

PIZZA RUSTICA

Neapolitan in origin, this make-ahead savory pie is delicious either warm or at room temperature.

For Pizza Rustica

2 pounds Swiss chard, washed well, stems removed and sliced thin, and leaves chopped separately

2 tablespoons olive oil

4 large eggs, beaten lightly

a 15- to 16-ounce container whole-milk ricotta cheese

4 large red bell peppers (about 1 1/2 pounds), roasted and chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced and mashed to a paste with 1 teaspoon coarse salt

1 recipe pizza rustica pastry dough

1/4 pound Parmesan cheese, grated (about 1 cup)

1/2 pound thinly sliced prosciutto, chopped

6 ounces provolone cheese, cut into 1/4 inch dice (about 1 cup)

an egg wash made by beating 1 large egg with 2 tablespoons milk

PIZZA RUSTICA PASTRY DOUGH

4 cups all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon salt

2 sticks (1 cup) cold unsalted butter, cut into bits

4 large eggs, beaten lightly

Make Pizza Rustica:

In a large heavy saucepan cook chard stems in oil over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until crisp-tender, about 3 minutes. Add chard leaves with water clinging to them and cook, covered, over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until stems are tender, about 8 minutes. Drain chard well in a colander and squeeze out as much moisture as possible.

In a large bowl combine well eggs and ricotta. In a bowl combine well roasted peppers and garlic paste.

Preheat oven to 375°F.

On a lightly floured surface roll out two thirds pastry dough 1/8 thick into a round about 18 inches in diameter. Fit dough into a 9-inch springform pan and trim edge, leaving a 2-inch overhang. Into shell layer evenly half chard, half ricotta mixture, all roasted pepper mixture, half Parmesan, all prosciutto, remaining ricotta mixture, remaining chard, and remaining Parmesan.

On a lightly floured surface roll out remaining dough 1/8 inch thick into a round about 11 inches in diameter. Brush edge of shell in pan with some egg wash and fit dough on top of filling. Trim top crust even with bottom crust and crimp edges together decoratively. Cut four 3-inch-long vents in top crust and brush top crust with some remaining egg wash.

Bake pizza rustica in middle of oven 1 1/2 hours, or until top crust is deep golden, and cool completely in pan on a rack. Pizza rustica may be made 2 days ahead and chilled in pan, covered.

Serve pizza rustica warm or at room temperature, cut into wedges.

To Roast Peppers:

Using a long-handled fork, char peppers over an open flame or on a rack set over an electric burner, turning them, until skins are blackened, 4 to 6 minutes. (Or broil peppers on rack of a broiler pan under a preheated broiler about 2 inches from heat, turning them every 5 minutes, 15 to 20 minutes, or until skins are blistered and charred.) Transfer peppers to a bowl and let stand, covered, until cool enough to handle. Keeping peppers whole, peel them, starting at blossom end. Cut off pepper tops and discard seeds and ribs. Roast peppers can be prepared in 45 minutes or less.

To make Pastry Dough:

In a bowl with a pastry blender or in a food processor mix or pulse together flour, sugar, and salt. Add butter and blend or pulse until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add eggs and toss or pulse until eggs are incorporated and a dough is formed. Form dough into a disk and chill, wrapped in wax paper, 1 hour. Dough may be made 1 day ahead and chilled, covered.) Can be prepared in 45 minutes or less but requires additional unattended time.

Serves 6.

Gourmet

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