

SIMPLE ITALIAN SNACKS

MORE RECIPES FROM
.....
AMERICA'S FAVORITE
.....
PANINI BAR



JASON DENTON AND KATHRYN KELLINGER
AUTHORS OF SIMPLE ITALIAN SANDWICHES


SIMPLE ITALIAN SNACKS

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MORE RECIPES FROM AMERICA'S
FAVORITE PANINI BAR
.....



JASON DENTON AND KATHRYN KELLINGER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL PIAZZA

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*To my amazing wife, Jennifer, and my
two little dudes, Jack and Finn, I love you*

—Jason Denton

*For Kay and George and
all that took place in
the kitchen*

—Kathryn Kellinger

.....

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INTRODUCTION

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner all have their merits—books have been written, families raised, and important business conducted over all of these meals. But for my family and me, most of our meals are built from snacks; delicious ingredients arranged into an assortment of small plates. Lively, fun, and sophisticated, these snacks are born from the union of the Italian tradition of antipasti and the modern American lifestyle. The pace at the table is leisurely, and the time spent in the kitchen is just as relaxed.

Small plates, bar snacks, antipasti, and tapas—these are familiar terms to most of the American restaurant-going public. Social and stylish, this type of cuisine is the basis for my weekends with friends and family, midweek nights at home with the neighbors, or just the kids on a Sunday morning. Like everybody else, I don't have the time to make elaborate meals—I save that for holidays. But we do a lot of entertaining all year long, and this is the food that makes it possible. Beside the ease of advance preparation, the prolonged nibbling of snacks and small plates is conducive to extended conversation and elongated lounging—both of which should be national pastimes.

The Italian custom of antipasti has gained popularity in restaurants recently (even though it existed in medieval times) with broad tables of small plates to entice the guests as they enter, offering something to nibble on while considering the rest of the meal. The food I serve at my restaurants—'ino, Lupa, 'inoteca, and Bar Milano—is made and served in the tradition of Italian conviviality. The dishes in this book have been road tested—these are the ones my friends love and look for when they arrive for a summer weekend or an afternoon of football.

The chapters in this book are based on occasions: time spent with friends and family and what you might serve them. Each chapter lists a selection of items that are especially suited to, say, having friends over, casual picnics, or serving a sit-down dinner. Seasons come into play mostly in spirit, but occasionally the fleeting availability of an ingredient like figs or corn dictates a snack that celebrates the season.

Panini, tramezzini, and bruschetta continue to be major players in our home entertaining. In *Simple Italian Sandwiches* I highlighted many of the classic combinations—the iconic sandwiches of Italy. I've added more here, but I've focused on regional combinations such as a panini of speck, cabbage, and poppy seeds (page 138), flavors that you might find in the northern Alpine region of Italy. Or I have featured what I consider an Italian approach to worldwide ingredients, like the Tramezzini of Duck Confit Salad with Pickled Squash Mayonnaise (page 100). This type of snacking continues to be inspiring—the combination of simplicity and endless possibilities is what *Simple Italian Snacks* hopes to embody.

Use the occasions as a starting point, and then compose your menus based on your own style and preferences. What all of these snacks share

is a simplicity of preparation and an Italian approach toward ingredients. There are combinations that are authentic and others that I think channel the spirit of Italian cooking. This is food to have fun with—preparing it, serving it, and, of course, eating it. My travels and restaurants are where the ideas for these dishes are born, but my home and family are where they take shape, and where the table really comes alive. Cheers!



APERITIVO—DRINKS
WITH FRIENDS



INVITING FRIENDS OVER FOR DRINKS IS LIBERATING—THIS IS FREE-FORM socializing, unlike dinner parties with their tyrannical schedules of cooking times and seating charts. Guests should be able to reach for a bite to eat as easily as they might refill their glass. The host should be able to laugh and gossip with abandon, knowing that there's not much to do in the kitchen. The first recipe in this chapter, Shallow-Fried Brussels Sprouts, gives you an opportunity to hold court: you at the stove, your guests at the kitchen counter, chatting over a glass of Prosecco.

