

Verdure alla Scapece, Italian-style Vegetables in Vinegar

Serves 6-8 | 15 minutes prep + 30 minutes cook time

Traditional Italian cooks make verdure alla scapece by frying vegetables, then layering them with garlic and herbs before covering with vinegar, and then letting them sit for several hours before serving at room temperature. It's an old technique, and even its name comes from the Spanish term escabeche, which derives from the Arabic name for a sweet and sour dish.

Besides adding an assertive, bright flavor, vinegar serves as an acidic preservative so dishes like this would last longer before spoiling. Spanish colonialism spread escabeche to all of its warm weather conquests, so you'll find vinegary food with a similar name in South and Central America as well as the Philippines. Different parts of Italy had been ruled by the Spanish before unification, but the Romans loved vinegar, so it's likely that food prepared alla scapece was consumed long before the label was applied.

Historical fun facts aside, it's a simple and delicious technique especially well-suited for busy cooks. The vegetables can be cooked ahead of time, then sit in the marinade for a few days if needed, and they just get better with time. While frying in olive oil is traditional, grilling or roasting is easier and not quite as messy.

1 eggplant

2-3 red bell peppers

2-3 zucchini

3 cloves garlic, chopped

**½ cup chopped fresh mint
or parsley**

**3 tablespoons extra virgin
olive oil**

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

Step 1 Slice the eggplant into ½ inch thick rounds. Remove the seeds and membrane, then cut the bell peppers in quarters. Slice the zucchini in half lengthwise. If roasting, toss the vegetables in a large bowl with a tablespoon or so of olive oil.

Step 2 Grill vegetables over direct heat until charred, 5-10 minutes depending on the heat of the grill. Or arrange on sheet pans and roast at 400 until tender, about 15-20 minutes.

Step 3 Arrange the cooked vegetables on a platter, drizzling each layer with a little olive oil and adding some garlic and herbs. Sprinkle the red wine vinegar over the top along with any garlic and herbs left. Let sit for at least 20 minutes or store in the refrigerator overnight. Best served at room temperature.