

# THE DISH ON FALL

## WHERE COMFORT IS THE MAIN INGREDIENT

BY FRANCESCA MUIA

As the days become shorter and the temperature slowly drops, we inevitably turn to warmer meals and some of our favorite comfort foods. This season is the time for calling on ingredients from our past that bring us comfort and creating new dishes with them. Just as the leaves are changing colors, so do the colors of our entrées and antipasti, bursting with rich flavour and full of Fall hues.

Figs were always around growing up, whether they were fresh ones midsummer, or dried figs during colder months. As we move our entertaining indoors, a new flavourful appetizer as guests arrive is the perfect compliment to your prosecco. Here is a crunchy glazed fig bite that is the perfect balance of sweet and salty.

## CROSTINI DI PROSCIUTTO E FICO PROSCIUTTO & FIG CROSTINI

Makes about 12

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 baguette bread
- 1 goat cheese log (any type will work –you just need a simple log that can be sliced into 1/4" thick rounds)
- Italian prosciutto (thinly sliced, about 12 slices)
- 4-5 dried figs
- fig jam
- balsamic glaze
- drizzle of olive oil
- cracked black pepper

Cut diagonal slices of the baguette and lay them on a baking sheet. Drizzle a little olive oil over them. Cut about 1/4" thick slices of goat cheese and lay them on baguette slices or spread, if your goat cheese is more crumbly. Fold a half slice of prosciutto on top of each slice. Add a slice of dried fig and a little espresso spoon-sized spoonful of fig jam on top of that. Drizzle some balsamic glaze and sprinkle some cracked pepper on top. Pop them into the oven at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for about 10-12 min.

Voilà! You have crunchy sweet n'salty crostini that will be devoured in seconds. They are truly delicious.



With Autumn, also begins soup season, and what better way to warm up than with a green minestra di verdura. I remember my grandparents making their original version of this with fresh zucchini and beans from the garden. Just about anything with zucchini brings me back to my childhood as it was always a garden staple. With white wine, pancetta and cannellini beans, this is a heartwarming soup everyone will love.

## MINESTRA DI VERDURA GREEN MINESTRONE

Serves about 8

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 zucchini, diced
- 1 leek, white part only, halved then thinly sliced (I usually use about 3 leeks)
- pancetta (diced, about 1 cup)
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 cup white wine
- 5 cups chicken broth
- 1 can white kidney beans
- 1 Parmesan rind
- 5 cups spinach leaves, chopped
- 3 oz. small pasta shells or other short pasta, tubettini
- 2 tbsp pesto
- thyme (2 sprigs)



In a large pot, over medium/high heat, soften zucchini, leek, pancetta and garlic. Keep stirring and cooking until translucent. Season with salt and pepper. Pour in white wine and cook until dissolved. Add the broth, beans, thyme and Parmesan rind and bring to boil. Cover and simmer for about 20 minutes. Add the spinach and continue to cook for 5-10 minutes. Remove from heat, remove thyme sprigs, add pesto to your pot and give it a stir. I like to boil my short pasta separately then add to each soup bowl when I'm ready to serve. Garnish with Parmesan and a basil leaf and enjoy the green goodness.

