

# FOOD & DINING

## A salad unlike any other

Taking chances when preparing meals is part of the joy of cooking for many foodies. Trying new things can open doors to wonderful cuisine you might otherwise never have considered. For those who want to try experimenting with a dish that's sure to raise an eyebrow, consider the following recipe for "Grilled Octopus Salad" from Michael White and Joanna Pruess' "Fiamma: The Essence of Contemporary Italian Cooking" (John Wiley & Sons).

### GRILLED OCTOPUS SALAD

Serves 4

#### OCTOPUS

- 1 pound cleaned octopus with heads removed (11/2 to 13/4 pounds uncleaned)
- 2 cups full-bodied red wine, such as Chianti or Sangiovese
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 small carrot, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 small rib celery, trimmed and finely chopped
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Juice of 1 lime

#### SALAD

- 3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup red wine vinegar
- Juice of 2 limes
- 1 bunch fresh mint, stems removed and leaves torn into pieces
- 1/2 cup chopped green olives, preferably Cerignola (available at specialty olive bars)
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 endives, cored and julienned
- 1 small head radicchio, washed and dried, cored and julienned
- 2 cups cooked chickpeas or gigante beans (see note)

#### TO COOK THE OCTOPUS:

Place the octopus in a pot with the wine and enough cold water to

cover. Add the onion, carrot, celery, thyme, and bay leaf; bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat and cook until opaque, 20 to 30 minutes. Remove the octopus with a slotted spoon and set aside to cool. (The octopus may be cooked a day ahead and refrigerated in a covered bowl.) Transfer the octopus to a resealable plastic bag, add the garlic, olive oil and lime juice; seal and refrigerate for 2 hours, then remove the octopus from the marinade and set aside. Preheat a charcoal or gas grill until hot. Position the rack 5 to 6 inches from the heat.

#### FOR THE SALAD:

Combine the olive oil, vinegar, lime juice, mint leaves, and green olives in the jar of an electric blender and puree into a smooth emulsion. Or whisk them together in a small bowl. (If done this way, the texture will be less smooth.) Season to taste with salt and pepper and set aside.

Toss the endives, radicchio and chickpeas together in a salad bowl.

Grill the octopus for 4 to 5 minutes, turning once after 2 to 3 minutes, until the pieces are browned in spots and nicely caramelized but not burned. Remove, toss with the greens and vinaigrette, divide among 4 plates, and serve.

Note: Dried versus canned chickpeas

In many recipes, rather than soaking and boiling dried chickpeas, you can use rinsed and drained canned chickpeas or jarred gigante beans, available at some Italian grocery stores. While they work fine, those you cook yourself will be tastier and have a better, less mushy texture.

There are two methods of soaking beans. The traditional way is to put them in a large pot of cold water overnight, then discard the water before cooking the beans. (To cook, bring to a boil in a fresh pot of water, and cook



until tender, about an hour.)

For the second or "quick" soaking method, put the beans in a pot with enough cold water to cover. Cover the pot and bring the water to a boil. Cook for 2 minutes, turn off the heat and let them stand for 1 hour. (Then cook in a fresh pot of water as instructed above.) Both soaking methods work well. Very old beans may require longer cooking to become tender.

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