



The photo for this recipe shows tomatoes, not sauce, because fresh tomatoes, the best quality you can grow or buy, are the key to a rich marinara. Also, here's a translation: Gravy, Sunday sugo, and red gravy all mean marinara in New England, especially among Italian families. Keep this in mind when ordering at restaurants!

Excellent Everyday Marinara

It takes 1 hour to make your own marinara with this recipe. You'll have enough for a spaghetti dinner for 4 and leftovers for another meal. In the summer, I use tomatoes from The Farm (my garden). Off-season, I use the best quality canned tomatoes that I can buy. I began to make my own marinara when it became very important to track carb and sugar intake for my son. I noticed that good quality jarred sauces contained added sugars, and I believed I could do better. Once I realized how easy it is to make homemade, I never went back. For this recipe, I'll reference canned tomatoes with a note at the end for the use of fresh tomatoes. And please, read to the end to learn about my optional secret ingredient. It makes all the difference in the recipe.

Ingredients

3 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Optional: Secret ingredient*

1 large yellow onion, diced

Optional: 1 jalapeno, ribs and seeds removed, small dice

2-3 cloves garlic, smashed

2-3 shakes of crushed red pepper

2 bay leaves

2 cans of whole peeled or crushed tomatoes, either 28 oz or 35 oz per can

depending on whether you want more or less sauce

look for no salt added

2 Tablespoons tomato paste (buy a tube and keep the rest in fridge)

Fresh basil, 8 big leaves, cut into strips

Fresh or dried oregano, 2 Tablespoons fresh or 1 Tablespoon dried

Maybe a pinch of sugar

Kosher salt

Heat the olive oil in a large pot over medium to medium high heat.

Add the secret ingredient (see note below). Saute for 1 - 2 minutes in the pot until it melts. It will almost disappear from sight.

Add a couple shakes of crushed red pepper. Saute for about 20 seconds.

Add the diced onion and the bay leaves. (OPTIONAL addition – 1 jalapeno.)

Sprinkle with kosher salt (1 teaspoon). Saute until the onions are soft (not brown), 4 - 5 minutes. Stir occasionally.

Add the tomato paste and the smashed garlic cloves. Saute for 1 minute.

Add all of the tomatoes including juice from the cans. Smash tomatoes slightly with a spoon or potato masher. Cook at a medium low simmer for 40 minutes.

Occasionally taste for salt. Add salt if necessary. If you think the sauce is too salty, add a small amount of water. If you get a tin taste from the canned tomatoes, add a pinch of sugar.

After 40 minutes of simmering, remove the bay leaves from pot. Discard.

Add the fresh basil and the oregano. Continue to simmer on very low heat for 10 more minutes.

Off the heat, use a potato masher to further break up the tomatoes for a chunky sauce. Use an immersion or countertop blender to blend tomatoes for a smooth sauce. Be sure to let the sauce cool before blending in a countertop blender, to avoid burns and splattering! There's no need to wait if you use an immersion blender. Personally, I like the immersion blender.

Allow to cool. Store in plastic containers. Freezes well.

*The secret ingredient is anchovy. Add 2 or 3 filets from an oil packed can or jar. Let them melt into the hot olive oil. Use a spoon to break them up while cooking. They will almost disappear, and will lend a wonderfully nutty and natural salty flavor to the sauce. No one will even know they are there, except you. (Disclose if your diners have a fish allergy!) Many restaurants use anchovy in their tomato base. Cooked this way, they taste absolutely nothing like a raw anchovy, so give it a try for added depth and flavor to the marinara. If you don't use the anchovies, you should taste the sauce frequently while cooking to make sure you have enough salt.

A NOTE ON FRESH TOMATOES: It takes quite a few tomatoes - several pounds - to make a batch of marinara. Pick and wash the tomatoes, and score the bottom with a small X. Drop the tomatoes into lightly boiling water for 1 to 2 minutes, or until the skin begins to shrivel and peel back. Take the tomatoes out of the boiling water and drop immediately into a big bowl of very cold iced water, to stop the cooking process (this is called "shocking"). Then peel the skins off of the tomatoes, discard the peels,

and use the tomatoes as the recipe notes. If the tomatoes are very large, quarter them before adding to the cooking pot.

First published by Judy on September 26, 2012