SHALLOW-FRIED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

TRAMEZZINI OF EGG WITH ITALIAN TUNA

'INO MAYONNAISE

BRUSCHETTA OF WHITE BEANS WITH EGG YOLK VINAIGRETTE AND TOMATO

TALEGGIO, APPLE, AND PISTACHIO PANINI

BRUSCHETTA OF HERBED RICOTTA AND BLACK PEPPER

MILANO MIXER

ALMOND ORANGE BISCOTTI

SHALLOW-FRIED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Deep-fried flavor using only a minimum of oil—this is my at-home method of frying. With brussels sprouts, I pull the leaves from the globe and let them sizzle to a delicate crunch. Thin, crisp, and salty, they're a leafy green garden alternative to nuts and chips when serving cocktails. And people are always surprised to find that they *do* like brussels sprouts, at least when they're prepared this way.

SERVES 4

- | | |
|--|--|
| 6 cups vegetable oil | 1. Pour the vegetable oil into a large (10-inch) straight-sided sauté pan. Heat it over a medium-high flame until a brussels sprout leaf sizzles vigorously when dropped in. |
| 1 pint brussels sprouts, leaves separated | |
| Sea salt | 2. Working in batches, add the leaves to the hot oil and fry them for 2 minutes, until they are crisp and golden. Using a slotted spoon, transfer them to a paper-towel-lined tray. Immediately sprinkle the fried leaves with sea salt. Let the oil reheat before adding another batch. |
| 4 slices prosciutto di Parma, cut into thin ribbons (optional) | 3. Let the leaves cool for 2 minutes before dividing them between two small serving dishes. |
| | 4. Scatter the prosciutto over the fried leaves, if using, before serving. |

TRAMEZZINI OF EGG WITH ITALIAN TUNA

This sandwich is one of those so-basic-but-so-sophisticated combinations. Embodying the Italian love of simple ingredients, this tramezzino combines two kitchen staples: canned tuna and hard-boiled eggs. Use homemade mayonnaise, add a glass of Verdicchio, and the effect is pure luxury.

SERVES 4

8 ounces canned Italian tuna	1. Drain the tuna and flake it with a fork in a mixing bowl.
1/2 cup Lemon Mayonnaise (page 8)	Add the Lemon Mayonnaise and combine. (If making fresh mayo isn't on your agenda, add the juice of 1 lemon to 2 tablespoons of Hellmann's, which is called Best Foods on the West Coast. Whisk to combine.)
8 slices pullman bread (square sandwich loaf also called "pain de mie"; Arnold Brick Oven White is a fine substitute)	2. Arrange half of the bread slices on a clean work surface. Spread a thin layer of tuna over each slice, covering it completely. Arrange the egg slices over the tuna, and then season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Cover with the remaining bread slices and press gently.
2 hard-boiled eggs (see below), sliced	3. Remove the crusts with a serrated knife, cut each sandwich in half diagonally, and serve.
Sea salt	
Freshly ground black pepper	

HARD-BOILED EGGS Two techniques, based on personality type.

If you can watch water coming to a boil, here's the method for you: Place 2 eggs in a saucepan and cover with water. Place over a high flame, and when the water comes to a boil, remove the pan from the heat. Let the eggs sit in the water for 8 minutes. Drain, and rinse under cool water.

If you're easily distracted: Bring a pot of water to a boil. When you notice that it's boiling, reduce the heat to a bare simmer. Gently lower the eggs into the water and set a kitchen timer for 11 minutes. Drain, and rinse under cool water.

Both of these methods produce an egg with a firm white and a creamy yolk. Peel just before using. The eggs should *not* be refrigerated.

'INO MAYONNAISE

Homemade mayonnaise feels like a luxury until you realize that it's a necessity—you just can't go back to the jar after tasting the superior flavor of homemade.

MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 5 large egg yolks | 1. In a blender, using a slow speed, combine the egg yolks, |
| 1½ tablespoons water | water, lemon juice, and salt. |
| Juice of 1 lemon | 2. Partially cover the open blender with a towel to cut |
| 2 teaspoons salt | down on splatter, turn the blender up to high, and begin |
| 1¾ cups olive oil | adding the olive oil in a slow and steady stream. Adding |
| | the olive oil should take 5 to 7 minutes. As the mayon- |
| | naisse begins to thicken, the towel will no longer be nec- |
| | essary and the blender will be less noisy. Watch as the |
| | mayonnaise thickens, being careful to maintain the |
| | speed at which you add the olive oil. |
| | 3. Store the mayonnaise in the refrigerator in a bowl cov- |
| | ered with plastic wrap or in a plastic tub with a tight- fit- |
| | ting lid for up to 4 days. |

Save your best extra-virgin olive oil for another use. Mayonnaise calls for a mild oil with no pronounced taste, so the less expensive olive oils work best.

LEMON AND TRUFFLED MAYONNAISE

The mayonnaise can be flavored to suit its use: Replace ¼ cup of the olive oil with an equal amount of truffled olive oil for Truffled Mayonnaise. Add an additional tablespoon of lemon juice to give the mayo a more pronounced citrus flavor for Lemon Mayonnaise.

BRUSCHETTA OF WHITE BEANS WITH EGG YOLK VINAIGRETTE AND TOMATO

This is as fast and stylish as a Fiat. Freshly cooked white beans are the scenic long route; canned beans are the rush-hour shortcut. Both roads lead to a bruschetta of an egg-enriched vinaigrette over creamy white beans.

MAKES 8 BRUSCHETTA

- | | | |
|--|----|---|
| 2 hard-boiled eggs (see page 7), yolks minced with a fork, whites finely chopped | 1. | Combine the egg yolks with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the olive oil and whisk together. Put the beans and the tomatoes in a bowl, and pour the mixture over them. Add the chopped egg whites and the lemon zest. Toss gently to combine while adding the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ cup olive oil. Season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. |
| 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil | | |
| 2 cups cooked white beans, drained and rinsed | | |
| 2 medium tomatoes, cored and cut into a medium dice | 2. | Top each toast with a layer of white beans. Give each bruschetta a turn of a pepper mill before serving on a large platter. |
| Grated zest of 1 lemon | | |
| Sea salt | | |
| Freshly ground black pepper | | |
| 8 baguette slices, cut $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick on the diagonal, toasted | | |

TALEGGIO, APPLE, AND PISTACHIO PANINI

I think of this as a cheese board packed into a sandwich—there’s the rich and runny cheese, the sweet and crisp apple, and the salty crunch of nuts. This is a great way to enjoy Taleggio, a full-flavored cow’s milk cheese that melts into a silky tang.

MAKES 4 PANINI

- | | |
|---|--|
| ½ cup shelled unsalted pistachio nuts | 1. Preheat the oven to 250°F. |
| ½ crisp, sweet apple, such as Macoun or Fuji, unpeeled, very thinly sliced | 2. Spread the pistachios on a baking sheet and toast them in the oven until they are aromatic, 3 minutes. When they have cooled, roughly chop them. |
| 4 ciabatta rolls, domed tops sliced off, rolls sliced in half horizontally | 3. Preheat a panini grill. |
| 8 ounces Taleggio, rind removed, at room temperature | 4. Arrange 4 apple slices on the bottom half of each ciabatta roll. Top with the sliced Taleggio. (This cheese will spread in the panini press, so don’t go to the edge of the bread.) Top with 4 more apple slices and a sprinkling of toasted pistachios. Season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Place the top half of the ciabatta on each sandwich. |
| Sea salt | 5. Grill the sandwiches for 3 minutes, or until the cheese has melted and the bread is golden brown. |
| Freshly ground black pepper | 6. Slice each sandwich in half and serve immediately. |



BRUSCHETTA OF HERBED RICOTTA AND BLACK PEPPER

This is a great example of the Simple Italian philosophy. Buy a little fresh ricotta, add some herbaceous olive oil, and with a few quick steps you've got something greater than the sum of its parts.

