

CAPSICUM CROSTINI

What you need

3 capsicums
1 garlic
olive oil to drizzle

2 red onions
1/2 tsp salt
2 tbsp olive oil
1/4 cup white wine
1 tbsp butter

Dressing

1/2 lemon
2 stalks flat-leaf parsley
3 anchovies
2tbsp olive oil
1/2 tsp balsamic vinegar
black pepper
100g Queso Fresco (can be substituted with Ricotta, Cottage cheese)
2 slices crusty bread

Don't make this recipe without: Anchovies, lemon

Yields 2 serves as a
main, or 4 as a side

Preparation 15 minutes

Cooking 60 minutes

What to do

1. Preheat the oven to 170°C/335°F. Peel and cut the red onions in half along the lines, and then against the lines so you get half-onion rings. They are going to shrink a lot, so keep the slices at least 5mm thick.
2. Sauté the onions in a generous amount of olive oil (1–2 tbsp) on very low heat. Break up the slices and stir well so that every piece of onion is coated in oil. Season with salt and stir occasionally. The point is to 'sweat' the onions to become translucent, and this takes 20–30 minutes. They should not be coloring/burning just yet.
3. In the meantime prepare the dressing. Chop up the anchovies as finely as possible. Squeeze half a lemon and add olive oil. Reserve the leaves from the parsley and chop the stems finely to add to the dressing. Add balsamic vinegar a little at a time, tasting as you go. Roughly chop the parsley leaves and set aside for garnish at the end.

Continued on Page 2 >

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4. Halve the capsicums, remove the seeds and cut into 3 or 4 long wedges. Cut the garlic down the middle on its side. Place capsicum and garlic in a roasting pan, and drizzle a generous amount of olive oil all over and massage, to ensure each piece is coated by the oil. Set aside until onions are ready.
5. When the onions are translucent and begin to color slightly, add white wine to deglaze the pan. At this point the onions are 15–20 minutes away from being ready, so the capsicums should be placed in the oven, to be baked on each side for 10–15 minutes.
6. When the liquid has evaporated from the onions, add butter (or oil, if preferred — but butter helps to caramelize the onions completely). Stir constantly from this point to avoid burning. They should be soft and sweet and caramelised, but they can be taken off the heat when you feel they are ready.
7. Flip the capsicums over when they have some blistering on the skin. Leave in the oven for another 5–10 minutes, and give it 1–2 minutes under the grill if you prefer a stronger char-grill. If in doubt, they should be cooked faster in high heat to avoid overcooking.
8. The capsicum is done when there are some nice crispy edges and the flesh is still firm. At this point, toast the bread for the crostini with a little olive oil in the onion pan, or in a regular toaster.
9. Assemble everything — toasted bread, capsicum, caramelised onion, dressing, with a generous sprinkle of queso fresco and flat-leaf parsley. Crack some black pepper or squeeze some lemon to taste.

Notes

If you can't find Queso Fresco where you are, you can replace it with Ricotta or Cottage Cheese; Fetta or Goat's cheese could be a little too salty. Queso fresco has a great crumbly texture and a mild flavor, which is why I think it's perfect for this dish. You might not need this much onion for the crostinis — however the onions do take some TLC so it's worth making a batch. It reduces down so much (and is nice and sweet) that you might find you eat it all up after all. I made this as a crostini on crusty toasted bread, but it could be served as a tapas-style appetiser, or as a warm salad on the side.