

Fresh Ricotta, Fava Bean & Prosciutto Tartine

Now you can add cheesemaker to your list of culinary achievements. Really. It's not hard. And homemade ricotta is far superior to store-bought, even if it comes from a fancy cheese shop. And tartine? Just a fancy way of saying open-faced sandwich. This is our ode to spring, with the fresh cheese topped by grassy favas and prosciutto laced with lemon atop the most delicious bread you can find.

Ingredients

fresh ricotta

1/2 gallon organic whole milk
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice (from about 1½ lemons)
1 teaspoon kosher salt

fava bean tartine

2 cups shelled and prepared fresh fava beans (see Cook's Note), or 1 pound thawed frozen fava beans, peeled
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon grated lemon zest
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
3 sprigs fresh tarragon, chopped (about 1 tablespoon)
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
3 slices (1½ ounces) prosciutto, cut into thin strips
12 slices Pugliese bread or other crusty, wide loaf of bread, cut 1/2-inch thick

special equipment

cheesecloth, mesh strainer

Directions

for the ricotta

Line mesh strainer with a double layer of cheesecloth and set over a large bowl.

Pour the milk into a large saucepan and bring just to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally to help distribute the heat, 10 to 20 minutes. A few bubbles will appear, the milk will steam and it will stick a little to the sides ... just don't let it boil. Turn off the heat, stir in the lemon juice, salt and let sit, stirring gently a few times, until curds form, about 10 minutes.

Spoon the curds into the strainer and let them sit, stirring gently a few times, until the cheese looks spreadable and is moist but not soggy, about 10 minutes. (You may have to empty the bowl as the cheese drains.) The longer the cheese sits, the firmer it will be. You'll get about 1¾ cups of ricotta.

for the fava tartine

Stir together the fava beans, olive oil, lemon zest, lemon juice, tarragon and salt. Gently stir in the prosciutto.

Spread each slice of bread with a couple tablespoons fresh ricotta and top with a similar amount of the fava bean mixture and serve.

Cook's Notes

Finding fresh fava beans at the market is a sure sign of spring. They do require a little advance prep. You'll need to remove them from their fuzzy pods (like unzipping a jacket). Set up an ice bath, then blanch the beans quickly in salted, boiling water. About 30 seconds should do it. Drop them in the ice bath to cool off, then slip them out of their tough, rubbery skins, and they're ready to use.

And if favas prove elusive, blanched lima beans or edamame are acceptable substitutes.

total time: 1 hour

active prep: 30 minutes

serves: 6

difficulty: easy