

ANTIPASTI DI LEGUMES

The first course in all Italian restaurants are little plates of vegetables, sometimes called Carpaccio de Legumes, drizzled with aromatic olive oil and scattered with fresh herbs; or the thinnest slices of the finest ham, carefully displayed in small circles or delicate rolls; or cooked, partially mashed garbanzo or other beans well seasoned with oil and herbs. Everyone helps themselves to a few spoonfuls from each. Be careful to pace yourself....a typical dinner will include a pasta; meat and/or fish; vegetables; salad; dessert...

In summer, Farmers Markets abound with wonderful fresh vegetables that are perfect for this casual dish. Fresh herbs are available in bunches or in pots and make it easy to experiment with different combinations.

Use freshly grilled vegetables, displayed in fans, drizzled with the very best olive oil and sprinkled with sea salt, pepper, a dash of balsamic vinegar and a mixture of chives, basil, parsley and tarragon.

For the vegetables choose what looks best in the market today – eggplant, zucchini, red and green peppers, to name a few. Slice them diagonally and grill them on a grill pan over medium high heat (you can also grill them on the barbeque).

For the pretty garnish, once the oil and herbs have been applied, toasted pine nuts make a nice touch along with a few scrapings of Parmesan-Reggiano cheese and some chopped fresh lemon zest.