

Recipes by *Here & Now* Resident Chef Kathy Gunst

Leek, Red Pepper, Red Onion, and Tomato Frittata

Kathy's Note: There are few foods more adaptable and forgiving than a frittata. For those who have a fear of making omelets, a frittata is simple, easy, and produces dramatic results. In this version, I sauté leeks, red peppers, onions and grated tomatoes and mix the eggs with grated Parmesan and cheddar cheese, but the possibilities are endless.

The frittata is baked in a hot oven to produce a slightly puffed dish that is like a cross between a soufflé and crustless quiche. Serve this frittata for breakfast, brunch, lunch or dinner with crusty bread and a green salad.

There is just one thing to keep in mind when making a frittata: the equipment. A smaller, ovenproof skillet is your best bet. An 8½ inch skillet is ideal for a six egg frittata. You don't want to use a skillet any larger or the frittata will be too thin, won't puff up, and can dry out. The smaller skillet produces creamy eggs with a good, thick height.

Use this as a master recipe and substitute different cheeses and vegetables, or add crumbled bacon, ham, sausage, or pancetta. Other favorite combinations: asparagus, red pepper and goat cheese; zucchini, Parmesan and fennel; red, green and yellow pepper strips with grated Gruyere and fresh basil.

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 leeks, dark green sections removed and the white and pale green part cut in half lengthwise and into thin pieces
1 small red onion, chopped
1 red pepper, cored and cut into thin strips
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 large tomato, grated on the large holes of a cheese grater
1 tablespoon fresh thyme or basil, chopped, or 1 teaspoon dried
6 large eggs
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
¼ cup grated sharp cheddar, Gruyere, or crumbled feta cheese

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

In a medium size, heavy, ovenproof 8½ inch skillet, heat the oil over moderately-high heat. Add the leek and onions and cook, stirring for about 8 minutes until tender and golden brown. Add the red pepper and salt and pepper and cook 5 minutes. Add the grated tomato and half the herbs and cook over low heat, stirring, for another 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk the eggs, salt, pepper, remaining thyme or basil, and the grated Parmesan and cheddar until frothy.

Raise the heat under the skillet to moderately high and add the egg mixture. Let set 1 minute and place on the middle shelf of the preheated oven. Bake for about 12 to 14 minutes, or until puffed and the eggs don't look wet. Gently jiggle the skillet to make sure the eggs are not too loose. Remove and let sit about 2 minutes. You can serve the frittata in the skillet or flip it out onto a wooden board or plate and cut into wedges. Serve at room temperature.

Serves 4.

Trio of Deviled Eggs

Kathy's Note: I used to think deviled eggs were fussy old lady food, but there are few dishes that take such little effort and give back such a huge pay off. Here, I stuff the bottom of the cooked whites with a few surprises – sun-dried tomatoes, Kalamata olive tapenade, and a chive-scallion combination, and then top the fillings with a creamy egg mixture, so that each bite reveals a burst of flavor inside. Place the eggs on top of a bed of baby watercress and serve as a salad or first course.

Once you get the hang of these devilled egg surprises, you can create your own flavors; see below for some ideas to get you started.

Ingredients:

12 hard-boiled eggs, peeled

¼ cup mayonnaise

1 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard

Salt and freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons chopped sun-dried tomatoes (the kind packed in oil), plus extra for garnish

2 tablespoons black or green tapenade, plus extra for garnish

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh chives, plus extra for garnish

1 tablespoon finely chopped scallions, white and green parts, plus extra for garnish

Sweet paprika

3 cups baby watercress, or stemmed regular watercress

Instructions:

Using a small, sharp knife, cut each egg in half, lengthwise. Carefully remove the yolks and place in a small bowl. Mash the yolks with a fork, and add the mayonnaise, mustard, and salt and pepper to taste.

Divide the sun-dried tomatoes among 8 of the egg white halves. Divide the tapenade among 8 other halves. Mix together the chives and scallions and divide among the remaining 8 halves.

Fill each egg half with a spoonful of the yolk mixture, and then top with its respective garnish.

Place the watercress on a serving plate and arrange all three types of eggs on top.

Serves 8 to 12.

Substitute 3 tablespoons of any of the following for any of the fillings above:

- Pesto
- Chopped scallions and fresh dill
- Chopped roasted red peppers

Egg Tips: Hard Boiled and Cracking Secrets

The trick to making perfect hard-boiled eggs is all in the timing. There are a few no-fail methods for hard-boiling an egg, each resulting in a firm, clear white with a yolk that's bright yellow all the way to the edges. This is our favorite method:

Place the eggs in a single layer in a large saucepan. Add cold water to cover the eggs by about an inch, and bring the water to a boil over high heat. When the water boils, cover the pan tightly, and move the pan off the heat. Let the eggs sit for 14 minutes.

