



Basic Tomato Sauce

Recipes for cakes, pastry and biscuits always need to be measured - for savoury recipes you can go 'off list' somewhat. This means you can use 3 onions, 2 carrots, some celery sticks, leeks, fresh tomatoes, passata, with or without tomato puree, dried or fresh herbs, sunflower or olive oil. For me, garlic would be essential, as would be a pinch of sugar to help bring out the flavour of the tomatoes.

This basic sauce can be a base sauce for so many different recipes, browning minced beef and adding it to the sauce, once assembled and then as long and slow cooking as you have time for will improve the taste and tenderness of the meat.

Meat can be substituted for red lentils for a vegetarian version. This needs less cooking and can be very cheap to make. Lentils and pulses are great sources of protein, so this is a low fat, healthy meal.

Preparation time 10 mins • Cooking time 50mins – 1 hour 20 mins • Serves 4 (refer to extended ingredients list for 12 portions)

Ingredients to serve 4

1 onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, crushed
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tin chopped plum tomatoes
1 teaspoon tomato puree
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
A pinch of sugar
½ teaspoon fresh basil, chopped (dried herbs can be used)
½ teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped
1 bay leaf

Additions:

250g red lentils
250g lean minced beef

Ingredients to serve 12

3 onions, finely chopped
4 carrots, finely chopped
6 cloves of garlic, crushed
3 tablespoons olive oil
3 tins chopped plum tomatoes
2 teaspoons tomato puree
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon of sugar
1½ teaspoon of fresh basil, chopped
1 teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped
2 bay leaves

Additions:

500g red lentils
500g lean minced beef

Method

Sweat the onion, carrot and garlic in the olive oil for 20 minutes (slow cook without colour). Add the chopped tomatoes, tomato puree, seasoning, herbs and sugar. (Add lentils if using – you may need more water/vegetable stock during the cooking).

Cook for 30-60 minutes and then remove the bay leaf. Longer, slower cooking will improve the flavour. Taste and season with salt, pepper and a pinch of sugar.

The sauce can be left with texture or can be blended in a food processor if desired.

This sauce can be used for pizza, pasta, in tacos, homemade baked beans, Mexican eggs with risotto, polenta, meatballs, or add vinegar to make ketchup. It freezes well and is low in salt and sugar compared to a shop bought sauce.

For A Meat Bolognaise Sauce

Heat a tablespoon of sunflower oil in a frying pan. Use a pack of low fat minced beef and brown it in a pan, half at a time. Allow the meat to become gently brown. While it cooks, break it up with a fork. Once browned, drain in a sieve and pop into the tomato sauce. You can also add 290 mls of water and a beef stock cube to add flavour.

Cook over a low heat (simmer) for at least an hour.

Use for lasagne, bolognaise, serve with baked potato, with mash for cottage pie.

For A Vegetarian Chilli

Add red kidney beans and chilli flakes to the tomato sauce and cook for 30 minutes.

Use for tacos, nachos, hot wraps, filled pancakes.