

# Keep your cool

Combine plump, fresh tomatoes with a bunch of basil and a little seasoning. It's the only way to beat the heat

It's that time of year when it's too hot to cook and cravings kick in for fresh, juicy ingredients. If you planted tomatoes and basil in your garden earlier this season, you should be reaping the rewards by now. These simple recipes - from smoky tomato bruschetta to plum and basil granita - make the most of their fresh flavours and will keep you cool through summer.

## FAST & FRESH



## • Tomatoes •

Nothing beats the taste of sweet late-summer tomatoes. This simple bruschetta combining tomato and basil - with some locally made Il Casaro mozzarella for a little protein - is a winner.

### Smoky tomato bruschetta

Ready in 25 minutes |  
Makes 12-15 pieces (serves 4-5)

#### BASE

Large sourdough loaf  
1 clove fresh garlic, halved  
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil (a fruity type)  
Smoked salt flakes

#### TOPPING

4 large, meaty tomatoes, deseeded (we used a golden heritage variety)  
100g mozzarella  
Handful fresh basil leaves

- 1 Cut sourdough into 2cm-thick slices. Heat a grill pan or barbecue plate to medium-high heat.
- 2 Toast bread on both sides until golden or lightly charred. Place toasted bread on large plate. Rub each piece well with cut garlic to infuse a gentle flavour.
- 3 Drizzle half the olive oil over toast, turn toast over and drizzle with remaining oil. Season with a tiny pinch of smoked salt.
- 4 To make topping, cut deseeded tomatoes into roughly 1.5cm pieces and place in a bowl. Tear mozzarella into similar-sized pieces and add to bowl.

Tear basil into small pieces and add to bowl. Season well with freshly ground pepper and salt. Toss gently.

5 Add a large spoon of topping to each bruschetta and sprinkle with a little smoked salt if desired. Serve immediately.

### Russian Bloody Mary shots

Ready in 1 hour | Serves 6-8 | GF

This is a fun way to use up an abundance of sun-ripened tomatoes. This recipe makes approximately 600ml of tomato juice; you could also bottle it to enjoy throughout the year (see Tip at end).

#### TOMATO JUICE

1 kg ripe tomatoes  
¼ tsp salt

#### SHOTS

½ stick celery, peeled  
¼ telegraph cucumber  
3 spring onions, washed  
1 lemon, cut into wedges  
Ice cubes  
90-120ml vodka (15ml per shot)  
Worcestershire sauce\*  
1 tsp freshly ground pepper  
Chilli salt, to serve

1 Cut tomatoes into halves or quarters over a large saucepan (to catch juice) then drop into saucepan. Add salt, cover and cook for 20 minutes on medium heat. Stir well, replace lid and turn down to a simmer. Cook for a further 20 minutes or until tomatoes have turned liquid. Remove from heat and tilt lid to cool.

2 Tip into a fine colander or sieve placed over a large non-reactive bowl. Use a ladle to press pulp through sieve until you have extracted all the juice. Discard solids.

3 Cut celery and cucumber into sticks a little longer than your glasses (your glasses should be slightly larger than shot glasses, about 60-80ml capacity) Trim spring onions and cut to similar lengths.

4 Add vegetable sticks and a lemon wedge to each glass with 2-3 ice cubes. Pour over vodka (15ml per glass), add a sprinkle of Worcestershire sauce and top with the tomato juice. Sprinkle over a little pepper and chilli salt to serve.

#### Tip

> The tomato juice can be easily preserved. Return sieved juice to pot, bring to the boil then pour into hot jars. Cover with sterilised lids and tighten them when slightly cooled.

\* Check label if eating gluten free.



## • Basil •

**F**lavoured butter is a delicious yet simple topping that can be prepared in advance and kept in the fridge or freezer until required. Enjoy the instant flavour hit on seared fish, meat, portabello mushrooms and more.

### Basil butter

Ready in 20 minutes |  
Makes 4 logs (each 125g) | **GF**

1 cup packed basil leaves, roughly chopped  
¼ cup chopped chives or finely sliced spring onion  
1 clove fresh garlic, minced  
½ tsp salt  
¼ tsp ground pepper  
Finely grated zest 1 lemon  
500g natural butter, at room temperature

1 Cut out four squares of waxed paper. Place all ingredients in a bowl and stir until well mixed.

2 Divide butter mixture into four even pieces and place one on each square of paper. Fold paper over top and shape butter into a neat log. Roll up and twist ends together. Keep in the fridge until needed.

3 To use, cut a log into 10 slices and add a slice to a hot piece of steak or fish. The butter will keep for weeks in the fridge or up to two months in the freezer.



**B**asil balances the sweetness of tomatoes perfectly, but it also works well with summer plums as in this refreshing granita. You can make this easily by hand; all you need is a freezer and a shallow dish.

### Plum & purple basil granita

Ready in xx minutes | Serves xx | **GF**

1kg whole plums  
?? cups water  
½ cup sugar  
1 cup water  
3 large sprigs purple basil (or green is fine, too)  
plus 1 sprig, finely sliced, to garnish

1 Put all the plums in a large pot with the water, cover and cook on low heat for 20 minutes. Stir, replace lid and simmer for a further 20 minutes. Remove lid and leave to cool down.

2 In a small saucepan bring sugar, water and 3 sprigs basil to the boil, then turn down and simmer until sugar has dissolved. Leave this sugar syrup to cool.

3 Tip pot of plums and liquid into a colander placed over a large bowl. Press plums through colander. Discard stones.

4 Add ¾ cup of the sugar syrup to bowl of plum pulp and stir. Tip mixture into shallow dish and freeze for 1-2 hours.

5 When the granita is almost frozen solid, take a fork and scrape and whisk the mixture to create small ice crystals. Return to the freezer and again let it freeze for 1-2 hours until almost solid. Scrape and whisk again with a fork.

6 Spoon into small dishes, sprinkle with sliced basil and serve immediately.

#### Tips

- > Reserve leftover sugar syrup in a jar and refrigerate for a later batch of granita.
- > You can adjust the amount of sugar syrup you use, adding a little more if the plums are tart, or less if they are particularly sweet. •

