

Tomato Juice Sipped Through a Lovage Straw | MAKES A SCANT 2 CUPS

Imagine having your own fresh tomato juice. Strained but not cooked, the juice has a consistency far lighter than what comes out of a can. It's especially fine if you can sip it through the hollow stem of lovage, yet another good reason for having a lovage plant in the garden.

1 pound ripe, juicy tomatoes, any
color, coarsely chopped
½ cup ice
sea salt and freshly ground pepper
fresh lemon juice, to taste
2 lovage stalks, fennel stalks, or lemon
basil sprigs for garnish

Puree the tomatoes and ice in a blender, then pour through a strainer. Add a pinch of salt, some pepper, and lemon juice to taste. Let stand for a few minutes for the air bubbles to dissipate, then pour 2 glasses and serve with the lovage straws or herb sprigs.

Slow-Roasted Tomatoes | MAKES 16 TO 20 PIECES

Slow roasting requires rather little effort for the succulent results that are produced. It concentrates the flavor of tomatoes, leaving them intact but meltingly tender. I serve them perched on a little toast. (You can spread with ricotta cheese first.) But I've been advised that they freeze well for winter use, too. They can also be cooked with other vegetables or with meats. A combination of red Principe Borghese and yellow Italian paste tomatoes, such as Italian Gold, is especially striking. Oblong, dense paste tomatoes have scant amounts of juice and thick, meaty flesh.

1½ pounds paste tomatoes
2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil
sea salt and freshly ground pepper
1 teaspoon chopped oregano, thyme,
or marjoram
1 garlic clove, minced

1. Preheat the oven to 300°F. Lightly oil a large shallow baking dish. Slice the tomatoes in half lengthwise. Set them cut side up in the dish, then brush the tops with the oil, using about a tablespoon in all. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and add the herb and garlic.
2. Bake, uncovered, for 2 hours. Check after an hour and drizzle a little more oil over the surfaces if they look dry. If you don't plan to use the tomatoes right away, store them in the refrigerator, or freeze and use in soups and stews come winter.

Roasted Eggplant and Chickpea Stew |

SERVES 6

All the nightshades are braised together in a sauce of basil and cilantro, two herbs that are quite possibly even better in combination than they are separately. Serve warm or at room temperature with a spoonful of garlic-

infused yogurt or a wedge of lemon.

1. Preheat the broiler. Bring 6 cups water to a boil and add 1 teaspoon salt. Slice the potatoes lengthwise about ½ inch thick, boil them for 5 minutes, and drain. Halve the peppers lengthwise, press to flatten them, then brush with vegetable oil. Broil, cut side down, on a baking sheet until blistered but not charred. Stack them on top of one another and set aside to steam. When cool, remove the skins and cut the pieces in half. Set the oven temperature at 350°F.
2. Coarsely chop the basil, cilantro, and garlic, then puree in a small food processor with the olive oil, cumin, and ½ teaspoon salt.
3. Toss all the vegetables with 1 teaspoon salt, some freshly ground pepper, and the herb mixture. Using your hands, rub the herb mixture into the vegetables, especially the eggplant, then add the chickpeas and toss once more. Transfer everything to an earthenware gratin dish. Rinse out the herb container with ½ cup water and pour it over all. Cover the gratin dish tightly with foil and bake until tender, about 1½ hours. Remove the foil, brush the exposed vegetables with the juices, and bake for 20 minutes more. Let cool for at least 10 minutes before serving.

- sea salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1½ pounds Yellow Finn, Russian
- Banana, or other waxy potatoes
- 2 large peppers, red and/or yellow
- bells or cubanelles
- vegetable oil
- 1 cup packed basil leaves
- 1 cup packed cilantro leaves
- 3 large garlic cloves
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon roasted ground cumin
- 2 large onions, peeled and cut into eighths, or 16 very small onions
- 1 pound short oblong eggplants, such as Ichiban, quartered lengthwise
- 2 or 3 large meaty red tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and diced
- 1½ cups cooked chickpeas (1 15-ounce can, rinsed)