

A Touch of Tomato

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What To Do With A Fruit Of Many Personalities

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Introduction

Most people I know have the knowledge of the basics of cooking. With that being said they know the classics; perhaps a plate of pasta with sauce, baked chicken on rice, or a salad with many toppings. But as for many cooks, we all come across a single ingredient we cannot seem to get rid of. I made this discovery about two years ago and still cannot get sick of it. The day that I learned how to cook tomatoes was the day I realized I would never stop cooking with tomatoes. So, within all the classic dishes I began

adding tomatoes. It was no longer just a plate of pasta, it was a plate of pasta with perfectly sauteed tomatoes and ingredients that complimented them.

Baked chicken turned into baked chicken doused in savory tomato sauce.

Eventually, tomatoes became the main focus of many of my meals. Surely, you'd think I would've grown tired of eating the same ingredient so often but it only led me to finding and creating new recipes.

With the main seven types of tomatoes, I have concocted different types of recipes to satisfy your tomato cravings.

Types of Tomatoes

There are several types of tomatoes around the world, but you are probably most aware of these seven types: grape, cherry, roma, vine, green, heirloom, and beefsteak tomatoes. Each one has a slightly different size, texture, and flavor, which means a specific type may be preferred when cooking. Here's what you need to know about each type of tomato:

Grape tomatoes: oblong, firm, bite-sized tomatoes with a sweet and sour flavor.

Cherry tomatoes: round, juicy, bite-sized tomatoes with a sweet flavor.

Roma tomatoes: oval, juicy, small-medium sized tomatoes with a sweet flavor.

Vine tomatoes: round, firm, medium-sized tomatoes with a fresh and slightly sweet flavor.

Green tomatoes: round, firm,
medium-large sized tomatoes with a tangy
and sour flavor.

Heirloom tomatoes: round or misshapen,
juicy, large-sized tomatoes with a sweet
and earthy flavor.

Beefsteak tomatoes: round or misshapen,
juicy, large-sized tomatoes with a mild
flavor.

Tomato and Ricotta Toast

Serves 1

2 slices ciabatta bread

15 cherry tomatoes, sliced in half

1 tbsp olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ c ricotta cheese

1 tsp red pepper flakes

1 tsp garlic powder

1 tsp onion powder

1 ½ tbsp honey

¼ tsp salt

¼ tsp Pepper

Brush ½ tbsp of olive oil on both slices of bread and toast until crispy.

In a medium size frying pan, heat ½ tbsp olive oil over medium-low heat. Once warm, add the sliced tomatoes. Sauté for about 5 minutes. Once soft, use tongs or a spoon to smash the tomatoes.

Spread ricotta cheese onto both slices of bread. Evenly sprinkle on the garlic powder, onion powder, and red pepper flakes.

Spoon the tomatoes over the bread, dividing them among both slices. Season with salt and pepper and drizzle honey on top and serve.

What I have learned most about this recipe is how diverse it can be. Add fresh

arugula or basil for extra flavor. You can also substitute cream cheese for ricotta cheese. Throw on some fresh avocado for extra healthy fat.

Fried Tomatoes

Serves 4

4 vine tomatoes

$\frac{1}{4}$ c extra virgin olive oil

5 garlic cloves, finely chopped

4 fresh basil leaves, chiffonade

½ tsp salt

¼ tsp pepper

Slice each tomato horizontally in half.

In a large frying pan, heat 2 tbsp of the olive oil over medium heat. Add the tomatoes face down and drizzle the rest of the olive oil over them. Cook for five minutes. Flip the tomatoes and evenly sprinkle the garlic, salt, and pepper.

Cover the pan and reduce heat. Cook until the tomatoes are soft, about 10 minutes.

Half way through, spoon the oil in the pan over the tomatoes.

Remove the pan from the heat and top with basil. Serve with fresh bread.

Instead of vine tomatoes, beefsteak and green tomatoes can also be used. This recipe is great with fresh focaccia, Italian, and homemade bread. These make a tasty appetizer and pair well with chicken and fish.

Tomato Soup

Serves 2 to 3

1 red pepper

1 yellow onion

6 vine tomatoes

1 bulb of garlic

2 tsp dried oregano

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp red pepper flakes

1 tsp salt

1 tsp pepper

5 strands of thyme

4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

2 tbsp tomato paste

2 tbsp sugar

1 tbsp balsamic glaze

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cayenne powder

1 c vegetable stock

$\frac{1}{3}$ c heavy cream

5 fresh basil leaves

parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 425°F.

Cut and seed the red bell pepper and cut into 4 sections. Cut tomatoes into quarters. Cut the onion into 4 wedges. Cut the garlic bulb in half horizontally.

