

## Less can be more when it comes to **fresh tomato sauce**

By Katie Workman

Tomato lovers wait for this moment all year, that moment when the plants in the garden are struggling under the weight of those gorgeous red (or yellow or orange or even green) orbs, and the tables at the farmers markets threaten to buckle under the load. We slice and eat them as fast as we can, but we still can't keep up. Nor can we ever get enough. This is when fresh tomato sauce comes into play, turning a basketful of ripe tomatoes into an easy dinner.

The beauty of this recipe is you can cook the tomatoes for as little or as long as you want, and you'll still have a lovely, clean sauce. I like to take out about half of the sauce after 10 minutes, preserving the sweet-acidic freshness of a barely cooked tomato, then let the rest of the sauce simmer for longer so that it reduces and concentrates and becomes deeper in flavor.

The two batches are then reunited and whirled together, and the result is a sauce with both depth and brightness. Not in the mood for that extra step? Just cook the whole thing for about 20 minutes, blend it up and call it a day. Also, if you prefer a chunky rustic sauce, just skip the blending step altogether. You can use absolutely any tomatoes you like. Some are more meaty, some have more water and seeds, and the sauce's consistency, flavor and color will vary accordingly.



### Fresh Tomato Sauce with Pasta

#### Ingredients

4 pounds ripe tomatoes (about 14 plum tomatoes)  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
1 medium yellow onion, chopped

5 cloves garlic, minced  
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)  
Salt and ground black pepper, to taste  
1/2 teaspoon sugar  
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme

6 large fresh basil leaves, chopped or shredded  
12 ounces dried pasta (any variety)  
Parmesan cheese, to serve  
Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Fill a

large bowl with ice water and have it nearby.

#### Preparation

Use a paring knife to cut an X across the bottom of each tomato. Carefully set the

tomatoes into the boiling water, cook for 60 seconds, then use a slotted spoon to transfer them to the ice water. Cool for 1 to 2 minutes. Place the tomatoes on a cutting board with a groove to catch the juices, then dump out the ice water, reserving the bowl. Peel off the tomato skins, then roughly chop the tomatoes, discarding the stem and any white core. Transfer the chopped tomatoes and any juices on the board to the bowl.

Return the large pot to medium heat. Add the oil, onion and garlic and saute, not allowing the garlic and onions to get more than lightly golden, for about 5 minutes, or until soft. Stir in the red pepper flakes, if using, and season with salt and pepper. Add the tomatoes and all of their juices, then increase the heat to high. Bring to a rapid simmer, add the sugar, then cook for about 10 minutes, or until the tomatoes start to break down.

Use a slotted spoon to transfer about half of the tomatoes to a bowl. Continue to simmer the rest of the tomato mixture for another 15 minutes until it thickens further and some of the liquid evaporates. Stir the reserved tomato mixture back into the pot along with the thyme and basil. Check and adjust the seasoning. While the tomato sauce finishes cooking, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook according to package directions.

For a chunky sauce, you can simply drain the pasta, return it to the pot, and toss with the sauce to combine. Alternatively, use an immersion blender to puree the mixture as smooth as you'd like right in its pot, or carefully transfer it to a food processor or blender and pulse or puree the mixture - in batches if necessary - until it reaches the desired consistency. Serve with grated Parmesan.



## Simple means simple with this **Zucchini soup**

By Melissa D'Arabian

In the farm-to-table food world of today, we often praise the cook who keeps recipes simple, letting the ingredients speak for themselves. Yet once I get started in the kitchen, sometimes I can't help but add in a final touch, an extra this or that (or two or three) that will make the whole recipe really sing.

So I'll admit, when I gave myself the task of creating a truly simple weeknight soup, I had to exercise uncharacteristic restraint. In fact, truth be told, I made eight different versions of this soup, half of which I allowed myself to continue to tweak and taste, adding everything from low-fat sour cream and citrus for tang to prosciutto chips and smoked paprika for a smoky edge. Guess which soup won the taste tests at my house? The simple 4-ingredient version I'm sharing with you today.

