

Tomato Soup Three Ways

Serves 6

This tomato soup is easy to prepare and is easily customized to suit the tastes of your family. This soup stores beautifully and tastes even better the second day. If you don't add the cream you can store it in the freezer for up to 3 months. It's not any more expensive to make your own and the bonus is you know exactly what's in it and you can control the salt and sugar. If you have an abundance of tomatoes you can substitute 4 cups of peeled, seeded and chopped fresh tomatoes for the canned.

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon butter
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 large garlic clove, peeled and chopped
2 tablespoons flour
3 cups low sodium chicken broth
1 - 28-oz. can diced tomatoes, undrained
1 teaspoon honey
1 sprig fresh thyme or 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons thinly sliced fresh basil or chives

In a large pot or Dutch oven heat the oil and butter over medium-low heat until the butter melts. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is soft but not browned, about 5-8 minutes. Sprinkle in the flour and stir to coat the onion and garlic.

Add the broth, tomatoes, honey, thyme, and 1/4 teaspoon each of salt and pepper. Bring the soup to a simmer over medium-high heat while stirring the mixture to make sure that the flour is not sticking to the bottom of the pan. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 40 minutes. Discard the thyme sprig if using. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Version 1: At this point you can serve the soup as a "chunky tomato soup"

Version 2: Let the soup cool briefly and then purée in two or three batches in a blender or blend for a few minutes with an immersion blender. You will now have a smooth tomato soup that can be garnished with fresh basil, parmesan or cheddar cheese.

Version 3: After the soup is pureed and off the boil, add 1 1/2 cups of whipping cream for a creamy tomato soup. Heat gently after the cream has been added, do not bring to a boil. Serve warm but not hot, garnished with the basil or chives if desired.