



TOMATOES

ROASTED PEPPER, TOMATO AND LENTIL SOUP

with Toasted Almonds

SERVES 4

40 minutes

5 red (bell) peppers
4 tablespoons rapeseed (canola), vegetable or light olive oil
2 red onions, finely sliced
3 garlic cloves, peeled and finely sliced
2 celery stalks
1 tablespoon butter (salted or unsalted)
2 tablespoons paprika
1 teaspoon chilli (hot pepper) flakes
1 x 400 g (14 oz) tin of chopped tomatoes
1 x 390 g (13¾ oz) tin of green lentils in water
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 teaspoons salt
handful of flaked (slivered) almonds (optional)

SUBSTITUTES

Red peppers

yellow or orange (bell) pepper, fresh ripe tomatoes, sundried tomatoes

Almonds

hazelnuts (filberts), walnuts, pine nuts

Paprika

cayenne pepper

Red wine

squeeze of lemon juice, any kind of vinegar, white wine

This soup is inspired by the classic pepper, almond and garlic combination you find in a Spanish romesco sauce, but here I've thrown in some lentils to provide extra heartiness, turning the whole thing into a complete meal.

This recipe is a good one for using up any (bell) peppers that are looking slightly sad and shrivelled in the bottom of the refrigerator. By all means use orange or yellow peppers too if that's what you've got to hand, but I'd avoid green ones as they'll make your soup a bit bitter.

* First, preheat the oven to 210°C (410°F/Gas 8). Roughly chop the peppers, discarding any stalks and seeds, then put them in a roasting tin and toss in 2 tablespoons of oil. Roast for 25 minutes until completely soft and beginning to catch at the edges.

* Meanwhile, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil in a large frying pan (skillet) over a medium heat; add the onions, garlic, celery stalks and butter, reduce the heat to low and gently fry for 10 minutes. Stir in the paprika and chilli flakes, fry for 1–2 minutes until fragrant, then stir in the tomatoes, lentils, including the tin juice, and vinegar. Top up the tomato tin with fresh water and add it to the pan along with the roasted peppers and salt. Bring to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes.

* Using a hand blender, blitz until mostly smooth, leaving some of the lentils whole.

* If serving with the flaked almonds, heat a frying pan on high, add the almonds and toast for 2–3 minutes, stirring regularly to ensure they don't burn, then transfer to a plate.

———— To assemble

Ladle the soup into bowls and scatter over the toasted almonds (if using) to finish.

COOK'S TIP

If you've got a jar of pre-roasted red peppers in your cupboard, you could throw those in the soup instead of roasting fresh peppers. Just make sure you rinse them first to remove any flavour of the brine.

TOMATO BUTTER SUGO

Pictured overleaf

with Fettucine and Feta

SERVES 2

45 minutes

3 tablespoons rapeseed (canola), vegetable or light olive oil
3 garlic cloves, peeled and finely sliced
1 x 400 g (14 oz) tin of chopped tomatoes
¼ teaspoon chilli (hot pepper) flakes
½ onion, peeled (not chopped)
50 g (2 oz) butter (salted or unsalted)
1 teaspoon sea salt flakes, plus extra to taste
pinch of sugar (optional)
150 g (5 oz) dried fettuccine
50 g (2 oz) feta

SUBSTITUTES

Onion

half a leek, banana shallot, red onion

Fettuccine

whichever pasta you have to hand

Feta

salted ricotta, Parmesan, halloumi, pecorino

Chopped tomatoes

passata (sieved tomatoes), peeled fresh in-season tomatoes

This dish reminds me of Andrew McHarg, an inspiring young chef with a focus on simplicity, and the creative force responsible for transforming my little neighbourhood lunch cafe into Edinburgh's fresh pasta spot by night. It's the first sauce we teach together on our pasta workshop evenings, illustrating how even the simplest of storecupboard ingredients can be turned into something truly comforting and spectacular. Fettuccine is my go-to pasta for this rich butter sugo, but by all means, just cook whatever pasta you've got to hand.

