

Savored Starts

THE TIMELESS TASTES AND TRADITIONS BEHIND ITALIAN ANTIPASTI

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IN CULTURES AROUND THE WORLD FAMILY AND friends gather ahead of the main meal noshing, relaxing and sharing. These communal pastimes span the globe, varying only in ingredients and name. One can enjoy mezze in Turkey, zakuski in Russia, tapas in Spain, yet nowhere is the tradition more alive than in the antipasti of Italy.

Antipasti literally translates to “before the meal” and is a compilation of savory bites that can include cured meats, cheeses, smoked fish, marinated olives or grilled vegetables. It’s often served family-style on a large platter and may be accompanied by a glass of wine.

“That’s the beauty of antipasti—you can really make it with anything,” says Emilio Mignucci, third-generation owner and Vice President of Culinary Pioneering of iconic specialty food market **Di Bruno Bros.** He recalls frequently going over to his grandparents’ house growing up, and each time they’d whip up something simple, delicious and healthy from whatever was available.

“It was actually pretty strategic,” he says with a chuckle. “You’d have food and drink, relax and suddenly you’re sharing things . . . even things we didn’t plan on telling our parents.” Emilio admits he and his wife still use that technique with his kids years later.

Di Bruno Bros. was first opened in 1939 by brothers Danny and Joe Di Bruno as a small grocery store in the heart of Philadelphia’s famed Italian Market. In 1965, the brother’s made the decision to focus on cheeses and other specialty imports to set themselves apart. They never looked back.



Danny and Joe Di Bruno opened the first Di Bruno Bros. in 1939 in Philadelphia’s Italian Market.



Third-generation cousins Bill Mignucci, Bill Mignucci Jr. and Emilio Mignucci took over the business from their grandparents in 1990.

In 1990 third-generation cousins Emilio, Billy Jr. and Bill took over the business pledging to keep the family legacy alive. Since then, the company has grown to six retail locations and numerous bottle shops. Fortunately for us, they have found their way out into our neck of the woods.

The new Wayne location opened in spring of 2021 with all their standard best-in-class offerings along with Cafe Di Bruno, a coffee and pastry bar, and Bar Alimentari, which serves Roman-style pizzas and antipasti-style small plates.

When shopping for your own antipasti components, Emilio suggests heading to the store with a general plan, sampling and tasting your way through, and leaning on the expertise of cheesemongers and others.

Emilio acknowledges their antipasti selections—whether imported prosciutto or specialty cheeses—often carry a higher price tag, but for good reason. “It’s the best you can get,” he says proudly. “You don’t need much, a few ounces of each cheese or meat and a few spoonfuls of marinated olives go a long way.”

The best news about antipasti—you can’t mess it up. Select an assortment of tasty ingredients, tailor it to your preferences, arrange it in a grazing-friendly way, and presto—it’s ready. Whether you’re hosting a gathering or grazing through dinner, we hope you’ll give the antipasti route a try. Buon appetito!



Di Bruno Bros. continues to expand its offerings and locations, opening its 6th retail location in Wayne.

Recipes

The grazing-style antipasti course welcomes guests in a more informal and familial way—as if to say come enjoy, relax and savor. We’ve put together some simple recipes to get you started on your antipasto journey. Take a look, get inspired, and as always, make them your own.

Marinated Feta & Olives

This simple dish is a guaranteed crowd-pleaser. The briny olives and salty feta merge and come to life in the rich grassy notes of olive oil.



- 4 oz. feta, cubed
- 2 oz. castelvetrano olives, pitted and halved
- ½ C. extra virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp. fresh ground black pepper

Place feta in an airtight container. Add olives, olive oil and pepper. Close lid and marinate for at least an hour before serving. Serve with crusty bread or crostini. Serves 3–4.

Prosciutto With Brie and Apple

Who doesn’t love the tried and true brie and apple combo, especially this time of year? Add the smoky salty layers of prosciutto and sweet and crunchy toppings, and we have ourselves a true winner.

- 1 baguette, sliced
- 8 oz. of brie, sliced
- 1 sweet apple, cored and sliced
- 8 slices of prosciutto
- 2 oz. candied pecans, chopped (such as Di Bruno Cinnful Cocoa Pecans)
- 2 Tb. honey

Lay slices of baguette out on a tray and begin adding toppings, starting with brie then apple and finally prosciutto. Top with pecans and a drizzle of honey.

