

**From Marie – July 2013 W1 (July 8)**

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## **Panzanella Salad**

From: [Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking, by Marcella Hazan](#)

*Throughout Central Italy, from Florence down to Rome, the most satisfying of salads is based on that old standby of the ingenious poor, bread and water. Stale bread is moistened, but not drenched, with cold water, the other ingredients of the salad are added, and everything is tossed with olive oil and vinegar. The bread, saturated with the salad's condiments and juices, dissolves to a grainy consistency like loose, coarse polenta. Given the right bread—not supermarket white, but gutsy, country bread—there is no change one can bring to the traditional version that will improve it. If you have made the Olive Oil Bread and have leftovers, make the salad with it.*

- ½ garlic clove, peeled
  - 2 or 3 anchovy fillets, chopped fine
  - 1 tablespoon capers, drained
  - ¼ yellow sweet bell pepper
  - Salt
  - ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
  - 1 tablespoon choice quality red wine vinegar
  - 2 cups firm, good bread, trimmed of its crust, toasted under the broiler and cut into ½-inch squares (keep the crumbs)
  - 3 fresh, ripe, firm, round tomatoes
  - 1 cup cucumber, peeled and diced into ¼-inch cubes
  - ½ medium onion, preferably of a sweet variety, such as Bermuda red, Vidalia, or Maui, sliced and soaked\*
  - Black pepper, ground fresh from the mill
1. Mash the garlic, anchovies, and capers to a pulp, using the back of a spoon against the side of a bowl, or a mortar and pestle, or the food processor.
  2. Scrape away any part of the pulpy core of the sweet pepper together with the seeds, and dice the pepper into ¼-inch pieces. Put the pepper and the garlic and anchovy mixture in a serving bowl, add salt, olive oil, and vinegar, and toss thoroughly.
  3. Put the bread squares together with any crumbs from the trimming in a small bowl. Puree 1 of the tomatoes through a food mill over the bread. Toss and let it steep, together with a little salt, for 15 minutes or more.
  4. Skin the other 2 tomatoes, using a swiveling-blade peeler, and cut them into ½-inch pieces, picking out some of the seeds if there are too many of them. Add the soaked bread squares and the cut-up tomato to the serving bowl, together with the diced cucumber, the soaked and drained onion slices, and several grindings of black pepper. Toss thoroughly, taste and correct for seasoning, and serve.

\*To mellow the flavor of raw onions in salads, follow these directions, beginning 30 minutes or more before preparing the other ingredients of the salad:

- Peel the onion, slice it into very thin rings, put it in a bowl, and cover amply with cold water.
- Squeeze the rings in your hand for 2 or 3 seconds, closing your hand tightly and letting go for 7 or 8 times. The acid you squeeze out of the onion will make the water slightly milky.
- Retrieve the onion rings with a colander scoop or strainer, pour the water out of the bowl, put fresh water in. Put the onion back into the bowl and repeat the above procedure 2 or 3 more times.
- After squeezing the onion for the last time, change the water again and put the onion in to soak. Drain and replace with a fresh change of water every 10 minutes, until you are ready to make the salad.
- Before putting the onion into the salad bowl, gather it tightly in a towel and squeeze out all the moisture you can.