

WE CELEBRATED A BIRTHDAY at Simon Pearce Restaurant in West Chester, Pennsylvania. I had a barbecue hamburger accompanied by a delicious sauce. I hope you can pry loose the recipe.

CURT VOGT

POINT PLEASANT, NEW JERSEY

BARBECUE SAUCE

Adapted from Simon Pearce Restaurant

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

ACTIVE TIME: 25 MIN START TO FINISH: 40 MIN

Finally, a sauce that your grilling shelf can't do without—its savory-sweet kick makes it an ideal topping for anything barbecued.

- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- ½ cup chopped red onion
- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic
- Pinch dried hot red-pepper flakes
- 1 cup ketchup
- ¼ cup Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1½ teaspoons liquid smoke
- ¾ teaspoon ground allspice
- ¾ teaspoon Chinese five-spice powder
- ¾ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon star anise pieces
- ¼ teaspoon salt

►Bring vinegar, brown sugar, onion, garlic, and red-pepper flakes to a boil in a 2-quart heavy saucepan and cook, uncovered, over moderately high heat, stirring occasionally, until mixture is reduced to ½ cup, 8 to 10 minutes (mixture will be thick and bubbly). ►Stir in remaining ingredients until combined and simmer, covered, stirring occasionally, 10 minutes. Pulse in a food processor until smooth (use caution with hot liquids), then force through a medium-mesh sieve.

COOKS' NOTE: Sauce can be made 2 weeks ahead and kept chilled, covered.

I HAD AN AMAZING chilled avocado soup at The Elephant Walk, a Cambodian restaurant in Waltham, Massachusetts. It was rich with lime and filled with chunks of avocado and tomato. All the avocado soup recipes I have found include yogurt,

but this was like a broth. Is there any way you could publish the recipe?

KATHLEEN BAXTER

NEW YORK CITY

CHILLED AVOCADO CITRUS SOUP

Adapted from The Elephant Walk

SERVES 6 TO 8 (MAKES 10 CUPS)

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 1½ HR

Summertime just got easier. This no-cook, citrus-based soup is a cooling mix topped with fresh avocado, radish, and cilantro.

- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 3 (7- to 8-oz) firm-ripe avocados
- 1 qt fresh orange juice (from 12 oranges)
- 1 cup fresh lime juice (from 6 limes)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¾ lb diced (¼-inch) plum tomatoes, seeded
- 1 cup diced (¼-inch) radishes
- ¼ lb white mushrooms, thinly sliced (optional)

GARNISH: chopped fresh cilantro

►Toss onion with 1 tablespoon salt in a bowl and let stand 30 minutes. Transfer to a sieve and rinse under cold water, then drain and squeeze out excess water with your hands. Quarter, pit, and peel avocados, then cut into ½-inch cubes.

►Whisk together orange juice, lime juice, olive oil, sugar, and black pepper until sugar is dissolved. Gently stir in onions, avocados, tomatoes, radishes, and mushrooms and chill, covered, 1 hour. Serve chilled.

COOKS' NOTE: Soup, without cilantro, can be chilled up to 1 day.

THE TUSCAN BREAD SOUP that we had at Eccolo, in Berkeley, California, is a dish I will never forget. I've never had a soup so silken and concentrated. Could you please ask them for the recipe?

LAURA TATUM

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

PAPPA AL POMODORO

TUSCAN TOMATO-BREAD SOUP

Adapted from Eccolo

SERVES 8 TO 10 (MAKES 10 TO 11 CUPS)

ACTIVE TIME: 45 MIN START TO FINISH: 1½ HR

Day-old bread is the unassuming star of this fragrant tomato and basil soup. By substituting canned tomatoes you can make it all year (see cooks' note, below).

- 4 lb vine-ripened tomatoes
- 3 large red onions, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus additional for drizzling
- 3 cups water
- 3 cups loosely packed fresh basil leaves, coarsely chopped, plus additional for sprinkling
- 3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 (1-lb) day-old loaf Italian country bread, crust removed and bread torn into 1-inch pieces (10 cups)

►Cut an X in bottom of each tomato.

Blanch tomatoes in batches in a large pot of boiling water 10 seconds, then transfer to a bowl of ice water. Peel and core tomatoes, then chop and reserve juice.

►Cook onions with 1 teaspoon salt in oil in a 5- to 6-quart heavy pot over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until onions are very soft and beginning to brown, about 30 minutes.

►Add tomatoes, water, basil, garlic, and remaining teaspoon salt and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until mixture thickens slightly and tomatoes are falling apart, about 30 minutes. Season with salt, then reduce heat to low and stir in bread. Simmer, stirring occasionally with a whisk, breaking up any large pieces of bread, until it has absorbed most of liquid, 5 minutes (mixture will be thick). If desired, thin with water. Season with salt and serve sprinkled with additional basil and drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil.

COOKS' NOTES: Soup can be made 1 day ahead and chilled, covered.

•Soup can be made with 2 (28-ounce) cans whole San Marzano tomatoes in juice. Chop tomatoes and reserve juice, then proceed with recipe. ☺