

Roasted Cherry Tomato Pizza Sauce

Yield: 8 half pint jars

Ingredients:

For the Tomatoes

5 quarts Cherry Tomatoes
2 tablespoons Olive Oil
+ more to sauté the onions
Salt and Pepper to taste
Flavor additions (optional) [1]
Balsamic glaze or honey

To Complete the Sauce

1 1/2 cups Onion, chopped (about 1-1/2 large onion)
6 cloves Garlic, minced
2 tablespoons Oregano
2 tablespoons dried Green Pepper Powder (optional) [2]
1 1/2 tablespoons Sugar

Step #1 - Roasting the Tomatoes to Perfection:

Preheat your oven: Start by preheating your oven to 400°F (200°C). The high temperature will help caramelize the tomatoes and bring out their natural sweetness.

Prepare the cherry tomatoes: Because we're not worried about presentation since we're making a sauce, you'll want to remove any stems and leaves attached to the tomatoes. Then, rinse them under cool water and pat them dry with a towel. You can leave them whole, but I like cutting them in half to create a slightly softer texture.

Season the tomatoes: Place the cherry tomatoes in a large mixing bowl and drizzle them with olive oil. Add a sprinkle of salt and pepper. Enough that the taste would be suitable if you were eating them. Gently toss the tomatoes until they are evenly coated with the oil and seasonings,

Arrange on a baking sheet: Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper or aluminum foil for easy cleanup. Transfer the seasoned cherry tomatoes onto the baking sheet, spreading them in a single layer. This allows for even roasting.

[1] *Optional flavor additions: If you want to enhance the flavor of the roasted cherry tomatoes, you can experiment with additional herbs and seasonings. Add minced garlic, fresh basil leaves, or a sprinkle of dried herbs like thyme or rosemary. These additional flavors will infuse the tomatoes as they roast, creating a more complex taste profile in the sauce when you're finished.*

Roasting time: Place the baking sheet with the seasoned cherry tomatoes in the oven. Roast for approximately 15-20 minutes, or until the tomatoes burst and wrinkle slightly. This will vary depending on the size and ripeness of the tomatoes, so keep an eye on them to avoid overcooking.



Finish with a touch of sweetness: To capture the full potential of the cherry tomatoes' natural sweetness, you can additionally drizzle a small amount of balsamic glaze or honey over the top. I like adding them a few minutes before taking them out of the oven to create a delightful sweetness and acidity to the roasted tomatoes.

Once the cherry tomatoes are roasted to your desired level, remove them from the oven and let them cool slightly before pressing them into a smooth puree using a food mill to remove the skins and seeds. (More on this gadget later. Keep reading below.↓)

Alternatively, strain the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve to remove any seeds or skin.

How to Puree Roasted Cherry Tomatoes in 3 Easy Steps Using a Food Mill

Place the food mill over a bowl or pot large enough to hold the tomatoes*.

Ladle or spoon the cooled cherry tomatoes with any remaining juices and caramelized bits into the perforated bowl or basket of the mill until it is 2/3 full.

Turn the crank to force the tomatoes through the disc until nothing is left but the skins and seeds.

Remove the skins and seeds from the food mill and again fill it with tomatoes. Repeat in batches until all the tomatoes have been processed.

** The smaller hole disk will work best for a smooth pizza sauce if your food mill has multiple interchangeable disks.*

Step #2 - How to Create the Sauce

While the cherry tomatoes are roasting, you can use your time efficiently by adding the onion and garlic with the remaining olive oil to a large skillet. Sauté them over medium heat until the onions become translucent and the garlic is fragrant. Then, transfer the mixture to a heavy pot or Dutch oven.

Next, add the pureed tomatoes from step one. Stir in the oregano, taste, and adjust the seasoning if needed, adding salt, pepper, sugar, honey, or any other spices according to your preference.

If the sauce appears too thick, you can thin it out by adding some water, olive oil, or vegetable broth. Blend again until you reach the desired consistency. On the flip side, if the sauce seems too thin, mixing in one 8-ounce can of tomato paste should be enough to thicken it.

Increase the burner heat and bring to a boil, then immediately reduce the heat to a simmer. Add the bay leaves and continue simmering for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. You'll know it's done when your desired sauce consistency is achieved.

Finally, remove the bay leaves. Add the lemon juice and transfer the sauce to jars or airtight containers for storage. The Pizza sauce can be refrigerated for up to a week or frozen for several months. When canning the sauce, ladle it into hot jars. Wipe the jar rims and center the canning lids on the jars, then adjust the jar rings to finger tight.

[2] This is my secret flavor ingredient. At the end of the growing season, when I have loads of green peppers, I wash, stem, and deseed the peppers, cut them into 1/4 inch strips, and then dry them in my dehydrator overnight at 125°F. After they are dried, I use my spice blender to pulverize and powder them for later use in seasoning homemade spice blends, soups, stews, and sauces.

To water-bath can the jars, place them into the canner filled with boiling water. The boiling water should cover the jars by about 1 inch. Adjust the heat to medium-high and process 35 minutes for half-pint jars. After 35 minutes, remove the jars from the canner. Place the hot jars on a heat-safe surface, covering them with a kitchen towel until the lids pop and the jars cool. Don't worry about re-tightening the jar rings if they're loose — cool overnight (about 12 hours). Before storing, tighten any loose rings, label the jars, and store them in a cool, dark cupboard.

Use the sauce as a base for pizza, a sauce for dipping breadsticks, or an accompaniment or ingredient for a favorite recipe. I like to garnish the sauce with grated cheese or add fresh basil or a snip of parsley for freshness and a pop of color when serving.

Table Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for this delicious pizza sauce that we are about to enjoy. We are grateful for the hands that prepared it and the ingredients that were used to make it flavorful and satisfying.

As we partake in this meal, we ask that you bless this sauce and all the nutrients it provides for our bodies. May it nourish us and keep us healthy.

We also thank you for the family and friends gathered around our table and the conversation and laughter that will be shared. May this meal bring us closer together and strengthen our bonds.

In your name, we pray. Amen.