

Summer Veggie Tomato Sauce

Chef Raquel graduated with highest honors from the culinary program at the Institute of Culinary Education after completing her externship at Le Bernardin in NYC. In 2009, Chef Raquel created A Pinch of Salt, LLC offering hands-on cooking instruction focusing on the preparation of healthy, gourmet, yet practical and inexpensive meals. Currently, Chef Raquel works closely with The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport (CCGB) providing extensive cooking education at local food pantries and community meal programs. Chef Raquel also provides outreach and cooking education for the Bridgeport Farmers Market Collaborative at the 7 farmers markets. This builds on her previous commitment with Wellness in the Schools, a NYC based nonprofit focusing on providing public school students nutritious meals which are reinforced through cooking educating in the classrooms and gardening. Chef Raquel is passionate about educating youth groups, families, seniors and communities on the importance of healthy cooking, understanding nutritional information, stretching food dollars, utilizing farmers' markets and community gardens.

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Serves 6

Ingredients:

- 1 eggplant, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 zucchini, sliced into ¼-inch-thick rounds
- 2 onions, red or yellow sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 pint of grape or cherry tomatoes or 3-4 tomatoes, diced
- 1-28oz can of crushed tomato sauce
- red pepper flakes, to taste, optional
- 1 cup loosely packed basil leaves, torn
- Parmesan cheese, grated, as needed, optional
- Salt & pepper to taste
- *Serve on top of cooked pasta



Directions:

1. Toss eggplant with 1 teaspoon of the salt and drain in a colander for 30 minutes. Pat dry with a paper towel, set aside.
2. In a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat, add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. When the oil is hot, add eggplant and cook, stirring often, until golden, 8 to 10 minutes, adding more oil as needed to prevent sticking. Remove eggplant and set aside in a medium bowl.
3. Add 1 tablespoons of the olive oil to the pot and cook the zucchini until golden but not completely tender, 2 to 4 minutes. Remove and transfer to the bowl with the eggplant.
4. In the same pot heat ¼ cup of the oil over medium heat. Add onions and peppers. Cook until softened, about 10 to 15 minutes. Add garlic/red pepper flakes if using, cook for 30 seconds.
5. Add grape or diced tomatoes and reduce heat to medium low. Cook for 8 to 10 minutes. Add reserved eggplant, zucchini and grape tomatoes and canned crushed tomatoes. Stir well. Season with salt, cover pot and reduce the heat to low. Cook until all the vegetables have softened, 15-20 minutes.
6. Remove from the heat, adjust seasoning as needed. Serve over pasta. Top with fresh basil, parmesan cheese and enjoy!

Chef Raquel Rivera-Pablo

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