

Gazpacho

SERVES 8

- 1** large cucumber, peeled and seeded
- 4 cups** tomatoes, chopped; heirloom local and ripe or canned San Marzanos *without* calcium chloride
- 1** large red or green bell pepper
- 1** medium red onion
- 3 cloves** garlic, roasted
- 1 tsp** salt
- 2 tsp** sugar
- 1/4 cup** sherry vinegar
- 1/2 cup** fresh basil leaves
- 1 slice** country white bread
- 1/2 cup** olive oil
- 2 Tbs** lime juice (1 lime)
- 1/2 tsp** sriracha (optional)

Prepare cucumber, tomato, bell pepper, and red onion by coarsely chopping and combining in a large bowl. Sprinkle salt and sugar and let sit for 15 minutes. Remove one fourth of the mixture, diced into small pieces, and reserve in another bowl.

Roast garlic cloves in 400°F oven for 12 minutes. Add garlic and vinegar to the vegetable mixture and stir to combine. Pour contents into a food processor or blender. Add basil leaves. Tear bread into small pieces and add to mixture. Pulse for several seconds to combine. Turn processor on high continuously and as mixture purees, slowly drizzle olive oil into the mix, about 1 minute. The mixture will emulsify. Pour mixture into serving bowl or storage container, stir in lime juice and hot sauce. Adjust acidity, sweetness and heat with additional vinegar, sugar and sriracha to taste.

Let soup rest for at least two hours in the refrigerator for flavors to meld. To serve, mound several tablespoons of reserved diced vegetables in a shallow bowl and top with a dollop of sour cream. Pour gazpacho around the mound and serve.



GAZPACHO IS OFTEN CALLED A SALAD SOUP. It is much more like a very vegetable-laden salad dressing that eats like a soup. The vinegar and olive oil make an emulsion, which is why it is necessary to drizzle the olive oil slowly into the puree to help them come together. The bread is a traditional addition that makes the soup a bit creamier and silkier and helps the emulsification.

Pouring the puree around the diced vegetables in a shallow bowl makes a nice presentation, but you can just as easily stir the diced vegetables into the puree at the last step, or you can just puree the whole thing for two minutes to make a smooth soup before letting it rest in the refrigerator.

The gazpacho needs at least a couple of hours, preferably longer, to let the acids and oils do their thing; a step that shouldn't be skipped. Making gazpacho the day before you serve it is an even better idea.

Of course, using fresh vine-ripened tomatoes is ideal for this dish, but canned fruit works surprisingly well. Both the skin and seeds add flavor to the soup, so don't bother to peel or core the tomatoes.