

Creamy Gazpacho Andaluz

From the episode: *Grilled Steak and Gazpacho*

Serves 4 to 6

For ideal flavor, allow the gazpacho to sit in the refrigerator overnight before serving. Red wine vinegar can be substituted for the sherry vinegar. Although we prefer to use kosher salt in this soup, half the amount of table salt can be used. Serve the soup with additional extra-virgin olive oil, sherry vinegar, ground black pepper, and diced vegetables for diners to season and garnish their own bowls as desired.

INGREDIENTS

- 3** pounds (about 6 medium) ripe tomatoes , cored
- 1** small cucumber , peeled, halved, and seeded
- 1** medium green bell pepper , halved, cored and seeded
- 1** small red onion , peeled and halved
- 2** medium garlic cloves , peeled and quartered
- 1** small serrano chile , stemmed and halved lengthwise
- Kosher salt (see note)
- 1** slice high-quality white sandwich bread , crust removed, torn into 1-inch pieces
- 1/2** cup extra virgin olive oil , plus extra for serving
- 2** tablespoons sherry vinegar , plus extra for serving (see note)
- 2** tablespoons finely minced parsley , chives, or basil leaves
- Ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Roughly chop 2 pounds of tomatoes, half of cucumber, half of bell pepper, and half of onion and place in large bowl. Add garlic, chile, and 1½ teaspoons salt; toss

until well combined. Set aside.

2. Cut remaining tomatoes, cucumber, and pepper into ¼-inch dice; place vegetables in medium bowl. Mince remaining onion and add to diced vegetables. Toss with ½ teaspoon salt and transfer to fine-mesh strainer set over medium bowl. Set aside 1 hour.

3. Transfer drained diced vegetables to medium bowl and set aside. Add bread pieces to exuded liquid (there should be about ¼ cup) and soak 1 minute. Add soaked bread and any remaining liquid to roughly chopped vegetables and toss thoroughly to combine.

4. Transfer half of vegetable-bread mixture to blender and process 30 seconds. With blender running, slowly drizzle in ¼ cup oil and continue to blend until completely smooth, about 2 minutes. Strain soup through fine-mesh strainer into large bowl, using back of ladle or rubber spatula to press soup through strainer. Repeat with remaining vegetable-bread mixture and ¼ cup olive oil.

5. Stir vinegar, minced herb, and half of diced vegetables into soup and season to taste with salt and black pepper. Cover and refrigerate overnight or for at least 2 hours to chill completely and develop flavors. Serve, passing remaining diced vegetables, olive oil, sherry vinegar, and black pepper separately.

TECHNIQUE

ACHIEVING THE BEST CREAMY CONSISTENCY

The trick to smooth, fully blended texture is all in how you add the olive oil.

BROKEN

Adding all of the oil at once prevents it from blending properly with the vegetables, resulting in a greasy consistency.



PERFECTLY CREAMY

Slowly drizzling in the oil helps the mixture emulsify, for a soup that is silky and rich—but not the least bit greasy.



TECHNIQUE

FLAVOR BOOSTERS: SALT—AND TIME

Because of salt's ability to dissolve in liquids and to draw moisture out of meat and vegetable cells, it often enhances dishes in ways that go beyond just making them taste saltier. Could the length of time we salted our vegetables affect the flavor of our soup?

THE EXPERIMENT

We made two batches of gazpacho. For the first, we salted the tomatoes, cucumber, onion, and green bell pepper in the recipe and let them sit for 1 hour before pureeing these ingredients with their accumulated juices in a blender. For the second batch, we skipped the salting step, but stirred in the equivalent amount of salt after we pureed the vegetables.

THE RESULTS

The vegetables that were salted for 1 hour before pureeing produced gazpacho with fuller, more complex flavor.

THE EXPLANATION

To experience any foodstuff's flavors, our tastebuds must be exposed to its flavor molecules. But many of the flavor molecules in fruits and vegetables are not only trapped within their cell walls, they are tightly bound to proteins that also make them inaccessible to our tastebuds. Vigorously blending—and

chewing—release some of the flavor molecules. But for maximum flavor extraction, salting the vegetables and letting them sit for an hour works best. With time, the salt draws flavor compounds out of the cell walls while simultaneously forcing the proteins to separate from these molecules, producing a more intensely flavored soup. Simply seasoning the soup before serving will not have the same effect.



America's Test Kitchen is a 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside of Boston. It is the home of *Cook's Country* and *Cook's Illustrated* magazines and is the workday destination for more than three dozen test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes until we understand how and why they work and arrive at the best version. We also test kitchen equipment and supermarket ingredients in search of brands that offer the best value and performance. You can watch us work by tuning in to *America's Test Kitchen* (www.americastestkitchen.com) on public television.