Holiday Crostini Two Ways

Cranberry, Whipped Ricotta & Prosciutto + Pesto, Prosciutto & Balsamic

Crispy, golden crostini topped two ways. One with fluffy lemon-whipped ricotta, tart cranberry sauce, salty prosciutto, and a generous drizzle of honey. The other with savory pesto, prosciutto, and sweet balsamic glaze. Finished with fresh microgreens and a little flaky salt, these are the kind of holiday appetizers that disappear from the platter before everyone's even had their first glass of wine.

Fun fact: This was actually the first recipe that ever went viral on my page! I brought it to Friendsgiving last year, and apparently it made an impression because I've already been asked to bring it again. So of course, we're bringing her back.

The original cranberry and whipped ricotta version is still a favorite, but I had extra baguette slices and figured, why not give everyone another option? Enter the pesto, prosciutto, and balsamic version. Both are ridiculously easy to throw together!

Servings: Approximately 24–32 crostini, depending on baguette size
Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 8–12 minutes
Total time: Approximately 30 minutes, including cooling

Ingredients

For the Crostini Base

- 2 baguettes, sliced diagonally into approximately ½-inch slices (Or just one baguette if you're making just one version)
- 2–3 tbsp olive oil, or as needed for brushing
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Flaky sea salt, for finishing (optional, but highly recommended)

For the Cranberry, Whipped Ricotta & Prosciutto Crostini

- 1 (16 oz) container whole-milk ricotta
- 1 tsp olive oil

- 1 tsp fresh lemon juice
- Lemon zest, optional
- Salt and freshly cracked black pepper, to taste
- ½–¾ cup cranberry sauce, homemade or store-bought
- 3–4 oz thinly sliced prosciutto
- Honey, for drizzling (hot honey would be SO good here too)
- Fresh microgreens, for garnish

For the Pesto, Prosciutto & Balsamic Crostini

- ⅓–½ cup basil pesto
- 3–4 oz thinly sliced prosciutto
- Balsamic glaze, for drizzling
- Fresh microgreens, for garnish
- Flaky sea salt, for finishing (optional)

Instructions

1. Toast the Baguette

Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C).

Slice the baguettes diagonally into approximately ½-inch-thick slices and arrange them in a single layer on a large baking sheet. Work in batches if needed.

Lightly brush (or drizzle) the tops with olive oil and bake for 8–12 minutes, until the edges are golden and the bread is nice and crisp.

As soon as they come out of the oven, give them a little sprinkle of salt. This is a trick I picked up from Geoffrey Zakarian, and now I do it every time.

Here's the important part: Let the crostini cool completely before adding your toppings! Warm bread will soften the whipped ricotta and make it runny, which is not what we're going for.

2. Make the Lemon-Whipped Ricotta

Add the whole-milk ricotta, olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and freshly cracked black pepper to a food processor.

Blend for 1–2 minutes, scraping down the sides as needed, until it's smooth, airy, and fluffy.

Give it a taste and adjust your seasoning. If you love a little extra lemon, add some fresh zest too.

Transfer to a bowl or piping bag and keep refrigerated until you're ready to assemble.

3. Assemble the Cranberry, Whipped Ricotta & Prosciutto Crostini

Once your baguette slices are completely cool, spread or pipe a generous layer of whipped ricotta onto each piece.

Add a little spoonful of cranberry sauce, followed by a loosely folded piece of prosciutto. I like to bunch up the prosciutto rather than lay it flat. It gives the crostini a little height and makes the platter look so much prettier.

Drizzle with honey (or hot honey if you're feeling adventurous), then add a few fresh microgreens for a pop of color.

If you have flaky sea salt, finish with a tiny sprinkle. Trust me on this one.

4. Assemble the Pesto, Prosciutto & Balsamic Crostini

For the second variation, spread a little basil pesto over each cooled baguette slice.

Add a loosely folded piece of prosciutto, followed by a drizzle of balsamic glaze.

Finish with fresh microgreens and a little flaky sea salt, if you have it.

That's it. SO easy.

5. Serve

Arrange both variations together on a large serving platter. I like alternating them so you get all those pretty reds and greens mixed together. They look so festive.

Serve shortly after assembling while the crostini are still crisp.

Tips & Notes

Please let the bread cool. I know I've already said it, but it's worth repeating. Warm crostini and whipped ricotta are not friends. Give the bread enough time to cool so your ricotta stays light and fluffy instead of turning into a runny mess.

Whole-milk ricotta is the way to go. It's richer, creamier, and whips up beautifully in the food processor.

Salt your bread straight out of the oven. That little sprinkle of salt while the crostini are still hot makes such a difference. It's one of those tiny things that takes something simple and makes it that much better.

Use whatever cranberry sauce you love. Homemade is wonderful, but store-bought works perfectly too. I personally love a sauce with a little tartness to balance out the creamy ricotta, salty prosciutto, and honey.

Make what you can ahead of time. You can toast your baguette slices 2–3 days in advance and store them in an airtight container at room temperature once they've completely cooled. The whipped ricotta can also be made 2–3 days ahead and kept refrigerated. Just save the assembly for shortly before serving so nothing gets soggy.

Flaky salt is your friend. Especially on the cranberry version. That little bit of salt against the honey and tart cranberry? So good.

Why You'll Love This Recipe

You get crispy, creamy, salty, sweet, and tangy all in one bite. Plus, the reds and greens make these practically made for a holiday appetizer spread.

They're easy to prep ahead, fun to assemble, and you can make two completely different appetizers using the same batch of toasted baguette slices.

And considering these have officially become a repeat Friendsgiving request, I think they've earned their spot on the holiday menu. 🤎