Four ingredients is all it takes to create this perfect meal starter. By starting my meals with a healthy veggie-driven soup, I load up my family with vitamins and fiber before the main meal even begins. And since my kids usually arrive at the dinner table racing in from hours of soccer practice or dance rehearsal, they are ravenous. Whatever I feed them first has the highest chance of being eaten, so why not make it uber healthy?

Zucchini - available most of the year despite technically being a summer squash - is full of fiber and offers nice

array of vitamins. One medium squash provides vitamin B6, folate and over half our daily requirement of vitamin C, not to mention minerals, such as iron and calcium. Zucchini also sports a couple grams of protein, which are always welcomed.

#### Ingredients

3 medium-large zucchini (about 1 1/2 pounds)  
Salt and ground black pepper  
2 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth, warmed to hot  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives  
1 tablespoon lemon juice

#### Preparation

Heat the oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with kitchen parchment. Cut the zucchini in half lengthwise, then slice off the nubby ends. Place the zucchini on the prepared baking sheet, then mist with cooking spray. Season with salt and pepper, then roast until tender, about 15 minutes, turning halfway through. In a blender, combine the roasted zucchini, hot broth, chives and lemon juice. Blend until creamy and smooth. Serve immediately.

## What your chop really needs is an easy, **warm salad**

By Sara Moulton

This recipe is a template for topping sauteed steaks or chops of most any kind with a wilted salad, a splendid dish for a late summer dinner. Mostly, I'm taking my cues here from the Italians. In Florence, they like to pep up their grilled steaks with a drizzle of olive and a spritz of lemon, which cuts through the meat's fattiness. Then there's veal Milanese, a breaded chop with a salad on top. But the latter dish doesn't marry the salad dressing to the chops, as I do here, and my chop isn't breaded. Also, Caesar dressing is rooted in Mexico, not Italy. All of which is to say I guess my inspirations were pretty diverse.

How to marry the meat to the salad? By taking advantage of the concentrated bits of reduced meat juices at the bottom of the pan, as well as the juices from the resting chops after they have been cooked. It's then that the salad's flavors - anchovies, garlic and shallots - are added to the skillet, followed by chicken broth, lemon juice and olive oil. As noted, these are basically the ingredients for a Caesar dressing with a little chicken broth added.

As for the greens, feel free to experiment. If you prefer them to be more crispy and less wilted, don't add them to the pan; just toss them with the warm dressing. Finally, I have called for lamb shoulder chops because they're more affordable than rib or loin chops. They're every bit as tasty as the pricier chops, even if they're also marginally chewier.

### Lamb Chops with warm Caesar Salad

#### Ingredients

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided  
Four 1/2-inch-thick lamb shoulder or round bone chops  
Salt and pepper  
4 anchovy fillets, chopped  
2 tablespoons minced shallots  
1 teaspoon minced garlic  
1/4 cup low-sodium chicken broth  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
4 cups chopped escarole, dandelion greens (tough stems removed) or romaine  
1 ounce shaved Parmesan cheese

#### Preparation

In a large skillet over medium-high, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil. Reduce the heat to medium and add 2 of the lamb chops, sprinkled with salt and pepper. Cook until lightly browned on both sides, 5 to 6 minutes total for medium-rare. Transfer to a plate and cover loosely with foil. Repeat with the remaining 2 chops in the oil remaining in the pan.

Return the skillet to the heat and reduce to medium-low. Add 1 tablespoon of the remaining oil, the anchovies, shallots and garlic, then cook, stirring, for 1 1/2 minutes. Add the broth and lemon juice and cook, scraping up the brown bits on the bottom, for 1 minute. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil, the greens, and a hefty pinch each of salt and pepper. Cook, stirring until the greens are slightly wilted, about 2 minutes. Add the juices from the resting lamb and remove from the heat. To serve, transfer the chops to each of 4 plates and top each chop with a quarter of the dressed wilted greens and the cheese. —AP

