

STUDENT ESSAY: PROCESS

How to Make Tomato Sauce

By Rossano Cherubini

In Italy, since the times of the ancient Romans, cooking and eating have always been represented as an art rather than just satisfying the basic human need for food. Since then, Italian cuisine has been famous throughout the world as a traditional, simple and healthy one. The traditional Italian dish is pasta, and the indispensable element in pasta cooking is “La Pummarola,” the tomato sauce. It is the base of all the so-called “red sauces,” and it can be seasoned to suit personal tastes. However, the Italians usually say that the simplest is the best, and, of the many sauce recipes, this is a simple one. You will find that it will not be necessary to drive to the grocery store, because the things that you need are among the most common. In fact, the only ingredients needed to make this sauce are two pounds of tomatoes, an onion, two stalks of celery, and a carrot. Toward the end of the preparation, salt, pepper, and virgin olive oil are added for seasoning. The only equipment necessary is two saucepans, a strainer, a chopping knife, and a spoon. By following these simple steps, anyone can make the perfect Italian tomato sauce.

You should begin your sauce by preparing the vegetables, and for this you will need to use the chopping knife. First, peel one carrot and cut it lengthwise into strips. You will get four to six strips, depending on the size of the carrot. Second, you have to dice the strips into small cubes. Similarly, you dice two stalks of celery, trimming off the leafage. The onion, like the carrot, has to be peeled, but minced thinly rather than diced. Regarding the tomatoes, they should be soft and ripe for this recipe. You begin preparing the tomatoes by first washing them in cool running water. Second, placing the tomatoes with the stem up,

you cut them in half from top to bottom and trim out the cores. Third, the tomatoes should be cut into quarters, and then diced. The carrot, onion, and celery are used and recommended not only for their complementary flavors, but also for the fact that they act together as a counter to the acidity of the tomatoes.

Now that all the ingredients are ready, you can start the actual cooking of the sauce. Take one of the two saucepans and put in the tomatoes so that they completely cover the bottom of the pan. Next, you can add the carrot, onion, and celery on top. You need to make sure that this is the exact sequence of vegetables in the pan and for a good reason: while cooking, the tomatoes will give off liquid and it is this liquid that will take the place of butter, which is normally used to sauté vegetables. On the other hand, if you put the carrot, onion or celery first, they would burn and stick to the bottom of the pan. Once all the vegetables are in the pan, you need to cover and cook slowly on a low heat for forty-five minutes until all the ingredients are soft. This may seem like a long time, but it is fundamental to allow the flavors of the tomatoes and those of the other vegetables to blend.

Once the sauce has been cooked for the given length of time and the vegetables are soft enough for mashing, you should be ready for the next step: straining the sauce. What you need now is the second saucepan and the strainer. First, place the strainer over the top of the saucepan. Second, you have to pour the vegetable mixture into the strainer. Third, you will want to use the spoon to press the mixture through the strainer so that as much as possible drains into the saucepan. You will have some of the mixture remaining in the strainer, but you can scrape the pulp from the outside bottom of the strainer and add it to the sauce. Now, all you have to do is reheat the sauce. While stirring slowly, add salt and pepper to taste, and two tablespoons of virgin olive oil. The sauce at this point has enough character to be served with any type of pasta, or, at your choice and with double or triple

quantities, the sauce can be frozen in small portions and stored in your freezer. If this is the case, it will be always ready by only reheating it in a pan with a tablespoon of olive oil.

Finally, your sauce is ready to cover a steaming plate of spaghetti. At this point, in order to have a true Italian sauce, you need an Italian final touch: fresh basil. However, do not make the mistake of chopping it, because Italians believe that it will bring bad luck. You must break the leaves into small pieces with your fingers and put them in the sauce along with the salt, pepper, and olive oil. After you have done this, you need to let the sauce simmer for about five more minutes in order for the basil to lend its flavor. Of course, you can always use ready canned tomato sauces and artificial flavors, but you will miss the pleasure of cooking and a great taste that will really impress your guests. Buon Appetito!