

roast tomato and smoked bacon soup with herb croûtons and crème fraîche



Serves 6

Ingredients

SOUP

- 10 plum tomatoes, halved
- 1 medium onion, roughly diced
- 1 medium carrot, roughly diced
- 2 smoked back-bacon rashers, rind removed, diced
- 5 ml (1 tsp) fresh thyme leaves
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) caster sugar (optional)
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) olive oil
- 450 ml ($\frac{3}{4}$ pint) chicken stock
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) tomato purée
- 12 basil leaves

CROÛTONS

- sunflower oil for deep-frying
- 2 egg yolks
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) double cream
- 5 ml (1 tsp) each of chopped parsley, coriander, oregano and fresh thyme leaves
- 3 medium-cut slices of white bread
- 25 g (1 oz) parmesan cheese, finely grated
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

TO SERVE

- 100 ml (3.5 fl oz) crème fraîche
- 45 ml (3 tbsp) reduced balsamic vinegar

Method

- 1 Pre-heat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4
- 2 Toss the tomatoes, onion, carrot, bacon, thyme, garlic, sugar and olive oil together in a large roasting tin. A little sugar added at this stage would help the flavour of out-of-season tomatoes. Season well and roast in the oven for 25 minutes until softened.
- 3 Transfer the mixture into a large saucepan. Add the chicken stock, tomato purée and half the basil leaves. Stir, crushing the tomatoes with the spoon to release their sweet juices.
- 4 Bring to the boil, cover and reduce to simmer for 15-20 minutes.
- 5 Meanwhile, make the croûtons. Pre-heat the oil in a deep-fat fryer to 190C/375F.
- 6 Beat the egg yolks and cream together in a small bowl and season.
- 7 Mix the herbs together in another bowl.
- 8 Using a 2.5cm (1") plain-sided cutter, press out 8 rounds from each slice of bread. For each croûton, dip 2 bread rounds in the egg mix to coat. Then press one round into the herb mix, so the leaves stick to one side. Press this side against the second round to sandwich the herbs. Toss the croûton in the parmesan to coat. Repeat to make 12 in total.
- 9 Working in batches, deep fry the croûtons for 1-2 minutes, turning half way through, until crisp and golden. Drain on kitchen paper.
- 10 To finish, blend the soup in a liquidiser for a few minutes until smooth (this is easier to do in two batches). Return the soup to the heat to warm through for a few minutes and check seasoning.
- 11 Ladle into warm bowls and top with a spoonful of crème fraîche, a whirl of reduced balsamic vinegar and a basil leaf. Serve with a couple of croûtons on the side.

tomato soup

tomato soupscience

- Not only do they taste great, but tomatoes are also good for you. One medium sized tomato contains 35 per cent of your recommended daily intake of vitamin C and 15 per cent of vitamin A. It has more than 90 per cent water and contains only 35 calories. And if that's not enough, tomatoes are also naturally sodium-free, cholesterol-free and high in fibre – so get eating!
- Tomatoes get their red colour from a natural pigment called *Lycopene*, an important antioxidant which is thought to help protect against heart disease. Antioxidants also neutralise free radicals that cause cell damage, so they are meant to help protect you from some cancers. And surprisingly, processed products like tinned soup contain more *Lycopene* than fresh tomatoes.
- Don't like your greens? Well, think about getting out the tin opener instead. The latest advice from the British Dietetic Association says canned soup or baked beans can now count towards the 'five portions a day' of fruit and vegetables that scientists recommend for good health.

tomato souphistory

- In medieval times, peasants relied on thin soup from a stock pot which was endlessly topped up. The broth was a by-product of cooking meat, and was served over thick pieces of bread known as 'soppes', and eaten without a spoon – hence the word, soup.
- The tomato was introduced to Europe in the 16th century, from South America and Mexico. Because they belong to the same plant family as the Deadly Nightshade, tomatoes were thought to be poisonous until as recently as the 19th century.
- In 1897, Joseph Campbell came up with the idea of condensed tomato soup – by reducing water in the tin, storage and shipping costs were reduced. Campbell's soup packaging later became iconic when Andy Warhol used the image in more than 100 pop-art works.