



Caprese Salad



6 servings



25 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 2 (8 ounce) balls whole milk mozzarella in brine
- 2 pounds ripe salad or heirloom tomatoes (such as Beefsteak, Big Boy, or Purple Cherokee)
- Fine sea salt
- 1 handful basil leaves (smaller, more tender leaves preferred)
- 3 tablespoons best-quality extra virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Flaky sea salt (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Drain the mozzarella: Remove the balls of mozzarella from the brine and let it drain on a clean kitchen towel or paper towels for 15 minutes. Lightly pat the mozzarella and slice it into 1/4-inch-thick slices.
2. Slice the tomatoes: Using a serrated knife, slice the stem end off the tomatoes. Cut the tomatoes into slices about 3/8-inch thick, slightly thicker than the mozzarella. You'll need 12 slices, not including the ends (discard the ends or eat them as a snack!). Lay the slices out on the cutting board and sprinkle with fine sea salt.
3. Layer the salad: Arrange the tomatoes and mozzarella on a serving plate so that they are overlapping slightly. Tuck in the basil leaves between the slices, and sprinkle or arrange a few more on top.
4. Season: Drizzle the olive oil over the salad and grind a little black pepper on top. Let the salad rest briefly—no more than 5 to 10 minutes. Right before serving, sprinkle a pinch of flaky sea salt on top (optional). Serve immediately.

Notes

1. If you have time, allow the mozzarella to sit at room temperature for one hour before serving. The delicate mozzarella's flavor shines brighter at room temperature.
2. Serve right away! Caprese salad is not a make-ahead salad. If you assemble it ahead of time and refrigerate it, you'll compromise the texture of the cheese and tomatoes, and you'll end up with a giant puddle of tomato juice and mozzarella milk at the bottom of your serving plate.
3. Quick tip: Look for tomatoes that are about the same size as the mozzarella balls. This will make the salad more visually appealing. Use a variety of tomatoes: Green, yellow, red, and purple to add color, or halve cherry tomatoes and arrange them here and there on the plate for interest.
4. Swap with buffalo mozzarella: Southern Italy is home to water buffalo farms, where the world's best buffalo mozzarella is produced. This tangy, spongy cousin of cow's milk mozzarella is a great substitute for fior di latte. Just be sure to drain it well before slicing.
5. Use burrata, a luxurious combination of mozzarella and cream. Place the whole burrata in the center of the plate and arrange the tomato slices and basil around it. Tuck in a small spoon in the burrata for scooping. Or, scoop out the creamy center and dollop it on top of the tomato slices. It's not traditional, but it is delicious.
6. Add summer fruit: Ripe summer fruit, especially stone fruits like peaches and nectarines, are perfectly at home in a Caprese salad. Slice the fruit into thin wedges and alternate it with slices of tomato and mozzarella. Or, arrange the wedges in a pretty spiral in the center of the plate.