* First, heat the oil and garlic in a medium saucepan over a medium heat for 1–2 minutes until fragrant and beginning to golden (take care not to burn the garlic). Add the tomatoes, chilli flakes, onion half, butter and salt. Bring to a simmer, then reduce over a low heat for 25–30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Splash in some water if it's sticking or reducing too much. Remove and discard the onion, then taste the sugo for seasoning. You may want to add a pinch of sugar, depending on the acidity of the tomatoes.

* After 15 minutes of the sugo simmering, bring a large saucepan of water up to the boil and cook the fettuccine until al dente (around 9–10 minutes – check packet instructions for exact timing), reserving a mugful of the starchy cooking water. Using tongs, transfer the fettuccine into the tomato sauce, stirring in spoonfuls of the reserved cooking water until coated in the sauce. Taste again for seasoning (bear in mind the feta will add saltiness).

———— To assemble

Divide the pasta between two plates, then finely grate over the feta to finish.

FEAST TIP

Roasted or charred little gem lettuce (bibb lettuce) topped with finely grated (shredded) Parmesan and a squeeze of lemon makes a beautiful side dish to this fettuccine (see page 69). Throw in some nice olives, a plate of burrata drizzled with the salsa verde from page 93 plus a good bottle of red and you've got a full-on Italian-style feast.





TOMATO AND RED WINE BRAISED AUBERGINE

SERVES 4

1 hour

200 ml (7 fl oz/scant 1 cup) rapeseed (canola), vegetable or light olive oil (don't be alarmed by the quantity of oil, it's what makes the aubergine skin nicely crisp and smoky)
2 aubergines (eggplants), roughly chopped
2 teaspoons sea salt flakes (as with the oil, don't be alarmed, it won't taste overly salty), plus extra for seasoning
2 onions, peeled and finely sliced
3 garlic cloves, peeled and finely sliced
2 teaspoons ground cumin
2 teaspoons ground coriander
1 x 400 g (14 oz) tin of chopped tomatoes
1 teaspoon chilli (hot pepper) flakes (optional)
400 ml (13 fl oz/generous 1½ cups) red wine
4 tablespoons strained yoghurt (ideally full-fat)
sumac, to serve
handful of dill fronds, lemon zest and crusty bread or flatbreads (all optional)

SUBSTITUTES

Aubergines

courgettes (zucchini)

Red wine

white wine, water with a splash of vinegar, stock

Onion

spring onions (scallions), leek, shallot

This has become one of our supperclub crowd-pleasers, and while the stage of charring the aubergines (eggplants) does make your kitchen slightly smoky, it's definitely worth opening the windows for! A plate of this braised aubergine is meal-worthy as it is, but serve with some good bread, Whipped Butter Bean Dip (page 83), a few quick pickles and/or Garlic Salted Yoghurt (page 18), and it becomes a full-on celebratory feast.

* First, heat the oil in a wide non-stick pan over the highest heat. Carefully, add in half the aubergines, then scatter over the salt. Fry for 8–10 minutes, turning occasionally until charred and blackened. For best results, fry the aubergines in batches so that they fry in a single layer – otherwise they will sweat not fry. Transfer to a plate.

* Next, reduce the heat to low, then add the onion and a few splashes of water. Fry for 4–5 minutes, then add the garlic, increase to high then fry for a further 3–4 minutes until soft and translucent. Stir in the cumin and coriander until fragrant. Return the aubergines to the pan, then add the tomatoes, chilli flakes and wine. Simmer for 25–35 minutes until the aubergines are soft and the sauce is reduced. Top up with a few splashes of water at any point if the mixture is catching on the base of the pan. Taste for seasoning; you may want to add more salt.

———— To assemble

Divide the aubergines among four plates, top each with a dollop of yoghurt and the sumac sprinkled on top. Roughly tear over the dill, then zest a little lemon over each to finish (if using). Serve alongside some bread of your choice.