SERVES 4

- | | |
|--|--|
| ½ cup olive oil | 1. In a small sauté pan, combine the olive oil and the fresh |
| ½ cup fresh basil leaves, packed | herbs. Heat over a low flame for 3 to 4 minutes, until the |
| ½ cup fresh oregano leaves, packed | herbs become aromatic and the oil is infused with their |
| ½ cup fresh thyme leaves, packed | flavor. Remove from the heat and strain the oil into a |
| 1 cup fresh ricotta | medium mixing bowl. Discard the herbs. |
| 8 baguette slices, cut ½ inch thick on the diagonal, toasted | 2. Add the fresh ricotta to the herb-infused oil and whisk until smooth. |
| 4 fresh basil leaves, cut into thin ribbons, for garnish | 3. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the herbed ricotta over each |
| Sea salt | toasted baguette slice. Garnish with a few strands of |
| Freshly ground black pepper | fresh basil, a sprinkling of sea salt, and a half-turn of a |
| | pepper mill. Serve immediately. |

MILANO MIXER

First make a simple syrup: Combine 1 cup fresh blood orange juice (6 oranges) with ¼ cup sugar in a small saucepan. Heat over a low flame until the sugar has entirely dissolved and the mixture is reduced by half, about 5 minutes. Store in a glass jar and keep for up to 1 week. For each drink, combine 1 ounce blood orange syrup, 1 ounce Campari, 4 ounces sparkling water, and a dash of bitters. Pour over ice, garnish with a blood orange slice, and serve.

ALMOND ORANGE BISCOTTI

These are a version of the classic twice-baked wine-dipping biscuit found all over Italy. With a firm bite, these biscuits are meant to be softened in an afternoon espresso or glass of Chianti. They become kid-friendly when dunked in Chocolate Espresso Fondue (page 51), but these are very much cookies for grown-ups.

The biscotti will keep for several days in an airtight tin or cookie jar and are wonderful to take along to a dinner party.

MAKES 2 DOZEN BISCOTTI

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1½ cups blanched almonds | 1. Preheat the oven to 325°F. |
| 2 cups all-purpose flour | 2. Spread the almonds on a baking sheet and toast them in the oven until they are aromatic, 3 minutes. When they have cooled, roughly chop them. Leave the oven on. |
| 1 cup sugar | 3. In the work bowl of a food processor, combine the flour, sugar, baking soda, and salt. Pulse to combine. |
| 1 teaspoon baking soda | 4. In a large spouted measuring cup, whisk together 2 of the eggs, egg yolk, vanilla, and orange zest. With the food processor running, pour the egg mixture down the feed tube, processing only until the ingredients begin to come together. Turn off the machine, add half of the almonds, and pulse 5 times. Add the rest of the almonds, and pulse 5 more times. |
| ¼ teaspoon salt | 5. Transfer the dough to a floured board and shape it into 2 logs, each about 2½ inches in diameter. Place them on a parchment-lined baking sheet, with a few inches of space between them, and brush them with the remaining, beaten egg. |
| 2 large eggs, at room temperature, plus 1 additional, lightly beaten, for brushing over the shaped dough | 6. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the tops are golden and feel firm to the touch. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and set it aside until the logs are cool enough to handle, 15 minutes or so. |
| 1 egg yolk, at room temperature | 7. Cut the logs on the diagonal, into slices that are about ¾ inch thick. Lay the slices flat on the baking sheet and return it to the oven. Bake for 10 minutes on each side for a golden crisp texture. |
| 1 teaspoon vanilla extract | |
| Grated zest of 1 orange | |



NEW YEAR'S DAY



**THE PARTY AFTER THE PARTY,
NEW YEAR'S DAY IS A MORNING-**

after menu for those occasions when you want the good times to continue. Partying to the wee hours is exhausting, so the next day's brunch should be substantial enough to bring everyone back to life. This menu offers choices for an easy but stylish buffet of hearty cold-weather food that can be served throughout the day—from brunch to early supper. Serve strong coffee and wear your best robe. Postpone resolutions if possible.

LENTIL BRUSCHETTA WITH FRIED EGG

WARM SALAD OF BUTTERNUT SQUASH

EGGS BAKED IN TOMATO SAUCE

STEAK SPIEDINI WITH CHERRY
TOMATOES AND 'INO PESTO

SWEET FENNEL SAUSAGE PANINI

BLOODY BRANCA

BRUSCHETTA OF RICOTTA, ANCHOVY,
AND CHERRY TOMATO

AFFOGATO



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