



Frankly Speaking

about Good Foods



with Roslyn executive chef Frank Schuchman

NORTHERN KITTITAS COUNTY TRIBUNE

CROSTINI

CHEF FRANK'S TOP 10

By UKC executive chef Frank "Frankly" Schuchman

Merry Christmas – a FREE GIFT from Chef Frank & the NKC Tribune

Frankly, if you are reading this, then you just read my NKC Tribune article, "Holiday Pesto Crostini" in the Dec. 15, 2011 issue, and now you know the difference between Crostini, Crostoni and Bruschetta! Again, please try making some of these ideas below on some grilled, broiled, pan-fried or chilled polenta. (recipe follows) Below are some of my all time greatest hits for entertaining. All recipes are interchangeable for any style of crostini or bruschetta.

1. **Frank's Famous Pomodori.** Almost like an Italian version of Mexican salsa, this is truly the easiest and most common topping. Dice up a bunch of really nice tomatoes, add paper thin sliced garlic, some sweet onion, sliced fresh basil leaves, chopped flat leafed parsley, salt & pepper with mix of 4 parts olive oil to 1 part Balsamic vinegar. Toss in a bowl and let stand 1 hour. Serve with toasted breads on the side, everyone gets a spoon or just dip right in. Refreshing!

2. Cannellini Beans & Sea Salt. The classy Cannellini is an Italian white bean, soft creamy smooth and delicious. This is especially great on plain Bruschetta slices and chilled polenta. I place 5-8 cooked, chilled white beans in the center, top with a light pinch of coarse sea salt and rough chopped flat leafed Italian parsley. A drizzle with good olive oil is tasty too.

3. Avocado & Tomato with Herbs. I take 1 cup of ricotta, ½ cup plain yogurt and blend in chopped fresh thyme, oregano and flat leafed parsley. (Optional: add thinly sliced green onions to the ricotta) Slice your avocados thinly and coat with a little lemon juice to keep from turning brown.

Chop up some good quality organic tomatoes and drizzle with a good EVOO and black pepper. Sometimes I will peel and de-seed the tomatoes before chopping. Assemble: spread the ricotta mix evenly, add 2 slices of avocado and top with the chopped toms. This is excellent with a poached prawn on top!

4. Roasted Tomato & Romano. Make a mix of chopped garlic and fresh oregano leaves, chop very fine (I like to add in a little fresh thyme leaves too). Place in a small bowl and cover with olive oil, let stand for one hour. Slice tomatoes, about 1/8th inch thick and place on a greased cookie sheet. Set oven to 325. Using a spoon, spread the garlic & herb infused oil over the tomatoes and slow roast for about an hour. Do not let them get dark brown; this will cause them to become bitter. Don't let them dry out, they get leathery and chewy, you want them plump and bursting with flavor.

Top your toasted bread with tomato slices and shave off long curls of Romano (aged sheep's milk). Lightly broil and serve. This is also great with crumbled feta – do not broil this cheese, just top and serve. Feta Hint: add chopped fresh rosemary to the oil mix above.

5. Local Mushroom & Olive Gremolata. Ok you lucky UKC folks that have some local Chanterelles or Morels, here's a great one. Sauté thin slices of either mushroom in butter, paper thin sliced garlic and sweet onions. To make the Gremolata – a fancy name for grated lemon zest, chopped parsley and garlic. Chop about 15 black Kalamata olives with 3 cloves of garlic, the zest of one lemon, flat leafed parsley and a little black pepper. Spread the olive mix onto warmed crostini and top with the mushroom slices, serve immediately.

6. Totally Turkey Day. This is a great after T-Day snack. I smear a thin coating of plain cream cheese on the toast and top with a small amount of leftover stuffing, then sliced turkey breast and off to a 400 oven for 5-7 minutes until warmed through. Top with a spinach leaf and a small spoonful of whole cranberry sauce! If your turkey has dried out a bit, simmer in some gravy! Yummo!

7. Smoked Seafood. I just love the amazing flavor and aroma of smoked oysters, scallops, mussels and if you can find it, Sablefish (Black Cod).

I like to use a mild cheese like Monterey Jack that easily melts. I don't add anything else, just the toasted bread and melt the cheese on broil. Top with the seafood and serve. Bruschetta: I do rub with a cut garlic clove.

8. Lox & Bagel Style. Hard (hot) or cold smoked (Lox) salmon is an all time fave. To cream cheese I add a little splash of heavy cream to softened cream cheese (this makes it spreadable and rich). Mix in some very finely sliced green onions and just a hint of powdered garlic. Spread evenly on the toasted bread, top with thinly sliced Lox or smoked salmon. Place 3-4 capers and paper thin sliced red onion over the salmon. Garnish with small lemon wedge and only let 1-2 drops of lemon juice hit the salmon.

9. Hummus with Roasted Peppers. Easy Hummus, I got this recipe about 28 years ago at the PCC Market in Fremont. 1 can garbanzo beans, don't drain, 3 cloves fresh garlic, ¼ cup or more, Tahini (a roasted sesame paste found in every Asian/Ethnic section), ¼ cup fresh lemon juice 2 Tbl fresh parsley, 2 Tbl extra virgin olive oil – put everything in a food processor and blend until smooth. Spread the hummus liberally over the toast and top with thin strips of fire roasted red bell peppers. Very nice served with cucumbers, fresh oranges and local apples. Got Pita chips?

10. Sausage and Dandelion. In honor of my dad! Make a simple O&V dressing, 3 TBL olive oil, 1 Tbl Balsamic or red wine vinegar, thinly sliced basil leaves, black cracked peppercorns, a pinch of sea salt and a pinch of sugar. Toss with fresh dandelions to coat (if you're out of dandelion... then use endive, arugula or red radicchio. Also incredible is with thin sliced fresh fennel bulb, "Finocchio" in Italian). Cook off your favorite locally made fresh Italian sausage, slice into medallions and chill. Top the toast with the dandelion, then sausages, more greens and a couple rings of a hard boiled egg. Grind more black pepper on top. This is also excellent on chilled Polenta. Instead of the hb egg, top with thin sliced parmesan or Cotija (co-TEE-ha) a Mexican aged cheese similar to parm.

Polenta

It's quite easy. Alber's brand is one of my old school favorites (Made in Seattle). 1 cup corn meal, slowly add to 3 cups of salted boiling water. Simmer until smooth, about 15 minutes, you want a thick paste-like consistency. (Think thick oatmeal.)

To set it for slicing, I simply pour it into a long, oiled bread pan and chill in the fridge until totally cold and firm (at least an hour). Gently remove from the pan and slice like bread, no more than ½" inch thick. You can top it now as a chilled appetizer or quickly sauté it in 50/50 olive oil and butter. Also try rubbing a little olive oil on and broiling it – or throw it on the barbecue! Then top it with whatever you like.

Calling On UKC Locals

My upcoming workshop is on “Food Myths”, you know the one’s like why your grandma never refrigerated the butter...so if you have any that need to be demystified then write to me, I’ll answer and teach them in my classes!

Roslyn’s own Frank Schuchman with over 34 years experience as an executive chef is an enthusiastic “foodie”. He writes a weekly column in the Northern Kittitas County Tribune called “Frankly Speaking – about good foods, and teaches organic vegetable growing workshops in the spring and summer and culinary and food safety classes in the fall and winter. He can be reached anytime at 509-649-3864, or email:

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