

Tomato, basil & mozzarella salad

Insalata Caprese

Ingredients:

5-6 ripe, vine-ripened tomatoes

350g quality mozzarella cheese

10-12 fresh basil leaves, shredded

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

tiny splash, balsamic vinegar (optional)

salt and freshly ground pepper

Method:

1. Slice the tomatoes into thickish rounds, pour off any excess moisture.
2. Cut the mozzarella, the same thickness as the tomatoes. If you're lucky enough to find genuine buffalo mozzarella, open them up using your hands.
3. Arrange the tomatoes and the cheese on a flat plate, alternatively, so they overlap.
4. Dress with the shredded basil, sprinkle over the oil and the balsamic vinegar, if using.
5. Season with salt and then freshly ground pepper.

Insalata Caprese (tomato, basil and mozzarella salad) is one of the simplest and most delicious of salads. It is also known as insalata tricolore – 3 coloured salad (the colours of the Italian national flag). It is from the Campania (south) region of Italy and its name refers to the island of Capri. Three important main ingredients are required; firstly you will need red, well flavoured, but not overly soft, tomatoes. Secondly, commercial mozzarella is now made with cow's milk but the most sought after is mozzarella made from the milk of water buffalo. Lovely, fresh basil, of course, and quality extra-virgin olive oil is traditionally the only dressing used.