

# Tomato Basil Parmesan Soup

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## Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 3 cans diced tomatoes with juice
- 1 cup finely diced celery
- 1 cup finely diced carrots
- 1 cup finely diced onions
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme or 1 teaspoon dried
- 4 tablespoon fresh basil or 1 tablespoon dried
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 4 tablespoon sugar
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1 cup parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 cups half and half, warmed



## Directions:

Heat oil in a 4 quart soup pot. Add celery, onions and carrots and sauté for 5 minutes. Add basil, oregano, bay leaf, tomatoes and chicken broth. Bring it to a boil, reduce heat and simmer approximately 15 minutes until carrots are tender. To increase richness and add tomato flavor, stir in tomato paste. Add sugar to cut the acidity of the tomato paste.

HINT: Tomato paste freezes well and I use it often to increase tomato richness to recipes. Whenever I use a tablespoon or two from a can of tomato paste, I freeze the remainder in single tablespoon portions in an ice cube tray or small plastic cup.

While soup simmers, prepare a roux. In a small saucepan, melt butter over low heat; add flour and cook, stirring constantly, 5-7 minutes. Slowly stir in 1 cup hot soup. Add another 3 cups and stir until smooth. Add back into soup pot. Simmer, stirring constantly, until soup begins to thicken.

This chunky soup is beautiful and delicious, but I like mine smoother, so I use an immersion blender for about 5 or 10 seconds which is just enough to chop the vegetables smaller but does not liquefy them.

While whisking to blend, sprinkle Parmesan cheese slowly so it does not clump. Stir in warmed half and half, salt and pepper. Simmer over low heat 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Makes about 2 quarts (about 8 servings) Enjoy!