

lemon ricotta toast with smoked salmon & fried capers

BEAUTY, LOVE & GRUB

SERVES 4-6

Part of this creation was inspired by a recipe from my idol, Ina Garten. Ina makes a whipped feta spread for a crostini appetizer, and it's in my top 10. So I decided to try a modified version using ricotta cheese, served with one of my favorite NYC weekend breakfast staples: smoked salmon. This is a very simple breakfast to prepare and serve. It's a traditional meal with a spin. Or as Ina would say, "taken up a notch." I tend to become obsessed with certain flavors and ingredients for short periods of time. My latest obsession is fried capers, and personally, I think they make this meal simply perfect. I often use pastrami salmon from Barney Greengrass in NYC. If you ever have the opportunity to try it, do so!

¾ cup	part-skim ricotta cheese
¼ cup	cream cheese, room temperature
3 tablespoons	freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 teaspoon	fresh lemon zest
2 teaspoons	extra virgin olive oil
½ teaspoon	kosher salt
to taste	freshly ground black pepper
¼ - ½ cup	extra virgin olive oil
½ cup	non-pareil capers, rinsed and drained
¼ cup	all-purpose flour for dredging
1.5 pounds	smoked salmon or lox
1 loaf	fresh bread, such as sourdough or country round, sliced ¼ inch thick
¼ - ½ cup	fresh dill, fronds minced with thick stems removed

For the lemon cheese spread, place the ricotta and cream cheese in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade. Pulse to combine. Add 2 teaspoons of olive oil, lemon juice, lemon zest, salt, and pepper, and process until smooth and creamy. Set aside in a bowl. Can be made one day ahead and refrigerated.

Place flour in a small bowl and dredge capers in it. Scoop up the capers and use a tightly bound wire mesh handheld strainer (or colander—the net is what's important) to shake off the excess flour. In a large, non-stick skillet over medium-high heat, add the olive oil until it's about 1/8 inch deep in the pan. Once hot, add the capers in a single layer. Fry for 3 minutes, shaking the pan periodically to ensure even frying and that they don't burn. With a slotted spoon (with holes small enough to hold the capers), remove capers from the pan and place on a paper towel.

Mince dill (excluding thick stems). Toast or grill bread. Spread lemon ricotta on toast. Top with smoked salmon/lox as desired. Sprinkle with fresh dill and fried capers. Enjoy!

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