

Good Old Tomato Sauce

sauces 3-4# pasta

A good old-fashioned red sauce like my Grandma taught my Mom and my Mom taught me (minus the beef and pork!). Thick, robust, and delicious. It's my food staple.

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| 1/4 c. olive oil | 1/2 tsp. oregano |
| 1 1/2 c. onion, 1/2" dice | 1/2 tsp. dried granulated garlic |
| 3/4 c. sweet red pepper, 1/2" dice | 1/2 tsp. paprika |
| 1 c. mushrooms, thin slices | 1/4 tsp. cayenne |
| 4 cloves garlic, minced or pressed | 1/4 c. robust red wine |
| 12 oz. tomato paste | 3 28-oz. cans Italian plum tomatoes |
| 1/2 tsp. salt | 1/3 c. freshly grated Parmesan |
| 1 tsp. black pepper | |
| 2 tsp. dried or 2 1/2T. fresh basil | |

Heat the oil in a 6-quart or larger pot over medium high heat. Add the onions and saute' for 15 minutes, stirring often. Add the pepper, mushrooms, and garlic and saute' for an additional 8 minutes, stirring occasionally. Turn the heat to low, add the tomato paste, and stir well. Add the salt, pepper, basil, oregano, dried garlic, paprika, and cayenne and stir well. Cook for 5 minutes. Add the red wine and stir well.

If using whole canned tomatoes, run the tomatoes through a food mill or chop finely or run through a food processor. The food mill is the preferred method. If using crushed tomatoes, add directly to the pot. Stir well. Add the parmesan cheese and turn the heat back up to medium high. Stir often until the sauce begins to bubble, then turn the heat back down to low and cover the pot. Simmer for 2-3 hours (or longer if you'd like), stirring every 10 minutes or so to prevent sticking. Each time you lift the lid to stir, quickly invert the lid so that the condensation doesn't drip back into the pot. As this sauce thickens, flavors become more concentrated and bold, and the texture becomes smoother.

Serve over any type of pasta. Freeze the extra sauce or give some away. Double the batch and make lots!

Every time I make this sauce, I evoke images of my Italian ancestors from generations past, in their own kitchens, creating the same flavors and aromas. I fill with wonder and appreciation that the traditions have been passed down to me.