

All-Purpose Tomato Sauce

Makes about 3 cups

From "Williams-Sonoma Tools & Techniques," edited by Chuck Williams.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 3 or 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ cup dry red wine, such as Zinfandel
- 28 ounce can whole tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅓ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Instructions: Place a saucepan over medium heat and add the olive oil. Heat the oil until it just appears to shimmer.

Add the onion and cook, stirring often, until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until golden, 2-3 minutes longer. Be careful not to burn the garlic or it will taste bitter.

Stir in the tomato paste, oregano and thyme and cook, stirring often, until the paste is evenly distributed and the onion is a uniform light red, about 3 minutes. The tomato paste deepens the flavor and the color of the finished sauce.

Raise the heat to medium-high,

pour in the wine, and stir vigorously with a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits that may have cooked onto the bottom of the pan.

Add the tomatoes and their juice, the sugar, and the red pepper flakes. The sugar balances the slight acidity in the tomatoes and gives the finished sauce a well-rounded flavor. Use the wooden spoon to crush the tomatoes slightly, if desired, or leave them whole for a chunkier sauce.

Stirring often, bring the sauce to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat until only small bubbles occasionally break the surface of the sauce. Simmer, uncovered, until the sauce nicely coats the spoon, about 10 minutes.

Add the salt and black pepper to the sauce and stir for about 3 minutes to distribute the seasonings evenly. Taste the sauce. If it tastes acidic, stir in a pinch more sugar. If it tastes dull, add a little more salt, black pepper or red pepper flakes until the flavors are nicely balanced and to your liking.

Per ½ cup: 75 calories, 2 g protein, 9 g carbohydrate, 2 g fat (0 saturated), 0 cholesterol, 602 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.