Serves 4.



Antipasti 101

Although antipasti feels and sounds fancy, it couldn’t be simpler to put together. There are common ingredients, but no hard and fast rules. It can (and should) be shaped by what’s fresh, available and favored by those enjoying it.

Here are a few tips and tricks to get you started.

Lingo Lesson – “Antipasto” and “antipasti” are actually the same thing: “antipasti” is just the plural version. The word antipasti is sometimes mistranslated to “before the pasta,” but it actually has a much broader meaning of “before the meal.” It’s meant to wet your whistle for the tasty feast ahead.

Ask Questions – When shopping for ingredients, make sure to take advantage of the knowledgeable butchers and cheesemongers. They can give you the inside scoop on what’s fresh and best. Don’t be shy—ask for recommendations, serving sizes and pairing ideas!

Taste Often – With all of these expensive and quality ingredients, it’s important to love what you’re buying and get only what you need. The beauty of somewhere like Di Bruno Bros. is that they’ll let you sample just about anything.

Less Is More – Another perk of a specialty market is they will literally sell you any quantity. “Don’t feel bad about asking for little amounts. We don’t want you to waste it. We’d rather you come back more often,” says Emilio.

Beautiful Bites – We eat with our eyes first. Take the time to artfully arrange the items on the platter/cutting board. The end result feels more special and delicious. Start with a platter or cutting board that’s big enough to hold everything but small enough to make it feel abundant. Next add your largest items, including ramekins or bowls, and finish by layering in the finger foods all around them.

Five Senses Feast – Antipasto should have a variety of different tastes and textures. Take it up a notch with a little heat (chili oil/flakes) or sweet (honey and cheese are a match made in heaven), and add in a good crunch factor (toasted nuts, crisp vegetables or crackers do the trick).

Make It Yours – Don’t like blue cheese? Leave it out! Love olives? Add a few varieties, maybe a tapenade. Serving a pescatarian? Add a nice tinned fish and some marinated shellfish. The world is your oyster (pun intended).

Keep It Simple – Unlike fancy coursed dinners or composed appetizers, these platters are meant to be simple and communal. The goal is for you as the host to enjoy them with your guests, not be holed up in the kitchen.

Sweet and Spicy Stuffed Peppadews

This sweet and slightly spicy flavor combo is complemented and cooled by the tangy fresh goat cheese filling.

- 10 pickled peppadew peppers, deseeded
- ½ lb. fresh goat cheese
- 1 Tb. Mike’s Hot Honey (make your own, note below)
- ⅓ C. candied nuts, chopped (such as Di Bruno Bros Black Lava Cashews)

Use a small spoon or spatula to stuff peppers with cheese. Arrange peppers on a plate. Drizzle hot honey over peppers and sprinkle generously with nuts.

Serves 4–5.



****Note:** DIY Hot Honey: Heat 1 C. honey with 2 tsp. chili flakes or 1 fresh hot chili of your choosing, sliced. Simmer for 5 minutes (being careful not to allow it to burn), and strain and cool for use. Keeps in an air-tight container in the refrigerator for 3–4 weeks.

Saffron White Bean Dip

This white bean dip is an easy and completely satisfying addition to any antipasti spread. We recommend serving alongside crispy thin crackers or spears of fresh veggies.



- 2 C. cannellini beans, cooked
 - 2 Tb. fresh lemon juice (½ lemon approx.)
 - 2 cloves garlic, minced
 - ½ tsp. saffron threads (such as Diaspora brand)
 - ½ tsp. sea salt
 - 3 Tb. extra virgin olive oil (such as Sicilian Evoo)
 - Serve with flatbread crisps (such as Toketti brand)
- Blend all dip ingredients together in a food processor. Serve in a bowl with extra olive oil on top and a sprinkle of saffron.
- Makes 2 cups.

Roasted Beet and Goat Cheese Tartine

These tartines are the perfect way to dress up some leftover roasted root vegetables. This recipe can be customized to whatever roasted vegetables and fresh cheeses you happen to adore.

