



Chef Chandler Sargent

Kid's TABLE

By Rosemarie Perla
Photo by
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You say tomato...I say tomato sauce!

"Begin with the end in mind." Why start an article on making sauce from fresh tomatoes with a quote from Stephen Covey, author of *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*? Because I have an end goal for you after you read this article: that you and your children, or your nieces and nephews, or your neighbors' or friends' children sit down to a simple and delicious meal marked with a dish swimming lovingly in tomato sauce that you made together.

Doug Oster ended his article on growing tomatoes in the spring edition of TABLE by inviting you to walk barefoot through the summer vegetable gardens with your children, enjoying the smells and sights. If you have done that, or if you took a stroll through the farmers' market stalls, you can see that the tomatoes this time of year are artisan treats. Tomatoes have creative names like Amish paste, Roma, big boy, beefsteak, Cherokee purple. Although tomatoes are usually round, some heirloom tomatoes have quirky shapes. Heirloom tomatoes are grown from open-pollinated seeds have been showing up more and more at markets. Take your kids to a market with a display of heirlooms and you can have a blast finding colors and shapes that challenge your usual image of this summer treat.

CHOOSING TOMATOES

So let's get started. Doug gave us excellent instruction and advice in growing the fragrant tomato and basil plants. Some of you took advantage of the offer and got free plants at North Park or Soergel's Orchards this past June and have been lovingly tending them. If you missed growing your own or if a few days of neglected watering made your plants sickly, not to worry. Walk, don't run, to your nearest farmers' market, neighbor's yard, farm stand or supermarket - yes, some this time of year have locally grown tomatoes. With a pound or two of tomatoes, some fresh basil, garlic, olive oil and tasty cheese, you can easily make a scrumptious sauce.

We are focusing on garden or farm tomatoes that overflow plentifully in August and September. This is the time of year when you get an opportunity to cook and

savor deep flavorful tomatoes. I have outlined the recipes for two simple sauces, one cold and one cooked that you can make easily.

Now for the good part: not only are the following two recipes easy to make, but also quick and easy for both the novice chef as well as the seasoned. Because of the simple ingredients, these are great "first" dishes to make with children. Since these ingredients are farm fresh vegetables, you can begin a conversation with children about the local farmers who harvested the tomato, or review how the tomatoes grew from the seeds or plants that you planted earlier in the season. These are great lessons for children about the cycle of nature that provides gifts for our dinnertime plates and nourishment for our life.

When it comes time to cut and chop the vegetables, use this opportunity to teach knife and safety skills. Since these sauces need little or no cooking, the children feel rewarded in their efforts as they become your partners in cooking from start to finish.

To throw in another treat for good measure, here's some information on ways to preserve the tomatoes for opening in midwinter. Barbara Kingsolver, in her new book, *Animal, Vegetable and Miracles*, suggests placing whole tomatoes on a cooking sheet, and putting these in the freezer. When frozen solid, you can take them out and place them in freezer bags for defrosting to add to a sauce later in the year. Or, cooked tomato sauce ladled in to freezer bags offers a quick pasta dish for the busy family when opened in the dead of winter. Invite the children to decorate the freezer bags with colorful permanent markers, drawing their version of the tomato used on the freezer bag label with their names as the creator's of the tomato sauce. For example: "Caitlin's incredible tomato sauce." Cooking and then freezing the sauce can motivate children. The thought of the sauce they cooked being a part of a special dinner gives them a featured spot on the family dinner menu and in the hearts of the diners! Those families interested in learning more about canning can turn to http://www.dinnerplanner.com/canning_tomatoes.htm for simple instructions. The canning produces beautiful kitchen decorations for later as the red bountiful jars adorn your shelves.

*The perfect marriage:
tomato and basil.*

*The first recipe is a cold sauce,
great for making in the morning
or early afternoon to feast on
later in the evening.*



RECIPE

Late Summer Pasta Sauce

3 - 4 very ripe tomatoes, 2 ½ lbs. or 6 cups
4-8 large whole garlic cloves, peeled and left whole
¾ - 1 cup coarsely chopped fresh basil
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
½ cup olive oil
1 lbs penne pasta
1/4/ lb Fontina cheese
½ cup grated Pecorino or Parmigiano cheese

Core the tomatoes, chop and place in large non-reactive bowl. Add the garlic, basil, salt, pepper and olive oil. Let stand at room temperature for several hours.
Cook the penne according to package directions.
Grate the Fontina coarsely.

When pasta is cooked, drain it and add about 1/3 cup of the tomato mixture's liquid. Add the Parmesan cheese and toss. Add half the tomato sauce and toss. Add half of the remaining sauce and Fontina cheese and toss. Serve in bowls with the remaining sauce spooned on top.

RECIPE

Garden tomato sauce

¼ cup of extra virgin olive oil
4 to 5 garlic cloves, crushed or chopped
5-6 (about 2 pounds) very ripe coarsely chopped tomatoes *
½ cup chopped basil leaves
2-3 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
Sea Salt and Pepper
One lb. of pasta: spaghetti or penne
Freshly ground Parmigiano or Pecorino cheese

Place the oil in the saucepan over medium heat. Add the garlic and sauté until bubbles appear and garlic is lightly browned. Add the tomatoes, basil and salt and pepper to taste and cook for about 20 minutes on medium to low heat, stirring pan frequently. Meanwhile, cook the pasta until just al dente, drain (save about 2-3 tablespoons of pasta water) and toss it with the sauce. If the sauce is too dry, add some of the pasta water to the sauce pan. Sprinkle with fresh chopped parsley and cheese.

*If you prefer, you can drop each tomato into boiling water for one minute and then skin them before chopping them. However, garden-fresh tomatoes usually have tender skins so I usually skip this step.



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