



Roasted Tomato Soup

In this recipe from Chef Ray Garcia, roasting further concentrates the flavor of these early harvested tomatoes. If Early Girls are not available, substitute large plum tomatoes or high-quality canned San Marzano tomatoes.

Position 1 rack in the upper third and 1 rack in the lower third of an oven. Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Cut the tomatoes in half crosswise and transfer to a large bowl. Add 2 Tbs. of the olive oil, season with salt and pepper and toss to coat. Place the tomatoes, cut side up, on 2 baking sheets and transfer to the oven. Roast until the tomatoes are soft and slightly caramelized, about 2 hours, rotating the pans from top to bottom and 180 degrees after 1 hour.

In a Dutch oven over medium heat, warm the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil. Add the onion, celery and leeks and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the roasted tomatoes, any accumulated juices and the roasted garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes. Add the 8 cups stock and the thyme, reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for 30 minutes more.

Working in batches, puree the soup in a blender until smooth. Adjust the consistency as needed with more stock and season with salt and pepper. Ladle the soup into bowls, drizzle with olive oil and serve immediately. Serves 6 to 8.

Recipe by Ray Garcia, Chef, FIG, Santa Monica, CA.

20 Early Girl tomatoes
4 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for serving
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
1 large yellow onion, diced
4 celery stalks, diced
2 leeks, white and light green portions, diced
2 Tbs. roasted garlic
8 cups vegetable stock, plus more as needed
2 Tbs. fresh thyme leaves



Fresh Tomato Bloody Marys

These Bloody Marys are made with fresh tomato juice for exceptional flavor. Be sure to use very ripe, sweet, summer tomatoes when preparing the juice.

In a pitcher, stir together the tomato juice, celery juice, horseradish, pepper, the 1 tsp. salt, 3 dashes Tabasco and ½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce. Taste and adjust the seasonings. Cover and refrigerate until well chilled, at least 30 minutes.

Fill 2 tall glasses with ice cubes and add 2 fl. oz. vodka to each one. Stir the tomato juice mixture and pour into glasses, dividing evenly. Garnish each with a celery stalk and serve immediately. Serves 2.

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1¼ cups fresh tomato juice (from about 2 lb. tomatoes)
¾ cup fresh celery juice (from about 3 large celery stalks)
2 tsp. grated fresh horseradish
¼ tsp. freshly ground pepper
1 tsp. salt, plus more, to taste
3 dashes Tabasco sauce, plus more, to taste
½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce, plus more, to taste
Ice cubes as needed
4 fl. oz. vodka
2 celery stalks

July 15, 2012

Grow, Cook, Eat: Tomatoes

Once feared as poisonous, then considered a possible aphrodisiac, the “love apple” now adds its vivid color and delicious flesh to innumerable dishes. Like the potato, this fruit (which is generally treated as a vegetable) is a member of the nightshade family and is native to South America. After finally gaining acceptance as a food in Europe and the United States, tomatoes became an inextricable part of many cuisines.

Selecting: Although tomatoes are available year-round, they are best when eaten at the height of their natural season, usually June through September. For the best summer tomatoes, visit farm stands, farmers’ markets and natural-food stores for vine-ripened tomatoes, or grow your own. Choose organic tomatoes, if possible, as they are likely to be more flavorful.

When fresh tomatoes are out of season, use canned (or packaged) imported plum tomatoes, usually called Italian tomatoes. They will have a much better flavor than will poor-quality fresh ones.

Storing: Store ripe tomatoes at room temperature for up to 3 days. If they are slightly unripe, put them in a sunny place for several days and they will ripen further. Although whole fresh tomatoes should not be refrigerated, cut tomatoes should be wrapped in plastic wrap or waxed paper and refrigerated.

Preparing: Wash and dry tomatoes to be sliced. Cut out the stem end and leave the tomatoes whole or cut them into crosswise or lengthwise slices or into wedges, or chop, according to the recipe. Pull off the stems of cherry tomatoes. Some recipes call for peeled and/or seeded tomatoes, usually when they are to be chopped for a sauce.

What Are Heirloom Tomatoes?

Heirloom tomatoes are old-fashioned varieties that have been reintroduced by farmers and gardeners. These tomatoes are full of flavor, but they may not keep as long as more commonly available varieties, and they may have thinner skins, qualities that make them less desirable for commercial processing. Many new tomato varieties often also classified as heirloom have been introduced, as well.

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Types of Heirloom Varieties

- Commercial heirlooms: open-pollinated varieties introduced before 1940.
- Family heirlooms: seeds that have been passed down for several generations through a family or even a specific seed company. Family heirlooms that have been passed down since before 1940 and have become popular can be considered commercial heirlooms.
- Created heirlooms: two varieties of tomatoes that are crossbred to create a new variety in the hope of eliminating undesirable qualities or promoting positive qualities, such as resistance to blight.
- Mystery heirlooms: tomatoes that naturally cross-pollinate with heirloom tomatoes to form new heirlooms.

