

Spinach Salad with Pancetta and Mushrooms

Submitted by Janet Espersen
Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 3 ounces pancetta, diced
- 1 Tbsp minced shallots
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 2 Tbsp sherry vinegar
- 1 Tbsp Dijon-style mustard
- 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Leaves from 1 large bunch spinach, washed and spun dry
- 1/3 c (1 1/2 ounces) crumbled fresh goat cheese
- 1/2 c roasted and peeled red pepper (about 1 large pepper), cut or torn into strips
- 1/4 c toasted pine nuts
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- 4 large Marinated Grilled Mushroom caps, sliced into thirds

Directions

1. Heat the oil and pancetta together over medium high heat and cook until crisp. Remove the pancetta with a slotted spoon and set it aside. Add the shallots and garlic to the pan and cook until fragrant. Remove from the heat and stir in the vinegar and mustard, then the extra virgin oil.
2. Place the spinach in a large bowl. Pour in the dressing and toss to coat the leaves. Add the remaining ingredients and the reserved pancetta. Toss lightly. When serving, arrange some of the pepper, cheese, pancetta and pine nuts on top.

Marinated Grilled Mushrooms

Makes about 24

Grilling over a wood or charcoal fire gives extra aroma and flavor to ordinary mushrooms, but even if cooked in a skillet (see Variation), these marinated mushroom caps are a fine addition to a mixed antipasto platter. Sliced, they add a nice meaty texture to salads such as this spinach salad. Fresh shitake mushrooms, though not very Italian are especially good this way. Ignore the part about unopened caps with shitakes—the caps are always open in this species.



Ingredients

- 1 lb medium mushrooms, with caps unopened
- 1/4 c extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar

Brush the mushrooms clean or, if they are very dirty, wash them quickly and drain well. Pull off the stems (slice them off if using shitakes); discard the stems or save them for the stock pot. Toss the caps with the olive oil and a bit of salt and pepper. Grill them over a medium-hot fire until nicely browned, 2-3 minutes per side, then return them to the bowl. Toss with the vinegar and additional salt and pepper, if needed. Let cool to room temperature before serving.

Variation: If grilling is not practical, cook the mushroom caps in a very lightly oiled skillet over high heat until they begin to release their moisture, 4-7 minutes depending on size. (You probably won't be able to cook them all at once; start with as many as will fit in a single layer, and either cook them in batches or add more to the pan as they shrink and space becomes available.) Finish cooking the mushrooms with the gill side down so they steam slightly in the released moisture.