



Roasted Vegetable Sandwiches

The following recipe is hardly a recipe at all—it is just simple techniques for roasting veggies, blending easy dips, and putting them together onto delicious bread for a colorful sandwich. As with everything in the world of food, there are infinite possibilities for sandwiches. I hope the following techniques will help you get started on your sandwich exploration....

Roasted Veggies on Focaccia

To make sandwich: Layer a couple of slices of roasted eggplant, zucchini and pepper on one piece of focaccia. Spread another piece of focaccia with either the hummus or tapenade. Close up, cut in half and enjoy!

Making Focaccia

I'm a big fan of doing everything from scratch, but there are some things for which I make an exception in the interest of time—focaccia is one. I could tell you how to make the dough with yeast and flour, etc. *or* you can make friends with the guys at your nearest pizzeria and ask them if they'll sell you pizza dough to make your own focaccia at home. You can also use a bread machine or buy focaccia bread.

To make the focaccia:

1 pizza dough
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
salt
pepper
optional: 1 tablespoon fresh or dried rosemary, finely chopped.

1. Roll out the dough so it's about ½ inch thick and fits the shape of your pan (1 standard pizza dough will fit 1 large pan or 2 smaller ones, round or square). Put the dough in the pan and push it all the way to the edges.
2. Using all of your fingers (as if you were going to give the dough a massage), make many indentations on the top of the dough.
3. Drizzle olive oil over it and sprinkle it with salt, pepper and if you like, rosemary.
4. Bake in a preheated 375-degree oven for about 30 minutes or until it's golden brown on the top and bottom.

Roasting Eggplants and Zucchini

1 eggplant, cut into thin (but not super-thin) rounds, about 1/8 inch
1 green zucchini and/or yellow summer squash, cut lengthwise into 1/8 inch slices
4 tablespoons olive oil
salt
pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350 degree.
2. Place eggplants on one baking tray and zucchini on another. They should be in one layer and not overlapping too much.
3. Drizzle each evenly with 2 tablespoons olive oil, and a good pinch of salt and pepper.
4. Bake zucchini for about 25 minutes and eggplants for a little longer, 30-35 minutes, until veggies are browned and soft.

Roasting Peppers

To roast any pepper (green, yellow, red, even purple or orange ones!), just put the pepper whole on a baking sheet and roast at 375 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes. Turn it 3 or 4 times throughout the course of the cooking so that a new side touches the pan each time. The side touching the pan will get blackened. When you take it out of the oven, put it in a bowl and cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap for another 15 minutes. The trapped steam will allow it to continue cooking on the inside. Remove the plastic wrap and when it is cool enough to handle, peel the skin off the pepper (you can pull it off very easily with your fingers) and cut it in half to remove the seeds. That's it—the rest is yours to eat!

Garlic Bean Spread

1, 10-oz can chic peas, rinsed and drained *or* ¾ dried chic peas, cooked until tender (reserve cooking water)
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, roughly chopped
juice of 1-2 lemons
salt
pepper

Put all ingredients together in a food processor or blender and blend until it becomes a smooth puree. If it is too thick, add either more olive oil, a bit of water, or if you cooked the beans yourself, some of the reserved cooking water. Adjust seasonings until it's just right.

Black Olive Tapenade

The quality of your olives, capers and olive oil will determine the quality of your tapenade. Mediocre ingredients will yield a bitter-tasting dip whereas high quality ingredients will taste heavenly. This is a good time to splurge for the good stuff.

¾ cup good Kalamata olives, pitted
1-1/2 tablespoons capers, rinsed in a bowl of water for 15 minutes and drained
1 garlic clove, finely minced
1 handful fresh parsley leaves, chopped (about 2 tablespoons chopped)
2 - 3 grinds of fresh black pepper
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
optional: juice of ½ lemon

Combine all ingredients in a food processor or blender and pulse until relatively smooth, retaining some bits of olive and caper for texture if you like. Taste to adjust the seasonings if necessary. Stored tightly covered in the refrigerator, this will keep well for a week or two.