- 2 thick slices of sourdough bread
 - 2 oz. fresh goat cheese
 - 1 C. roasted beets, cubed
 - 2 Tb. pepitas (substitute with any chopped nut)
 - 1 Tb. olive oil (we love yuzu olive oil for its bright citrus notes)
- Toast sourdough. Spread goat cheese evenly on each piece of toast. Top with beets and pepitas, drizzle with olive oil.
- Serves 2.



Spanish Conservas

Sometimes (or perhaps usually) the best things are the simplest things. Thanks to the salt of the sardines, the fat of the butter and the brightness of the citrus ... this recipe serves up the perfect balance of flavors.

- 1 baguette, sliced and toasted
 - 2 Tb. butter
 - 6–8 oz. sardine filets (try Geuyu Mar or Ortiz)
 - 1 lemon, juiced
- Spread butter over toasted bread, top with sardines and drizzle with lemon juice. Serve along with olives, chorizo and Iberico ham.
- Serves 4.



Roasted Delicata Squash and Parm

Roasted and grilled vegetables are a huge part of the Italian diet. Since it's fall, we like to add roasted hard squash to our antipasto spreads.

- 2 Delicata squash, seeded and cut into half-inch rings
- 1 Tb. olive oil (such as DB Classico)
- ¼ tsp. fine sea salt
- Cracked black pepper
- 5 oz. Parmigiano Reggiano
- 5 oz. pistachios, roughly chopped



Preheat the oven to 425°. Cut both ends off the squash. Cut it crosswise through the middle. Scoop out the seeds from each half (Try using a serrated grapefruit spoon).

Slice the two halves into ½-inch rings. Toss the rings in a bowl with olive oil, salt and a few grinds of cracked black pepper.

Arrange the rings on a parchment-lined baking sheet and roast in the preheated oven for 22 minutes total, flipping halfway through. Sprinkle Parmigiano Reggiano and pistachios over top and serve.

Serves 4.

Bloody Mary Salad with Grilled Flank Steak

Although Worcestershire sauce is not traditionally Italian, Emilio says he swears by adding a little for a little depth of flavor. This dish uses the lesser-known method of cooking the meat and marinating after. The result is extremely flavorful and moist.



- 16 oz. flank steak
- 2 Tb. red wine vinegar
- 2 Tb. lemon juice
- 2 Tb. olive brine
- 1 Tb. prepared horseradish
- 1 garlic clove, grated
- 1 Tb. Worcestershire sauce
- 4 Tb. extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ C. chopped olives
- ¾ C. dill pickles, sliced
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- ¾ C. roasted red peppers, sliced
- 1 C. celery stem and leaves, sliced
- 1 pt. cherry tomatoes, halved
- 4 oz. blue cheese, crumbled
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 8 oz. salad greens

In a pan over high heat or on the grill, sear the unseasoned steak until browned well on both sides and cooked to medium-rare or desired temperature, about 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Allow the steak to rest while you prepare the other ingredients.

In a large bowl, whisk vinegar, lemon juice, horseradish, Worcestershire sauce, and olive brine. Then add the red onion, celery, pickles, olives, peppers and tomatoes. Grind a good amount of black pepper over top and stir to combine.

Slice the meat into ½-inch slices across the grain and add to the mixture. Mix again and allow to marinate for at least 30 minutes for the flavors to meld.

Serve over a mix of salad greens. Top with crumbles of cheese and reserved celery leaves.

Serves 4.

Heirloom Tomatoes with Burrata and Pesto

If you're still lucky enough to find them, heirloom tomatoes are great.



- 4 Tb. pesto
- 2 Tb. extra virgin olive oil
- 3–4 large heirloom tomatoes, thickly sliced
- 2 burrata balls
- ½ tsp. fresh ground black pepper
- Pinch of flaky salt (try Maldon)

Mix together pesto and olive oil in a small bowl so that the consistency is drizzly. Tile slices of tomato on a large serving dish. Place burrata on top of tomatoes—either whole or torn and dispersed. Drizzle pesto generously over top of tomatoes and burrata. Season with fresh ground black pepper and Maldon salt.

Serves 4. ♦

Alyssa Thayer found her love of food at an early age, frolicking around her mother's organic farm and eating her weight in berries and snap peas each summer. She is a self-proclaimed urban farm girl, whose mission is to bring inspired ideas to life, passionate people together, and good food to every table.



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