½ cup pure CT maple syrup
- 8 ounces pecans, whole or pieces
- Salt and pepper

For the vinaigrette:

- ¼ cup pure CT maple syrup
- 1 cup organic extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup aged balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper

Make the spicy pecans first, as they take the most time to prepare. Dissolve the sugar in the water and bring to a boil. Add

pecans and reduce to a simmer for 10 minutes. Remove pecans from water and drain. In a bowl, mix together the pure Connecticut maple syrup, cayenne pepper, salt, and pepper evenly. Add pecans and mix thoroughly. Bake on a sheet pan at 350 ° for 20 to 30 minutes, stirring and rotating every five minutes, until golden brown. Let nuts cool at room temperature with the baking sheet on a wire rack.

The vinaigrette can be made in a large bowl. Add the aged balsamic vinegar and pure Connecticut maple syrup while whisking together. Slowly add your organic extra-virgin olive oil until totally incorporated. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Toss the locally grown spring mix greens with the slivered red onion and some of the vinaigrette. Use the amount of vinaigrette you desire, there will be extra. Garnish the salad with crumbled Black Ledge blue cheese, fresh berries, and spicy pecans. Divide these items evenly and season lightly with kosher salt and fresh cracked black pepper.

Serves 4 as an entrée

