



Bob's Heirloom Gazpacho

July 27, 2023

It's that time of year when farmers' markets overflow with heirloom tomatoes. I love rescuing soft and bruised tomatoes from the "scratch & dent" boxes that most vendors use to liquidate their damaged fruit. As long as you are able to make soup, sauce or salsa the same day, they are a real steal. When I spot these tomatoes, I immediately think gazpacho, the cold soup from the Andalusian region of Spain. Like so many Spanish dishes, gazpacho migrated across the border to Portugal and eventually became a staple in North America. Unfortunately, on this continent, it is often bastardized by chefs who take tomatoes, add a few pedestrian vegetables, toss the lot in the food processor with some canned tomato juice, and check soup of the day off their to-do list. With a few extra ingredients, a little more attention to detail, and one unconventional ingredient (almonds, borrowed from Spain's white gazpacho). The trick is to begin by emulsifying some tomatoes, stale bread, almonds and olive oil—which combine to create a rustic, textured base for the remaining ingredients. While my version of the classic soup may be a little more labor-intensive than others, don't be intimidated; the ingredients will do most of the hard work for you. I like to gild the lily by finishing my gazpacho with Burrata, but either way, it's an addictive chilled soup that has so many layers of flavors it will linger in your mouth like a fine wine.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

- 1 poblano chili
- 2 pounds best-available tomatoes
- 1/3 cup stale, or rock-hard bread (ideally a rustic sourdough), roughly chopped 1/4 cup skinless Marcona almonds (or any other roasted almonds)
- 2-3 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 tablespoons best-available olive oil + more for drizzling
- 1/4 medium red onion
- 1/4 fennel bulb, trimmed, or 1 celery stalk
- 1/2 cucumber, skinned, seeds removed
- 1/4 cup lightly packed basil or cilantro, stems discarded before measuring
- 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar (ideally the good, thick, aged stuff)
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon ground Chipotle or New Mexican chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt + more for finishing
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper + more for finishing 1 4-ounce ball of burrata (optional)
- 4 cups ice for blanching

Method:

1. Blacken poblano over a gas burner or BBQ. Put in a paper bag for five minutes, then peel off and discard skin. Discard seeds and stem. Reserve.
2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil.
3. Set out a large bowl full of ice and 4 cups water.



What's 4 Dinner?

4. Core tomatoes, then cut a small "X" at the bottom. Drop tomatoes, 4 at a time into boiling water for 15 seconds.
5. Remove, and transfer to the ice bath.
6. Peel off tomato skins (which should just pop off into your hands) and discard.
7. To a food processor, add 2 tomatoes, bread, almonds and garlic. Run processor for 30 seconds, then drizzle in oil in a thin steady stream until it emulsifies with the contents (about 1 minute).
8. Roughly chop poblano, onion, fennel, cucumber and basil. Add to processor along with remaining tomatoes.
9. Season with balsamic, lemon juice, chili powder, salt and pepper.
10. Chill in refrigerator for a minimum of 2 hours.
11. Before serving, re-taste for salt and acid and heat, and adjust if desired.
12. **To serve:** Ladle soup into chilled bowls, place 1/4 ball of burrata, cut-side up in the center. Season burrata with salt and pepper, then drizzle with olive oil.