



## **CAPRESE SALAD** *INSALATA CAPRESE*

No matter where you are in Italy, the Caprese salad (which originates in southern Italy) is more often than not featured on menus and served at parties and special occasions. The combination of tomatoes, garlic and mozzarella is just perfect, and the salad looks so beautiful. Always use the best-quality tomatoes, in season. The good news for vegetarians is that rennet-free buffalo mozzarella is now available in many Italian delis and supermarkets. Serve with warm crusty bread or my Cheesy ciabatta (see page 62).

1 Place the tomatoes in a medium bowl with the basil and garlic. Season with salt and pepper. Pour over the oil and stir to combine. Leave for 10 minutes at room temperature, stirring occasionally.

2 Carefully spoon the tomatoes onto 4 plates, reserving the juices in the bowl.

3 Using a tablespoon, make a small hollow in the centre of the tomatoes. Place one ball of mozzarella in each 'nest'. Using a sharp knife, make a cross cut in the mozzarella, about 1cm deep. Gently open out the cheese and place 1 basil leaf inside. Drizzle over 1 tablespoon of the reserved juices.

Serves 4

5 large ripe fresh plum tomatoes, cut into chunks  
15 fresh red cherry tomatoes, halved  
15 fresh yellow cherry tomatoes, halved  
10 fresh basil leaves, plus 4 leaves to garnish  
2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped  
8 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
4 x 125g balls of buffalo mozzarella cheese, drained  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper