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## Asti Pepper Bruschetta

*Ever since I read Carlo Petrini's **Slow Food Nation**, I have been obsessed with the Asti pepper. I grew them this season from seeds that I bought from an Italian company so I could make peperonata. Not just any peperonata; but the one that Mr. Petrini wistfully remembers in his book. Ever since I read his musings about the dish, I was on a kitchen mission. I researched recipes and was surprised to see that they all used fresh tomatoes as an ingredient. I thought the tomatoes might obscure the flavor of the peppers so I tried to find a recipe without the tomatoes. Apparently there are none. Peperonata has to be "officially" made with tomatoes. So, I moved onto my Plan B-a bruschetta featuring only the peppers, cipollinis, and garlic. I think Mr. Petrini would approve!*

2 tablespoons olive oil plus more for drizzling on the bread  
4 Asti peppers (see NOTE), seeds removed and cut into half inch wide strips  
1 cipollini, cut into ¼ inch slices  
3 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced and two large whole cloves, cut in half, for the bread  
4 slices Italian bread, one inch thick  
Salt and pepper

Put the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat.

Add the peppers and cipollini. Sauté, stirring often, until they are just softened but not browned.

Add the garlic slices and cook for two minutes stirring to prevent burning.

Remove the pan from the heat and set aside while you toast the bread.

Grill or toast the bread and rub each slice on one side with the cut half of a garlic clove. Discard the cloves after using them.

Place the bread, garlic rubbed side up, on a serving plate, drizzle with the olive oil, and generously sprinkle with the salt and pepper.

Divide the pepper mixture evenly among the four bread slices and serve immediately.

Serves 4 as an appetizer or side dish.

**NOTE:** You can make the dish with other red bell peppers. I guess that Mr. Petrini will tell you it just won't taste the same with another pepper. He's right, but it'll still be really good!

*Victoria Wesseler*

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