<p>3 Tbs. olive oil, plus more for brushing and storing</p> <p>5 lb. tomatoes, cored and cut into small chunks</p> <p>1 tsp. salt</p>	<h3>Chunky Tomato Conserve</h3> <p><i>Serve this chunky conserve on top of crackers or toasted bread slices.</i></p> <p>In a large fry pan over high heat, warm the 3 Tbs. olive oil. Add the tomatoes and salt, bring to a boil and cook until soft, about 2 minutes. Pass the tomatoes through a food mill.</p> <p>Rinse and dry the pan and return it to high heat. Add the tomatoes and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and cook, stirring often, until reduced by two-thirds, about 2 hours.</p> <p>Preheat an oven to 250°F.</p> <p>Lightly brush a baking sheet with olive oil and spread out the tomatoes in an even layer. Bake, turning the tomatoes as their surface darkens, until the liquid evaporates and the tomatoes have reduced to a thick, shiny, brick-colored paste, about 1 hour.</p> <p>Transfer the conserve to a glass jar, top with about ½ inch of olive oil and store in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Top with olive oil after each use. Serves 4.</p> <p><small>Adapted from Williams-Sonoma <i>Cooking from the Farmers' Market</i>, by Tasha DeSerio & Jodi Liano (Weldon Owen, 2010).</small></p>
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<p>2½ lb. ripe plum tomatoes</p> <p>¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil</p> <p>5 garlic cloves, minced</p> <p>1 Tbs. minced fresh oregano</p> <p>Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste</p> <p>2 Tbs. minced fresh basil</p>	<h3>Fresh Tomato Sauce</h3> <p><i>Use the freshest vine-ripened tomatoes you can find to prepare this simple sauce. Toss it with gnocchi or your favorite pasta.</i></p> <p>Place the tomatoes in a tomato press or food mill set over a bowl and pass them through the press or mill. Repeat as needed until all the large pieces of tomatoes are crushed. Set aside.</p> <p>In a sauté pan over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, about 2 minutes. Add the oregano and stir to combine. Stir in the crushed tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, uncovered, until the sauce is thickened, 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in the basil and cook for 1 minute. Makes about 3 cups.</p> <p><small>Williams-Sonoma Kitchen</small></p>
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<p>2 Tbs. olive oil</p> <p>1 red onion, sliced</p> <p>Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste</p> <p>¾ lb. plum tomatoes, sliced</p> <p>2 small zucchini, about ¾ lb. total, sliced</p> <p>1 Tbs. minced fresh basil</p> <p>1 Tbs. minced fresh marjoram</p> <p>¼ cup water or chicken broth</p>	<h3>Baked Tomatoes and Zucchini</h3> <p><i>Look for plum tomatoes and zucchini with similar diameters so that you will have uniform slices to arrange attractively atop the sautéed red onions that form an aromatic base for this Mediterranean-inspired side dish.</i></p> <p>Preheat an oven to 350°F. Butter or oil a shallow 2-quart baking dish.</p> <p>In a fry pan over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the onion and sauté slowly until very soft and beginning to brown, about 10 minutes. Transfer the onion slices to the prepared baking dish, spreading them evenly over the bottom. Season with salt and pepper.</p> <p>Arrange the tomato slices and zucchini slices over the onion in alternate rows. Sprinkle with the basil and marjoram, and season with salt and pepper. Pour the water evenly over the vegetables.</p> <p>Cover and bake until the vegetables are bubbling and tender, about 40 minutes. Remove from the oven, uncover and serve hot directly from the dish. Serves 4 to 6.</p> <p><small>Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Lifestyles Series, <i>Chicken for Dinner</i>, by Heidi Haughey Cusick (Time-Life Books, 1998).</small></p>
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<p>1 very small yellow onion, cut into paper-thin slices</p> <p>Salt, to taste</p> <p>½ cup milk</p> <p>½ cup plain yogurt</p> <p>1 to 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice</p> <p>1 garlic clove, minced</p> <p>1 Tbs. chopped fresh oregano</p> <p>1½ Tbs. chopped fresh basil</p> <p>2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil</p> <p>Freshly ground pepper, to taste</p> <p>6 ripe tomatoes, thinly sliced</p> <p>1 English (hothouse) cucumber, peeled and cut crosswise into thin slices</p> <p>Handful of fresh basil leaves</p> <p>Handful of fresh cherry tomatoes</p>	<h3>Farmers' Market Tomato Salad</h3> <p><i>Farmers' markets are cropping up everywhere, offering an incredible selection of fruits and vegetables. Most provide a variety of fresh red, yellow and orange summer tomatoes, all of which need little embellishment to highlight their sweet, sun-ripened flavor.</i></p> <p>Place the onion slices in a bowl and sprinkle with salt. Pour the milk over the onion and let stand for 30 minutes.</p> <p>Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk together the yogurt, lemon juice, garlic, oregano, basil, olive oil, salt and pepper to form a vinaigrette. Cover and refrigerate until needed.</p> <p>Arrange the tomato and cucumber slices on a plate. Drain the onion slices and pat dry with paper towels. Scatter the onions atop the tomatoes and cucumbers. Drizzle with the vinaigrette, top with the basil leaves and cherry tomatoes and serve. Serves 6.</p> <p><small>Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Seasonal Celebration Series, <i>Summer</i>, by Joanne Weir (Time-Life Books, 1997).</small></p>
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