Bruschetta is much like a small open-face sandwich, but with an important difference – it requires a European-style rustic bread with firm body and a chewy crust. Bruschetta used to be simple. Originally, bruschetta was thick slices of coarse bread toasted over coals then rubbed with garlic and drizzled with olive oil.

Accompanied by meats, cheeses, olives and wine, bruschetta made a humble lunch for Italian laborers. Today bruschetta has new dimensions. Topped with a variety of savory ingredients, it has been transformed into an elegant party snack. Make your bruschetta as fancy or as simple as you want; your choice of toppings is limited only by your imagination.

**Bruschetta with Goat Cheese**
1 (8-ounce) loaf baguette-style French bread
2 tablespoons olive oil
6 ounces soft goat cheese, crumbled
4 ounces cream cheese, softened
2 teaspoons lemon juice
1 teaspoon snipped fresh sage or oregano
1 (7-ounce) jar roasted red sweet peppers, drained
1¼ cups coarsely chopped ripe olives
½ teaspoon olive oil
Small fresh sage or oregano leaves, to garnish
Cut bread into ½-inch-thick slices. Lightly brush both sides of each slice with the 2 tablespoons olive oil. Arrange slices on a ungreased baking sheet. Bake in a preheated 425 degree oven for about 10 minutes or until crisp and light brown, turning once. Meanwhile, stir together goat cheese, cream cheese, lemon juice and snipped herbs in a mixing bowl. Cut roasted red peppers into strips. Toss chopped olives in the ½ teaspoon olive oil. To assemble, spread each slice of toast with some of the cheese mixture. Top with sweet pepper strips and chopped

olives. To heat, return slices to ungreased baking sheet. Bake in 425 degree oven for about 3 minutes or until topping are heated through. Garnish with sage or oregano leaves. Serve warm or at room temperature. Makes about 24.

**Herbed Seafood Bruschetta**

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon snipped fresh chives
1 tablespoon snipped fresh basil
1 tablespoon snipped fresh mint
1 garlic clove, minced
6 ounces crab meat, drained and flaked
8 ounces cooked shrimp, peeled and deveined, coarsely chopped
1 cup chopped tomato
½ cup finely chopped onion
1 loaf ciabatta bread
2 tablespoons olive oil
Freshly ground black pepper
Fresh basil or chives, to garnish

Stir together 1 tablespoon olive oil, lemon juice, chives, basil, mint and garlic in a mixing bowl. Add the crab meat, shrimp, tomato and onion; toss to coat. Cut bread into ½-inch-thick slices. Brush one side of each slice with the 2 tablespoons olive oil; sprinkle lightly with pepper. Arrange slices on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake in a 425 degree oven for about 10 minutes or until crisp and light brown, turning once. Arrange on a serving platter with oiled side up; spoon seafood mixture on top. Garnish with fresh basil or chives. Serve immediately. Makes about 16.

**Pear Bruschetta with Melted Brie**

1 (8-ounce) loaf baguette-style Italian bread
3 tablespoons olive oil
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon snipped fresh rosemary
1 (8-ounce) jar pear preserves
½ teaspoon freshly grated lemon peel
8 ounces brie, thinly sliced
1/3 cup chopped pecans, lightly toasted

Cut bread into ½-inch-thick slices. Stir together olive oil, garlic and rosemary; lightly brush over one side of each slice. Arrange slices on a ungreased baking sheet. Bake in a preheated 425 degree oven for about 10 minutes or until crisp and light brown, turning once. Meanwhile, mix pear preserved with grated lemon peel in a small bowl. To assemble, spread preserved on the oiled side of the toasted bread slices; top with brie and pecans. Return slices to ungreased baking sheet; bake in 425 degree oven about 3 minutes or until heated through and brie has

softened. Serve warm. Makes about 20.

**Portobello Bruschetta**
¼ cup chopped onion
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons olive oil
½ cup diced, peeled eggplant
1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup canned cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
1 medium tomato, seeded and chopped
2 portobello mushrooms
Olive oil
6 (¾-inch-thick) slices Italian bread, toasted
3 tablespoons prepared pesto
6 ounces mozzarella cheese, sliced into 6 pieces
Chopped red onion
Fresh rosemary
Cook onion and garlic in 2 teaspoons olive oil in a medium skillet until tender. Add eggplant, red pepper and ¼ teaspoon salt. Cook and stir for 2 to 3 minutes or until eggplant is almost tender. Stir in beans and tomato. Remove bean mixture from heat; set aside. Clean mushrooms with a damp paper towel; discard stems. Slice mushrooms ¼ to ½-inch thick. Rub gently with olive oil. Place oiled mushroom slices on a baking sheet. Bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for 5 minutes. Remove from oven. Spread each slice of bread generously with pesto; place several slices of mushrooms on each bread slice. Spoon bean mixture over mushroom slices. Top each with a slice of cheese. Return to oven and bake 5 to 10 minutes more until cheese is melted and bean mixture is heated through. Garnish with red onion and rosemary. Makes 6.

**Bruschetta with Tomatoes and Basil**
7 ripe plum tomatoes
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
6 large basil leaves, chopped
Sea salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 (8-ounce) loaf baguette-style French bread
Olive oil
Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Chop tomatoes. Place tomatoes, garlic, 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil and vinegar in a bowl. Toss lightly to mix. Add the chopped basil and salt and pepper to taste. Cut bread into ½-inch-thick slices. Lightly brush one side of each slice with olive oil. Arrange slices on a ungreased baking sheet, olive oil side down. Toast in prepared oven for 5 to

6 minutes until bread just begins to turn golden brown. Arrange bread on a serving platter, olive oil side up. Place tomato topping on each slice of bread and serve immediately. Makes about 24.

**Caramelized Onion-Blue Cheese Bruschetta**
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 onions, coarsely chopped
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
½ teaspoon salt
Dash white pepper
8 slices baguette-style bread (¼-inch thick)
½ cup crumbled blue cheese
Heat olive oil in a large skillet. Cook onion, brown sugar and vinegar about 25 minutes over medium heat, stirring frequently. When the onions are golden brown, remove from heat and sprinkle with salt and pepper; stir. Place baguette slices on an ungreased baking sheet. Broil 2 to 3 inches from heat for a few minutes until lightly browned. Turn slices over so untoasted side is up. Spread the caramelized onion over the toasted bread and sprinkle with cheese. Broil 1 to 2 more minutes until heated through. Makes 8.

**Strawberry Bruschetta**
1 (8-ounce) loaf baguette-style French bread
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
1 tablespoon honey
2 cups strawberries, sliced
½ cup strawberry jam
Heat oven to 375 degrees. Cut bread into 24 slices about ¼-inch thick. Place in a single layer on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake about 10 minutes or until lightly brown, turning once. Stir together cream cheese and honey; spread on one side of each bread slice. Arrange strawberry slices on the cheese. Heat jam in a small saucepan over low heat until melted. Brush jam over strawberries. Makes 24.

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