

Puntarelle Alla Romana

Adapted from the Culinary Breeding Network's Radicchio Zine

Serves 2-4 | 20 minutes + 30 minutes soak

This traditional Roman dish (well, the capers aren't exactly traditional, but they're a delicious addition) is a classic example of what makes Italian food so compelling. Full of punchy flavor and appealing texture, the ingredients are nevertheless (mostly) simple, inexpensive, and widely available, and there are no special techniques involved in its preparation. The major caveats to the previous sentence are of course the fact that the stars of the show—a frilly green chicory called puntarelle, as well as the tool most Italians use to slice it—are relative obscurities in the US. But don't be put off; the puntarelle can effectively be swapped for endive, frisée, or any other mildly bitter chicory, and the slicer, while appealing in its ancient-feeling simplicity and specificity, can be replaced with a nice, sharp knife. However you get there, know this: the resulting salad, a textural wonder of crisp chicories, salty capers, earthy anchovy and bright lemon juice, is a deeply satisfying shoulder-season dish that comes together quickly and impresses everybody. Mangia!

1 head of puntarelle

8 anchovies

2 garlic cloves, microplaned

½ teaspoons kosher salt

3 tablespoons red wine vinegar

5 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons salt-packed capers, chopped

Black pepper to taste

Step 1 Process puntarelle: separate the head into individual stalks, trim the top and bottom of each stalk, and pull through the tagliapuntarella. If you don't have a tagliapuntarella, use a sharp knife to julienne the stalks lengthwise; you're looking for long, matchstick-wide strips. Place the sliced puntarelle into an ice-water bath for a minimum of 30 minutes but up to overnight. This tempers the vegetable's bitterness and makes it sort of curl up into fun shapes.

Step 2 Finely chop the anchovies; using the side of the knife, smooch the diced anchovies into a paste.

Step 3 Use a whisk to combine the anchovies, garlic and vinegar in a mixing bowl. While whisking, slowly add the olive oil.

Step 4 Drain the puntarelle and add to a mixing bowl. Add about half of the dressing and mix well. Taste and adjust seasoning if you need to (the capers and anchovies should provide plenty of salt, but tastes vary). Add more dressing as needed.

Step 5 Mix in about half the capers and the black pepper to taste. Dish out into bowls and add more capers to garnish. Enjoy!