

Caramelized Onion Torta with Piquillo Peppers and Manchego

serves 8

For the onions

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 large Spanish or Vidalia onions – peeled, quartered and cut crosswise in 1/8" slices
2 large garlic cloves – skinned and finely chopped
1/4 teaspoon sea salt or to taste
freshly ground pepper to taste

For the torta

8 large eggs – lightly beaten
1 cup milk
1 cup heavy cream
6 tablespoons unbleached all purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon sea salt or to taste
1–16 oz jar Piquillo peppers – cut in 1/4" strips (or other fire roasted sweet red peppers)
8 oz Manchego – coarsely grated

1–10" non-stick springform pan – lightly buttered and floured

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Step 1: Heat a large heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat. Add the olive oil and the onion slices, toss well and sauté for 10 to 12 minutes until golden, tossing only from time to time. Add the garlic, salt and pepper, toss well and continue sautéing for 1 minute only, until the garlic has released its flavor. Remove from heat and transfer to a bowl to cool slightly.

Step 2: In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, milk, cream, flour, salt and pepper, until just incorporated. Do not overmix. Add the Piquillo peppers, onions and cheese and stir until just incorporated.

Step 3: Pour the egg mixture into the prepared mold. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes until golden brown. Remove from oven and let cool for 20 minutes before un-molding.

Step 4: Remove sides of mold and transfer the torta unto a serving platter. Cut in wedges and serve warm or at room temperature.

***Cook's note:** The torta can be made up to 6 hours ahead, and keep at room temperature in its mold. Before serving, preheat oven to 375°F and bake for 5 to 6 minutes until just warmed. Then proceed with **Step 4**.*

Pan-Roasted Baby Yukon Gold Potatoes with Cured Olives

serves 4 – double this recipe for a brunch for 8 people (use 2 separate pans to sauté the potatoes)

1 3/4 lbs baby Yukon gold potatoes – left whole and unpeeled
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 cup pitted cured olives
2 large garlic cloves – skinned and finely chopped
1 teaspoon sea salt or to taste
freshly ground black pepper to taste

Step 1: Place the potatoes in a medium heavy bottom soup pot and fill with enough water to cover the potatoes by 2". Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Once boiling, fast simmer uncovered for 8 to 10 minutes until they are tender. Drain and let cool for a few minutes.

***Cook's note:** the potatoes and be cooked up to 24 hours ahead, and refrigerated until ready to use.*

Step 2: Cut the potatoes in 1" pieces lengthwise. Heat a large non-stick skillet over high heat. Add the butter. As soon as the butter is melted, add the olive oil, and potatoes. Toss well, spread in a single layer and sauté undisturbed for 2 to 3 minutes until golden. Toss the potatoes and continue sautéing undisturbed for an additional 2 to 3 minutes, until golden. If needed repeat the process until the potatoes are golden brown on all sides. Add the olives, garlic, salt and pepper, toss again and sauté for an additional 30 seconds to 1 minute until garlic has softened but not browned. Remove from heat, transfer to a platter and serve as a side dish.

Escarole Hearts and Avocado Salad

Meyer Lemon-Shallot Vinaigrette and Toasted Pine Nuts

serves 8

For the vinaigrette

1 teaspoon finely grated Meyer lemon zest (or regular lemon zest)
3 tablespoons fresh Meyer lemon juice (or 1 tablespoon regular lemon juice)
1 shallot – skinned and finely chopped
7 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1/4 teaspoon sea salt
freshly ground pepper to taste

For the salad

2 medium escarole – though outer leaves removed (save for another recipe), tender green leaves and yellow leaves thoroughly rinsed, spun dry and torn in 1" to 2" pieces
1 large, ripe but firm avocado – halved, pitted, skinned and cut in 1/4" slices
1/4 cup toasted pine nuts (see cook's note)

Step 1: To make the vinaigrette, place the lemon zest, lemon juice, shallot, olive oil, salt and pepper in a small bowl and whisk until well blended. Set aside.

Step 2: In a large bowl toss the escarole with half the dressing. Place the salad in a large serving bowl or divide in individual bowls. Top with the avocado slices. Garnish with the toasted pine nuts. Drizzle with the balance of the vinaigrette. Finish with freshly ground black pepper. Serve immediately.

***Cook's note:** to toast the pine nuts, heat a small skillet over medium-high heat. Add the pine nuts and toss constantly until pale golden, about 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a bowl to cool to room temperature before using in the recipe.*

Pan-Fried Rosemary-Infused Oil

makes 1/3 cup

Ingredients

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 to 3 fresh rosemary sprigs – leaves removed from stems

Heat a small frying pan to medium-high heat. Add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and the rosemary. Stir well and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes until the rosemary becomes pale and crispy. Transfer to a small bowl and add the balance of the olive oil. Set aside to cool. Use as a dip for a crusty loaf of bread.

***Cook's note 1:** Refrigerate up to 1 week.*