COOK'S TIP

Look for aubergines (eggplants) that are firm and fresh when buying as these will be tastier and contain less seeds. If you've got any leftovers of this recipe the next morning, heat in a frying pan (skillet), then crack in a few eggs and steam under a lid for a few minutes for a next-level take on shakshuka.



SPICED LAMB AND TOMATO FLATBREADS

with Mint and Cucumber Yoghurt

SERVES 2

25 minutes

2 teaspoons cumin seeds
1 teaspoon fennel seeds (optional)
1 tablespoon rapeseed (canola),
vegetable or light olive oil
250 g (9 oz) minced (ground) lamb
1 teaspoon sea salt flakes
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon chilli (hot pepper) flakes
1 x 400 g (14 oz) tin of chopped
tomatoes
2 khobez or pitta flatbreads

Mint and Cucumber Yoghurt

½ cucumber, deseeded and finely diced
1 teaspoon dried mint leaves
1 teaspoon sea salt flakes
1 small garlic clove, peeled
and minced
5 heaped tablespoons strained
yoghurt (ideally full-fat)

To Serve

handful of mint leaves
1 teaspoon sumac
1 lemon

SUBSTITUTES

Minced lamb

minced (ground) beef, chicken or pork

Cucumber

spring onions (scallions)

Chilli flakes

cayenne pepper, paprika

These are a midweek staple in our house, as I tend to always have some sort of mince stashed away in the freezer. They're inspired by the amazing Turkish eateries I used to go to after work in the Green Lanes area of North London; often family-run restaurants who greet you with plates of warm flatbread, hummus, tzatziki and roughly chopped salad before you've even thought about what you'll order for main.

Here I've used lamb, but of course use minced beef, chicken or pork if that's what is to hand.

* First, add the cumin seeds (and fennel seeds if using) to a large non-stick frying pan (skillet) over a high heat then dry-fry for 1–2 minutes until fragrant. Transfer to a pestle and mortar or cutting board to roughly crush.

* Return the pan to a high heat, then add the oil and the lamb; fry for 3–4 minutes until crispy and gaining some nice dark colour. Stir in the crushed spices, salt, cinnamon and chilli flakes until fragrant. Pour in the tomatoes, then simmer on high for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally until reduced and sticky.

* To make the yoghurt mixture, stir together the cucumber, mint, salt, garlic and yoghurt. Warm the flatbreads in a toaster – or carefully using tongs directly over the gas flame for 20 seconds each side until slightly charred.

——— To assemble

Spoon the mince over a flatbread then add a dollop of the yoghurt. Tear over the mint, a pinch of the sumac, then zest over the lemon to finish.



FENNEL AND LAMB POLPETTE

with Charred Sourdough, Halloumi and Fresh Oregano

SERVES 2

1 hour

4 tablespoons rapeseed (canola), vegetable or light olive oil
1 onion, finely diced
1 garlic clove, peeled and minced
2 teaspoons chilli (hot pepper) flakes
1 x 400 g (14 oz) tin of chopped tomatoes
1½ teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon caster (superfine) sugar
1½ teaspoons fennel seeds
1 teaspoon ground cumin
250 g (9 oz) minced (ground) lamb
grated zest of 1 lemon
50 g (2 oz) halloumi (optional)
2–3 sprigs of fresh oregano (optional)
2 slices sourdough bread

SUBSTITUTES

Minced lamb

minced (ground) beef, chicken or pork

Halloumi

feta, salted ricotta, pecorino, Parmesan

Oregano

basil, flat-leaf parsley, mint, dill

Onion

red onion, spring onions (scallions), leek, shallot

Some of my happiest memories are around the kitchen table at my parents' place in the Scottish Borders; red-wine flowing freely, Buena Vista Social Club's records playing, the smell of my Mum Claire's polpette filling the house as they simmer away in tomato sauce.

I've found halloumi is such a crowd pleasing ingredient, and here it's finely grated raw, offering a natural seasoning to the rich and fragrant polpette. If you're cooking for quite a few people, this recipe is such an easy one to scale up without added stress.