Drain the water you cooked the eggs in out of the saucepan, keeping the eggs in the pan. Shake the pan back and forth and up and down a few times, so that the egg shells crack *just a little*.

Then fill the pan with cold water; the water will seep into the cracks in the shells and separate the eggs from the shells, making them easier to peel once they've cooled.

Bistro-Style Frisée Salad with Poached Eggs, Sautéed Leeks and Bacon

Kathy's Note: A classic bistro-style salad, made with frisée lettuce, bacon, poached eggs, and leeks. Although the salad has a dressing the idea is that when you cut into the poached egg the yolk coats the salad with its delicious, creamy richness. You can prepare the leek, bacon, and vinaigrette several hours ahead of time and poach the egg just before serving.

Ingredients:

For the salad:

1 head frisée lettuce, or about 4 cups mesclun greens, or a mix of bitter greens (like arugula, mustard greens and more)

5 slices thick, country-style bacon

4 large leeks or 6 medium sized or 12 scallions, dark green leaves removed, white and pale green section of leek or scallion cut in half lengthwise

A generous grinding of black pepper

For the vinaigrette:

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon minced fresh chives, optional
Pinch of salt, or to taste
A few grindings of black pepper

For the poached eggs:
4 eggs

Instructions:

Clean the greens thoroughly and dry with paper towels or a clean tea towel and set aside. In a large skillet, fry the bacon over medium heat until cooked and crisp, about 3 minutes on each side, depending on the thickness. Remove the bacon and drain on paper towels.

Remove and discard all but 1 teaspoon of the bacon fat from the skillet. Heat the skillet with the bacon fat over medium-low heat. Add the leeks and cook, stirring frequently, for about 6 minutes, or until they are soft and golden. Remove from the heat and set aside.

To make the vinaigrette, whisk together all the ingredients in a small bowl, and set aside. (The recipe can be made several hours ahead of time up to this point; cover and refrigerate the vinaigrette, cooked leeks, greens, and bacon.)

To finish the salad:
Fill a large saucepan or pot with cold water and bring to a boil on high heat.

Meanwhile, place the greens in a large salad bowl and toss with the vinaigrette. (You can serve the salad in the bowl or divide it between four salad plates). Place the leeks on top of the greens and crumble the bacon into 1 inch pieces and scatter on top of the ramps.

Reduce the heat to medium and carefully crack the eggs into the water, one at a time, and cook for 2 minutes. (This will give you poached eggs with a soft, slightly runny yolk; if you want firmer yolks cook another minute or two.)

Using a slotted spoon, remove the eggs and let drain for a few seconds before gently placing the eggs on top of the salad. Add a grinding of black pepper and serve the salad immediately.

Serves 4.

B.E.L.T. (Bacon, Egg, Lettuce, and Tomato) Sandwich with Tarragon-Lemon Mayonnaise

Kathy's Note: If a B.L.T. is the perfect sandwich combination then a B.E.L.T. is even better. The meaty crunch of bacon combined with a juicy tomato, slices of hard boiled

egg, crunchy, refreshing lettuce, and a simple tarragon and lemon-infused mayonnaise layered on golden brown toast is, in our opinion, perfect breakfast fare.

The idea for this unusual breakfast sandwich came from The Market Basket, a gourmet food take-out shop in Rockport, Maine. The eggs, bacon, and tarragon-flavored mayonnaise can all be made ahead of time, making the sandwich easy to put together in minutes just before serving.

Use any leftover mayonnaise for sandwiches or as the base of a creamy vinaigrette.

Ingredients:

2 large eggs
4 strips thick-cut country bacon
1/3 cup mayonnaise
2 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon
2 teaspoons chopped fresh chives
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
1 medium-sized, ripe tomato, cut into 4 thick slices, (2 1/2 oz)
4 Romaine lettuce leaves
4 slices white bread

Instructions:

Place the eggs in a medium-size pot and cover with cold water. Hard boil the eggs. Peel the eggs, and cut into thin 1/8 inch slices.

Place the bacon strip in a medium-sized skillet set over moderately low heat and cook about 4 to 6 minutes on each side, depending on the thickness, until cooked through. Drain on paper towel.

To make the tarragon mayonnaise, gently mix the mayonnaise, tarragon, chives, lemon juice, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. (The eggs, bacon, and mayonnaise can be made a day ahead of time. Cover and refrigerate until ready to assemble the sandwiches.)

Assemble the sandwiches: Toast the bread and while it's toasting, gather all ingredients into a line for assembly.

Spread each piece of the warm toast with 1 tablespoon of the tarragon mayonnaise. Place 2 slices tomato, 2 pieces bacon, 4 slices egg, and 2 pieces lettuce on 2 slices of the bread. Top each piece of toast with a remaining slice of toast and cut the sandwich into two halves.

Makes 2 sandwiches.