

Fresh Tomato Sauce from Urban Sacred Garden



There is nothing as nice as a homemade, fresh tomato sauce to brighten an otherwise ordinary meal. One of the primary delights of the summer are tomatoes straight from the garden, warmed by the sun. This recipe can be made in large batches, frozen in quart sized freezer bags and thawed for individual future use. I perfected this recipe during my time in Italy one summer. This versatile basic can be used in baked pastas and combined with any type of meat or veggie.

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs ripe, beautiful tomatoes (substitute canned whole plum tomatoes in the winter - look for Italian brands like Cento)
1/2 extra virgin olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, finely chopped
1 stalk celery, finely chopped
(For consistency in cooking onion, carrot and celery should be same size - about 1/4 inch dice)
2 cloves garlic, diced
9 to 12 fresh basil leaves, chopped
Sea salt and ground pepper (to taste)
1 Tbsp fresh chopped Italian Parsley
1 cup shredded Parmesan cheese (optional - makes a "pink" sauce)

DIRECTIONS

1. Wash and chop all veggies as noted above
2. In large skillet or deep pan, warm the olive oil over medium heat, brown the carrots, celery, onion and garlic until the onion is translucent - about 4 to 5 mins
3. Wash tomatoes and chop coarsely into large chunks (chop canned whole plum tomatoes, too)
4. Add the tomatoes and 1/2 the basil leaves to the other veggies, cook for 30 mins
5. Add sea salt and ground pepper to taste throughout cooking process
6. Remove from heat and add remaining basil and parsley
7. (Optional) Add grated parmesan cheese to sauce
8. For a chunky sauce eat "as is", for a smoother sauce blend with a mixer or combine in a food processor.
9. Optional: Add chunky vegetables or meat - cook these items in a separate skillet and add to sauce in last 10 mins of cooking process. This sauce is also great for layering in baked pastas like lasagna.
10. This sauce can always sit and simmer longer than the 30 mins, or it can be cooked for 10 mins for a much chunkier sauce with large chunks of tomatoes
11. Serve over favorite pasta or chicken or eggplant parmesan. I always toss my finished pasta with a little olive oil, salt and pepper before serving with the sauce.