

## Antipasti Platter

Serves 4

### Ingredients

- salami (thinly sliced)
- Prosciutto (thinly sliced)
- Sopressata (thicker slices)
- Pecorino
- Mozzarella
- Parmigiano Reggiano
- Honey
- Figs (optional)
- Olives
- Bread and/or crackers



### Directions

**CHOOSE SALUMI** - Choose two or three varieties of thinly-sliced cured meats, such as prosciutto, mortadella, or sopressata. Plan for about 2 ounces per person – except when serving prosciutto, of which, from our experience, people will consume as much as you put out. Can you blame them? You’ve been warned.

**SELECT FORMAGGI** - Choose one or two soft cheeses, such as pecorino or mozzarella, and aged cheeses, such as Parmigiano Reggiano DOP or provolone by Auricchio, planning again for 2 to 3 ounces per person. Set out the cheeses with knives, and cut a few pieces to give an indication of how to prepare them to your guests.

**GARNISH** - On a separate plate, drizzle honey, figs, and other sweet spreads to accompany the *salumi* and *formaggi*.

**ADD COLOR** - Add a few colorful preserved vegetables, such as olives, semi-dried tomatoes, or eggplant, in ramekins nearby. Or, if a sweeter taste is desired (because why not?), include a selection of fruits, like grapes, apples, or pears.

**EAT THAT PANE** - What is a platter without bread? Slice a loaf of bread thinly; include grissini, or Italian breadsticks, for some bonus crunch! Your guests will love pairing all the mixings together into their own bruschetta or wrapped breadstick.

**DESIGN** - Arrange the platter. We prefer to use a wooden board, so guests can cut and scrape as needed; however, a large plate will also be lovely. Depending on the occasion, the platter can be as simple and elegant as one meat, one fruit, and one cheese, or you could be as plentiful and complex as the platter below.

## Rustic Caesar Salad with Croutons

Serves 4

### Ingredients

#### Croutons

- ½ large baguette or 1 small baguette, torn into bite-sized pieces
- 1 tsp dried mixed herbs
- 2 tbsp olive oil

#### For the vinaigrette:

- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 tsp English or French mustard
- 1 tsp red wine vinegar
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper



#### For the salad:

- 2 lettuces (e.g. Romaine, Little Gem or butterhead), torn into small pieces handful of salad leaves (e.g. watercress, rocket or baby spinach)
- handful of soft fresh herbs (e.g. chervil, tarragon, parsley or chives), roughly chopped or torn

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F
2. Put the bread on a baking tray and sprinkle with the dried herbs. Drizzle the oil over the bread and
3. Bake for 10 minutes, or until crunchy and golden-brown.
4. To make the vinaigrette, put all of the ingredients into a jam jar. Tightly screw the lid on and shake well until combined.
5. To make the salad, put all the ingredients in a large bowl. Top with the croûtons and drizzle over a little of the vinaigrette. Any remaining vinaigrette can be kept in the fridge for up to a week.

## Spaghetti alla Carbonara with Crisp Zucchini & Eggplant

Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons Extra-Virgin Olive Oil
- 8 ounces Pancetta, or good Bacon
- 1 lb Spaghetti
- 1 ¼ cups freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 4 large Eggs, separated
- Freshly ground Black Pepper
- 2 tbsp salt



### Directions

*A true carbonara has no cream, and it can be slightly tricky in its execution. The key is to toss and thoroughly mix the cooked pasta off the heat with the cheese, eggs, pepper, and pasta water, to create a creamy yet not overly thick sauce. I like to separate the eggs and present the individual egg yolks in nests of pasta; then each guest stirs the yolk into the pasta to cook it and form an even creamier sauce. Be sure to use the best—quality eggs you can get.*

1. Slice zucchini and eggplant into thin slices and sauté on medium high heat until crisp and browned. Set aside.
2. Bring 6 quarts of water to boil in a large pot and add 2 to 3 tablespoons salt so that the water tastes like the ocean.
3. Meanwhile, combine the olive oil and pancetta in a 12- to 14-inch sauté pan set over medium heat, and cook until the pancetta has rendered its fat and is crispy and golden. Remove from the heat and set aside (do not drain the fat). (for vegetarian – omit the pancetta)
4. Cook the spaghetti in the boiling water until just al dente. Scoop out ¼ cup of the pasta cooking water and set aside. Drain the pasta.
5. Add the reserved pasta water to the pan with the pancetta, then toss in the pasta and heat, shaking the pan, for 1 minute. Remove from the heat, add 1 cup of the Parmigiano, the egg whites, and pepper to taste, and toss until thoroughly mixed. (Optional – add the egg yolk now vs at the end)
6. Mound the zucchini and eggplant onto 4 plates or pasta bowls then divide the pasta equally and place on top of the mound. Make a nest in the center of each, and gently drop an egg yolk into each nest. Season the egg yolks with more pepper and sprinkle the remaining ¼ cup Parmigiano over the top. Serve immediately.

## Macerated Strawberries with Cracked Black Pepper

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 pints fresh strawberries
- 3 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
- 1/8 tsp. fresh cracked black pepper
- French vanilla ice cream

### PREPARATION

1. Remove the hulls from the strawberries and slice them. Small berries can be cut in half while larger berries should be quartered.
2. Toss the berries, vinegar, and sugar together until they are well combined.
3. Allow the fruit to sit at room temperature for an hour.
4. Cover and store in the refrigerator until you are ready to use them. They will hold for up to 24 hours and the flavors will continue to meld with time.



### Additions:

While this recipe is delicious as-is, you can change the flavor into something even more unique by choosing one of these additions instead of the cracked black pepper. Mix any one of these in with the strawberries and vinegar before you let them sit for a huge burst of flavor.

- 4 to 5 fresh basil leaves, sliced in a chiffonade
- 1 tsp. fresh mint, finely minced
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon zest

**Tips:** When you work with just three ingredients, make sure each one is the best you can find. This recipe is going to be best at the peak of strawberry season, when they are perfectly ripe. I love going to a local “you pick” farm to get berries for recipes like this, because they have to shine. This is also a great place to use beautiful aged balsamic vinegar. Aged vinegars are thicker and have more of a syrup texture to begin with, so they are great for maceration. Many cities have stores that specialize in oils and vinegars now, so you can taste before you buy.