Scatter the vegetables on a sheet pan and coat with 2 tbsp of olive oil. Make sure the garlic halves are cut-side up. Sprinkle on oregano, red pepper flakes, salt, pepper, and place thyme strands on top.

Place in the oven for 40-45 minutes until tomatoes are blistered.

In a dutch oven or stock pot, add 2 tbsp of olive oil on medium-low heat. Squeeze the garlic from the shell and add the vegetables to the pot. Add in tomato paste, sugar, balsamic glaze, cayenne powder, vegetable stock, heavy cream, and basil leaves.

Using an immersion blender, blend until smooth. Stir until hot. Serve with a drizzle of heavy cream and olive oil, and top with parmesan cheese.

There are endless ways to flavor tomato soup perfectly to your liking. Try using rosemary, red onions, or adding in carrots and celery. You can also use any type of tomato for this recipe. Roma and cherry tomatoes add extra sweetness and flavor.

Tomato Tart

Serves 4 to 5

1 sheet puff pastry, thawed

4 vine tomatoes

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ c ricotta cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$ c mozzarella cheese, shredded

$\frac{1}{2}$ c parmesan cheese, grated

3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

2 cloves of garlic, minced

1 fresh basil leaf, chiffonade

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

On a floured surface, roll out the puff
pastry to fit a rectangular tart pan. Line

the tart pan with the puff pastry and trim around the edges. Use parchment paper to line the pastry and add pie weights.

Bake for 25 minutes. Once done, remove from the oven and remove parchment paper. Reduce heat to 375°F.

While the puff pastry cools, slice the tomatoes about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick. Place the sliced tomatoes on a stack of paper towels and evenly sprinkle salt over them. Let them sit for 10 minutes. After, blot the top of the tomatoes with paper towels.

In a bowl, add 2 tbsp of olive oil and the garlic.

In another bowl, combine ricotta cheese, mozzarella cheese, parmesan cheese, and 1 tbsp olive oil.

Spread the cheese mixture over the bottom of the tart shell. Evenly place the tomatoes on top. Drizzle the garlic and olive oil mixture over the tomatoes.

Bake for 20 minutes, or until the cheese is bubbling. Allow tart to cool on a rack for 5 minutes. Garnish with fresh basil.

Don't have a tart pan? Use a parchment lined sheet pan or a pie pan instead. You can also use dried beans if you don't have pie weights. Try using green, heirloom, and cherry tomatoes for a more colorful tart.

Fresh Salsa

Serves 10

6 roma tomatoes, chopped

1 green bell pepper, finely diced

1 white onion, finely diced

1 tbsp fresh cilantro, finely chopped

1 tbsp lime juice

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp pepper

$\frac{1}{3}$ tsp red pepper flakes

In a food processor, add tomatoes and pulse about 7 times until they are a good consistency.

In a bowl, add the tomatoes, green bell pepper, onion, cilantro, lime juice, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes. Mix until combined.

Serve with tortilla chips.

When making homemade salsa, it's better to use firmer tomatoes so it doesn't become too watery. Roma and beefsteak tomatoes are typically the best tomatoes

to use for this recipe because of their
meaty texture.

Tomato and Cucumber Salad

Serves 6

2 cucumbers, sliced

$\frac{1}{2}$ c red onion, sliced

1 pint grape tomatoes, sliced in half

$\frac{1}{3}$ c sour cream

3 tbsp mayonnaise

1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

1 tbsp apple cider vinegar

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp sugar

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp fresh dill, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp garlic powder

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp pepper

In a bowl, combine cucumbers, onion, and tomatoes.

In another bowl, whisk together the sour cream, mayonnaise, olive oil, vinegar, sugar, dill, garlic powder, salt, and pepper.

Add the dressing to the vegetable mixture and coat evenly. Serve with additional salt and pepper if desired.

This recipe makes a super simple side dish for just about any meal. Cherry, vine, and roma tomatoes can all be used as well. Feel free to personalize this salad with feta, mozzarella, avocado, or olives for extra flavor.

Tomato Jam

Yields 2 cups

12 roma tomatoes

1 white onion, diced

2 ½ tbsp fresh lemon juice

¼ c fresh basil leaves, chopped

2 tbsp honey

¼ tsp cayenne pepper

1 tsp salt

½ tsp pepper

In a large pot, bring water to a boil. Add the tomatoes and blanch for about 1 minute until the peels loosen. Place the tomatoes in an ice bath and peel. Remove the cores and dice.

In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the tomatoes, onion, lemon juice, basil, honey, cayenne, salt, and pepper.

Once simmering, reduce the temperature to medium to a slow simmer. Cook for 1-2 hours and stir occasionally. Once the mixture is thick and syrupy, remove from

the heat and transfer to another container.

Store in an airtight container for up to 5 days in the refrigerator.

