
Tomato Sauce

A generous helping for two

Ingredients

2 tbs oil

1 tin tomatoes (400g)

½ onion

1 clove of garlic

Equipment

spatula

medium sized saucepan

Method

This is a sauce mainly for pasta, but it works very well with all sorts of other dishes: on plain boiled rice, with chicken (plain grilled or breaded), fish, pork chops, or with burgers or meat loaf. I'll start with the core basic recipe, and suggest a few variations.

Heat the pan and the oil over a low to medium heat, then add the finely chopped onion. When it has softened and lost the raw look (and taste), about 5 minutes, add the finely chopped garlic for 30 seconds. You should just be able to smell the garlic cooking towards the end of this time. Then add the tin of tomatoes, and allow to bubble away for 15 - 20 minutes. Leave it uncovered and watch closely and stir regularly to make sure it doesn't reduce too much and catch (aka burn).

Serve with pasta. Excellent over ravioli and tortellini.

Variations

Add a dessertspoonful of tomato purée. This gives extra depth of flavour, similar to what happens when you cook the basic sauce for a long time, close to catching.

First chop up a couple of rashers of bacon (pancetta is best) and fry for 2-3 minutes (less oil required) before adding the onion.

Best is to replace the tinned tomatoes with fresh ones (500 - 750g); you can only do this in summer when fresh ones are actually available. You need to skin and deseed them; skin by boiling some water in a pan and drop the tomatoes in for 30 seconds, then drain and cool in cold running water. The skin should come straight off. Then squeeze them to remove the seeds; you may also need to core them with a sharp knife.

To any of the preceding sauces you can add fresh basil or dried oregano (or fresh thyme). There are also many variations involving combinations of anchovies, capers and black olives. Another alternative involves adding a tin of tuna (in brine).
