

CHEESE TORTA WITH BASIL, OLIVES, AND SUNDRIED TOMATOES

<http://andreasrecipes.com/2010/07/16/cheese-torta-with-basil-olives-and-sundried-tomatoes-and-a-giveaway>

Adapted from *Basil: An Herb Lover's Guide*, by Thomas DeBaggio and Susan Belsinger.

Serves up to 24.

Equipment

stand mixer with paddle attachment, or hand mixer and large bowl
1-quart domed bowl (narrow and deep is better than wide)
small bowl
cheesecloth

Ingredients

16 large whole basil leaves
10 ounces (280 g) goat cheese, softened
8 ounces (225 g) cream cheese, softened
1/4 to 1/2 cup (60 to 120 ml) milk
3 cloves garlic, minced
salt, to taste
black pepper freshly ground, to taste
1/2 cup (120 ml) finely chopped basil leaves
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1/2 cup finely chopped sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil, drained
1/2 cup finely chopped Kalamata olives

Preparation

1. In the bowl of the stand mixer, mix the goat cheese and cream cheese, adding enough milk so the mixture is smooth and spreadable. Add 1 clove of the minced garlic, season with salt and pepper, and mix well.
2. In the other bowl, combine the chopped basil with the remaining garlic and all the olive oil to make a thick paste.
3. Line the 1-quart bowl with wet cheesecloth. Arrange 4 large basil leaves face down on the cheesecloth.
4. Carefully spread one-fourth of the cheese mixture over the basil leaves on the cheesecloth. Add the sun-dried tomatoes, evenly distributing and spreading them to the edge of the cheese. Press down gently. Spread one-fourth of the cheese

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over the tomato layer. Spread the basil and garlic mixture over this cheese layer, pressing lightly.

5. Add another one-fourth of the cheese, then cover it with the chopped olives, spreading to the edge and pressing gently. Add the final layer of cheese then finish with a layer of whole, large basil leaves and press gently.
6. Fold the cheesecloth in to cover the torta and refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.
7. To serve, fold back the cheesecloth and invert it onto a serving plate. Carefully remove the cheesecloth from the top of the torta. Let the torta stand at room temperature for 15 minutes before serving.