

FRESH TOMATO SAUCE

(edited) from smittenkitchen.com

(yields about 4 cups)

Ingredients

- 4 lbs **tomatoes**
- ¼ cup **olive oil**
- 1 small **onion**
- 2-3 small cloves of **garlic**
- ½ medium **carrot**
- ½ stalk of **celery**
- ½ tsp **salt** plus more to taste
- slivers of fresh basil, to finish



Preparation

- 1. Peel the tomatoes:** Bring a pot of water to boil. Cut a small X at the bottom of each tomato. Blanche the tomatoes in the boiling water for 10 to 30 seconds, then either rinse under cold water or shock in an ice water bath. Peeling the tomatoes should now be a cinch. If one gives you trouble, toss it back in the boiling water for another 10 seconds until the skin loosens up. Discard the skins (or get crafty with them).
- 2. Finish preparing the tomatoes:** If using plum tomatoes, halve each lengthwise. If using beefsteak or another round variety, quarter them. Squeeze the seeds out over a strainer over a bowl and reserve the juices. (You can discard the seeds, or get crafty with them.) Either coarsely chop the tomatoes on a cutting board or use a potato masher to do so in the pot, as they are cooked in a bit (see, Step 4).
- 3. Prepare your vegetables:** Finely chop the onion, and mince the carrot, celery and garlic. (Other methods that work: grate the carrots, or all four can be pulsed on the food processor to form a paste.)
- 4. Cook the sauce:** Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium. Cook onions, carrots, celery and garlic, if using, until they just start to take on a little color, about 10 minutes. Add tomatoes and bring to a simmer, lowering the heat to medium-low to keep at a gentle simmer. (If tomatoes are not yet chopped, use a potato masher to break them up as they cook.) Simmer your sauce, stirring occasionally. At 30 minutes, it should be a fine pot of tomato sauce, but at 45 minutes, it will have more caramelized flavors, more harmonized texture.

5. If the sauce is getting thicker than you want it to be, add back the reserved tomato juice as need. If the sauce is too lumpy, use an immersion blender to break it down to your desired texture. Season with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, add more to taste. (between $\frac{1}{2}$ –1 teaspoon can be used for 4 lbs of tomatoes). Scatter fresh basil over the pot before serving. Taste once more.

NOTES

Have a food mill? You can run your tomatoes through them on a fine setting and it will remove both the seeds and the skin. You can then skip the first two sets of instructions.

More ways to play around: There are innumerable ways to tweak your tomato sauce. Some like a pinch of red pepper flakes cooked with the carrots/celery/garlic and onion in the beginning. Some add them at the end. Some swear by a glug of red wine added with the tomatoes. Others insist that a tablespoon of tomato paste will give your relatively quick-cooked sauce a longer-cooked flavor.

To play around as little as possible: Skip the onion, carrot and celery. Just cook your tomatoes for 30 to 45 minutes and at the end, drizzle in some olive oil or melted butter. If you have time, you can infuse that oil or butter with garlic and basil. Season to taste with salt. Wonder why you ever added so many ingredients to something so obviously perfect without them.