

I love ricotta for its cream taste and especially as it only contains a fraction of the fat of most cheeses. Baked it makes a wonderful shared starter and its perfect for picnics too. Spread it on toast or serve as part of an antipasto platter.

### **Baked ricotta with herb, tomato & walnut salad**

serves 8-10 (as a starter)

prep 20 mins

cooking 30 mins

500g fresh ricotta

2 eggs, lightly whisked

35g (1/3 cup) finely grated parmesan

40g (1/3 cup) pitted black olives, chopped

2 tbs chopped fresh basil

2 tbs chopped fresh continental parsley, plus 2 tbs fresh continental parsley leaves, extra

¼ tsp dried chilli flakes

1 tbs olive oil

100g grape or cherry tomatoes, chopped

2 tbs fresh mint leaves

2 tbs fresh oregano leaves

2 tbs walnuts, lightly toasted, coarsely chopped

Grilled bread, to serve (optional)

1 Preheat oven to 160°C/140°C fan forced. Spray a 10 x 20cm (base measurement) non-stick loaf pan with oil.

2 Process the ricotta, egg and parmesan in a food processor until smooth. Transfer to a large bowl. Stir in the olives, basil and chopped parsley. Season. Spoon into the pan and bake for 25 minutes or until set and golden around edges.

3 Line a baking tray with baking paper. Carefully turn ricotta out onto the prepared tray. Sprinkle with the chilli and drizzle with 2 tsp of the oil. Bake for a further 5 minutes. Set aside for 10 minutes to cool.

4 Meanwhile, combine the tomato, mint, oregano, walnuts and parsley leaves in a bowl. Stir in remaining oil. Season.

5 Top the ricotta with the tomato salad and serve with slices of grilled bread, if using.