

Tomato Soup

This is the recipe from Ballymaloe Cookery School in Shanagarry, Co. in Cork, Ireland. They make the best tomato soup and brown bread I have ever had! I own all of their cookbooks. I haven't come close to preparing each of their recipes- sorry, eels just aren't my thing- but everything of theirs I have made is absolutely divine. If you are in Ireland, you simply must put Ballymaloe on your list of places to visit. You won't be disappointed!

Ingredients:

1 1/4 pints (750 ml) homemade tomato puree (see recipe) or 2 x 14 oz (400 g) tins of tomatoes, liquidised and sieved
1 small onion, finely chopped
3/4 oz (15 g) butter
8 fl oz (250 ml) Bechamel sauce (white) (see recipe below)
8 fl oz (250 ml) homemade chicken stock or vegetable stock
Salt, freshly ground pepper and sugar
4 fl oz (120 ml) cream

Directions:

Step 1

Sweat the onion in the butter on a gentle heat until soft but not coloured. Add the tomato puree, (or chopped tinned tomatoes plus juice) white sauce and homemade chicken stock. Season with salt, freshly ground pepper and sugar. Bring to the boil and simmer for a few minutes.

Step 2

Liquidise, taste, dilute further if necessary. Bring back to the boil, correct seasoning add a little cream if necessary.

Step 3

Spread a little blob of Pesto on 6 freshly cooked crostini and serve with each bowl of tomato soup.

Note: This soup needs to be tasted carefully as the final result depends on the quality of the tomato puree, stock etc.

Bechamel Sauce

Ingredients:

1/2 pint (300 ml) milk
A few slices carrot
A few slices onion
A small sprig of thyme
A small sprig of parsley
3 peppercorns
45 g (2 oz) roux
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Directions:

This is a wonderfully quick way of making Bechamel Sauce if you have roux already made. Put the cold milk into a saucepan with the carrot, onion, peppercorns, thyme and parsley. Bring to the boil, simmer for 4 - 5 minutes, and remove from the heat and leave to infuse for 10 minutes. Strain out the vegetables, bring the milk back to the boil and thicken to a light coating consistency by whisking in roux. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper, taste and correct the seasoning if necessary.

Roux

Ingredients:

110 g (4 oz) butter
110 g (4 oz) flour

Directions:

Melt the butter and cook the flour in it for 2 minutes on a low heat, stirring occasionally. Use as required. Roux can be stored in a cool place and used as required or it can be made up on the spot if preferred. It will keep at least a fortnight in a refrigerator.