Broccoli Toasts With Melty Provolone

[COLU HENRY](https://cooking.nytimes.com/search?q=Colu+Henry)

* YIELD4 to 6 servings
* TIME35 minutes

A beautifully assembled toast can make a lovely light dinner. In this version, blanched broccoli is cooked in olive oil that's been infused with garlic and anchovies (always optional) until it’s very tender, then it’s piled onto toasted bread. Grated extra-sharp provolone, which is a nice complement to the mildly sweet broccoli, is sprinkled on top, then the toasts are broiled until the cheese is melted and golden brown. You can use cauliflower, broccoli rabe or thickly sliced sweet peppers in place of the broccoli, but be sure to cook your vegetables until they are velvety soft — it provides a nice contrast to the crunchy bread. While these toasts work well on their own, they make an equally good accompaniment to roast chicken or grilled fish.

INGREDIENTS

* Kosher salt
* 1 head of broccoli, about 1 pound, trimmed and cut into small florets
* 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
* 4 anchovy fillets, roughly chopped (optional)
* 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
* ½ teaspoon red-pepper flakes
* ½ teaspoon lemon zest
* Black pepper
* 6 (3/4-inch thick) slices of a 10-inch round peasant loaf
* 3 ounces grated provolone, preferably extra-sharp

PREPARATION

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and blanch the broccoli for 2 to 3 minutes. Drain broccoli and pat dry.
2. Heat the olive oil in a 12-inch tall-sided skillet over medium heat. Add the anchovies, if using, the garlic and red-pepper flakes and cook until the anchovies have dissolved and the garlic is fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the broccoli and cook, stirring occasionally until the broccoli is cooked down and very tender, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add a tablespoon or two of water, if needed, to help it along. Stir in lemon zest. Taste and season with salt and pepper, if needed.
3. While the broccoli cooks, heat the broiler. Lay the bread on a large sheet pan and toast until golden, about 1 to 3 minutes a side depending on your oven. (Check often to make sure they don’t burn.) Remove from oven and divide the broccoli mixture between the toasts. Scatter each toast with the grated provolone, return to oven and broil until the cheese melts and turns golden in spots, 1 to 3 minutes more. (Again, check often to make sure they don’t burn.) Remove from oven and serve slices whole or cut in half.