These are great with crackers and cream cheese, or even on a sandwich or slice of toast.

Bruschetta

Serves 12

1 baguette, sliced

8 roma tomatoes, diced

3 cloves of garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{4}$ c parmesan cheese, shredded

1 tbsp balsamic vinegar

$\frac{1}{4}$ c and 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper

¼ c fresh basil, chiffonade

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Slice baguette on a bias and place on a baking sheet. Evenly brush 2 tbsp olive oil over the slices. Toast for 10 minutes, turning halfway.

In a small skillet, add ¼ c of olive oil over medium-low heat. Add the garlic and sauté for 1 minute until golden. Transfer to a bowl to cool.

In another bowl, add tomatoes, parmesan, balsamic vinegar, basil, salt, and pepper. Add in the cooled oil mixture and mix well.

Serve over the toasted bread.

This is my favorite go to party appetizer. It's extremely easy to make and if there are any leftovers, you can use it to top off meals such as baked chicken or salad.

Baked Green Tomatoes

Serves 4

$\frac{1}{2}$ c buttermilk

1 egg

$\frac{2}{3}$ c fine cornmeal

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp pepper

1 tsp cayenne pepper

2 green tomatoes, sliced into $\frac{1}{4}$ in

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a bowl, add the buttermilk and egg. Whisk until combined.

In another bowl, mix together the cornmeal, salt, pepper, and cayenne pepper.

Dip each slice of tomato into the buttermilk mixture and then into the

cornmeal mixture. Coat evenly and shake to remove excess.

Place the slices evenly onto the prepared baking sheet. For extra crisp, add cooking spray to the top of the tomatoes.

Bake for 20 minutes, flipping halfway through. Serve hot.

Other types of tomatoes may be used for this recipe, however, green tomatoes suit it best because of their tartness and crisp

texture. Pair with a delicious buttermilk dipping sauce.

Tomato Sauce

Serves 4

3 lbs vine tomatoes

$\frac{1}{3}$ c shallot, minced

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 tbsp tomato paste

2 tsp balsamic vinegar

2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp sugar

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp dried oregano

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp red pepper flakes

3 fresh basil leaves

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper

Slice the tomatoes in half and remove the seeds.

Over a large bowl, grate the cut side of the tomatoes leaving the skin behind.

In a medium pot, heat the olive oil on low heat. Add the shallot, garlic, salt, and pepper. Cook for 3 minutes and stir often.

Add the tomatoes, tomato paste, balsamic vinegar, sugar, oregano, red pepper flakes, and basil leaves.

Cover the pot and simmer on low heat for 30 minutes. Stir occasionally. Once done, remove the basil leaves. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

Typically, fresh tomato sauce is served over pasta, but this recipe has a thinner consistency which means it can be used several ways. Try it as a dip with tortilla chips and crackers, or as a sauce for homemade pizza.

Tomato and Feta Pasta

Serves 4

8 oz pasta

2 c cherry tomatoes

8 oz block of feta cheese

3 cloves of garlic, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ c plus 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

4 fresh basil leaves, chiffonade

1 tsp oregano

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

In a baking dish, add the tomatoes and $\frac{1}{4}$ c of olive oil. Add salt and pepper and mix.

Place the block of feta cheese in the center of the tomatoes. Drizzle 1 tbsp of olive oil on top.

Bake for 25-30 minutes.

In the meantime, prepare the pasta.

Reserve 1 cup of the pasta water.

When ready, add the pasta to the tomato mixture and mix. Add in pasta water if the mixture seems dry. Serve hot.

This pasta is really easy to make and very customizable. Feel free to use grape tomatoes instead, or add in onion powder, red pepper flakes, and other types of cheese.

Tomato Risotto

Serves 5 to 6

1 ½ c arborio rice

3 roma tomatoes, diced

1 yellow onion, diced

5 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

2 cloves of garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ c white wine

3 c vegetable broth

$\frac{1}{2}$ c parmesan cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp red pepper flakes

1 fresh basil leaf, chiffonade

In a large saucepan, heat 3 tbsp of olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion, salt, and pepper and cook for 5 minutes.

Add the rice and cook for 2 more minutes. Then, add tomatoes, garlic, white wine, and red pepper flakes. Cook for 5 minutes, or until the liquid has evaporated.

Add 2 c of vegetable broth and bring to a simmer. Stir and cook for 5 minutes, stirring frequently.

Once the liquid is absorbed, add the remaining vegetable broth and cook for another 5 minutes.

Remove from heat and add in the
parmesan cheese and 2 tbsp of olive oil.
Garnish with basil and serve hot.

For extra tomato flavor, you can add slices
of vine or green tomatoes to the side. This
dish goes great with chicken and fish.