* First, heat the oil in a wide non-stick frying pan (skillet), add the onion then reduce the heat to low and gently fry for 6 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the garlic and chilli, fry for a further 2 minutes until fragrant then pour in the tomatoes, 1 teaspoon of salt and the sugar. Increase the heat to high, simmer for 10 minutes then, using a fish slice or potato masher, crush the tomatoes to a rough pulp.

* Meanwhile, in a second frying pan, toast the fennel seeds on high heat for 1–2 minutes until fragrant. Crush in a pestle and mortar or with a knife, then add to a mixing bowl with ½ teaspoon of salt, cumin, mince and half the lemon zest. Mix to combine the mince then form into roughly 10 meatballs (just under the size of a golf ball).

* Next, add quarter of a tin's worth of fresh water to the tomato pulp, followed by the meatballs. Cover with a lid, poach on high for 8 minutes, then remove the lid, gently turn the meatballs and simmer for another 5 minutes or until the meat is cooked in the middle and the sauce is nice and thick. Taste the tomato sauce for seasoning; you may want to add a pinch more sugar or salt, but bear in mind the halloumi will add a sharp saltiness.

* Carefully using tongs, char the sourdough over a gas flame for 30 seconds, or until catching at the edges. Or toast it in a regular toaster if you prefer.

———— To assemble

Divide the meatballs between two plates. Using a Microplane zester or fine side of a box grater, grate the halloumi over the top then the remaining lemon zest. Sprinkle the fresh oregano leaves, if using, then serve up with the charred bread.

CHILLED CHILLI TOMATO NOODLES

Pictured overleaf

with Crispy Garlic and Sesame

SERVES 2

25 minutes

3 tablespoons rapeseed (canola), vegetable or light olive oil
5 garlic cloves, peeled and finely sliced
1 x 400 g (14 oz) tin of chopped tomatoes
3 teaspoons miso paste
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
½–1 teaspoon chilli (hot pepper) flakes (depending on how spicy you like things)
4 teaspoons sesame oil
150 g (7 oz) thin wholewheat noodles
2 spring onions (scallions), finely shredded
1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds

SUBSTITUTES

Cider vinegar

any type of vinegar

Wholewheat noodles

soba, ramen-style or buckwheat noodles

These simple noodles are inspired by afternoons cooking Japanese dishes with food stylist Aya Nishimura. Along with lots of other delicious things, Aya introduced me to the magic of crispy garlic on cold noodles, so I am forever grateful!

If you can, try and get hold of thin soba or wholewheat noodles for this dish, as they're better suited to the delicate, fresh flavours. Chunky egg noodles overpower the miso-tomato sauce slightly, but if that's all you've got, don't worry! You'll still have a delicious meal in front of you.

* First, heat the oil in a frying pan (skillet) on medium, add the garlic and fry for 2–3 minutes until golden (take care not to burn the garlic or it will become overly bitter). Using a slotted spoon, remove the garlic from the pan and transfer to a plate, leaving most of the oil in the pan.

* Next, pour in the tomatoes, miso, vinegar, chilli flakes and sesame oil. Increase the heat to high and simmer for 8–10 minutes until the sauce reduces to a thick concentrate. Using a fish slice or potato masher, mash down to a rough pulp.

* Meanwhile, fill a medium saucepan with water then bring to the boil. Add the noodles then cook until al-dente (around 3–4 minutes – check packet instructions for exact timings). Drain then rinse under plenty of cold water to chill.

* Once the tomato has reduced, taste for seasoning. You want a nice balance of spicy umami from the miso and slightly acidic from the vinegar. Adjust to taste.

———— To assemble

Stir the chilled noodles and tomato sauce in a mixing bowl. Divide between two plates then top with the crispy garlic, spring onions and sesame seeds.

COOK'S TIP

For added meatiness, try frying good-quality bacon lardons until crisp then sprinkle over the noodles. If you have any leftover miso, try making the caramels on page 144.

