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Gathering friends in your garden for a casual midday meal is the ultimate pleasure on a lazy summer day—especially in the cooling shade of an arbor. At the Apple Farm, a working farm, inn, and cooking school in Philo, California, owners Sally and Don Schmitt and Karen and Tim Bates have been hosting garden-fresh meals beneath a living arbor of 12 mulberry trees for more than a decade. There, around a concrete table with a tree-stump base, friends and guests eat together to dine and chat.

Tuscan Bread and Tomato Salad (Panzanella)

A favorite seasonal lunch at the Apple Farm.

PREP AND COOK TIME: 40 minutes

MAKES: 4 servings

NOTES: Serve with a selection of fruits and cheeses.

7 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons butter
2 cloves garlic, peeled and coarsely chopped
1 12-inch length of baguette
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 teaspoons kosher or sea salt
1/4 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
8 very ripe assorted tomatoes (3 lb.), large ones chopped
1/2 cup basil leaves, torn into pieces or cut into ribbons

1. Preheat oven to 350°. In a small pan over medium heat, combine 2 tablespoons olive oil, the butter, and garlic; stir until butter melts, about 2 minutes.

2. Cut baguette into 1/2-inch cubes and put in a 10- by 15-inch baking pan. Pour oil mixture over bread and mix well. Bake until golden, 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from oven and let bread cool in pan.

3. In a bowl, mix remaining olive oil, the vinegar, salt, and pepper. Stir in tomatoes and bread cubes. Serve at room temperature in shallow bowls, garnished with basil.

Per serving: 420 Cal., 69% (288 Cal.) from fat; 5.6 g protein; 32 g fat (7.4 g sat.); 32 g carbo (5.4 g fiber); 1,260 mg sodium; 16 mg chol.

—EDITED BY
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