

SPRING ANTIPASTO FLATBREAD and NETTLES  
with PONZI ROSATO

The current trend to feature cooked nettles on menus and the availability of fresh nettles at farmers' markets was launched by restaurants such as Chez Panisse in California and Marche in Oregon. Years ago, when we first moved to our Oregon farm, I identified nettles among all the other weeds. Armed with a book on Eating Wild, I carefully picked and cooked them... and they are delicious, even better than fresh spinach! They are also much more nutritious. Before you hike out to collect bags of free nettles, check the Internet where there's lots of information and good recipes. Collecting nettles is much less serious than foraging mushroom, but in the same spirit—a lot of fun, fresh air and good food. But don't forget to wear gloves!

We're all so happy to greet Rosato... it's so versatile, so pretty, refreshing and easy to enjoy; the only drawback is sharing. If you're inviting friends for a springtime fête, you might consider other *Amici* friends so they can bring their bottle: this wine seems to disappear quickly!

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BREAD DOUGH INGREDIENTS:

(2 flatbreads, app. 10 x 14 inches)  
2 c. warm water  
1 T. dry yeast (one package) or 1 oz. compressed yeast – not instant kind  
1 T. honey  
2 T. olive oil  
1 T. kosher salt  
5 - 6 c. more or less unbleached white flour

TOPPING INGREDIENTS:

Olive oil  
12 - 16 oz. fresh mozzarella, sliced in ¼ inch slices  
10 - 12 cups fresh nettles  
½ C. Parmigiano-Reggiano, finely grated

TECHNIQUE:

1. Combine yeast, water and honey in deep mixing bowl. Let rest several minutes until yeast mixture become active... frothy.
2. Add oil, salt and begin mixing in flour. Stir flour in with a wooden spoon until dough becomes too sticky, then turn onto floured board. Add flour as needed and knead until dough is elastic; not stiff and hard, just so dough doesn't quite stick to your fingers.
3. Place dough in a ceramic bowl coated with olive oil, turn once to completely coat dough with oil. Cover with tea towel and set aside in warm place, out of draft, to rise for at least an hour; more is fine. If the dough doubles before you're ready to make your bread loaves, punch down gently and let rise again.
4. Preheat oven to 425°F.
5. Put dough on well-floured board, knead just enough to handle ... 30-60 seconds. Cut dough in half and make two balls. First roll dough into sort of rectangle, then place in oiled rimmed baking pans. Stretch dough toward rims with your fingers. The goal is to stretch dough to thinness you want, remembering it will double in thickness as it cooks. Pinch a collar around the edge. Press flat part of dough down with fingertips. Let rise 5-15 minutes; thicker dough obviously takes a little longer to avoid being heavy and doughy.
6. Prepare nettles (and this can be done well in advance) by boiling a pot of water sufficient to hold nettles. Put nettles (without touching or with rubber gloves) all at once into boiling water, stir. They only need to cook 1-2 minutes

# PONZI

V I N E Y A R D S

to wilt and magically become stingless and delicious. Remove from heat, drain and rinse with cold water. When cool enough to handle, wring water out, place on cutting board and roughly chop. Nettles are ready to go, full of colorful nutrition and terrific flavor!

7. To top flatbreads, first coat generously with olive oil. Layer on fresh mozzarella slices, scatter on chopped nettles and sprinkle well with Parmigiano-Reggiano.
8. Bake 8 – 12 minutes until bottom of crust is nicely browned and cheese bubbling.
9. Remove from oven and cool a few minutes. Slice into wedges, squares or rectangles, bring out the chilled Rosato and relax... spring has sprung!

*NOTE – I understand there are a variety of nettles, Archangel or Dead, that are stingless. Cooks at Chez Panisse (yes, their nettle-topped pizza is wonderful) have told me they use a type of cultivated stingless nettle. I haven't found them... let me know if you do!*