

The perfect tomato sauce

1.6kg good, tinned plum tomatoes or ripe fresh mixed tomatoes
skinned

2 tbsp olive oil

3 large Spanish onions, finely chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 large carrot cubed

1 yellow courgette peeled and cubed

2 stems celery

1 tbls sugar

Dash of white-wine vinegar

1 tsp oregano

1/2 tsp thyme

1 tube tomato puree

If using fresh tomatoes, drop them into a pan of boiling water and leave for about a minute, until the skins split. Lift out and peel, then roughly chop.

Heat the oil in a medium saucepan on a medium-low heat and add the chopped onion. Soften for about five to seven minutes, until translucent but not coloured. Stir in the garlic thyme sugar vinegar and oregano and cook for another two minutes. Add rest of vegetables except tomatoes

Tip in the tomatoes, and break up with a wooden spoon if necessary, then add the sugar, vinegar and the stems of the basil, reserving the leaves. Season lightly.

Bring to a simmer, then turn down the heat and simmer for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally, until thick.

Test the seasoning, add the basil leaves, roughly torn, and drizzle in a little extra-virgin olive oil if you like before serving.

Tomato sauce: laughably basic cookery, or harder than it looks, especially in the UK? And what special twist do you give yours? Non-Italian variations particularly welcome.