Roasted Tomato Soup

12 large, ripe tomatoes, about 4 pounds total weight

$1/2$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

$1/4$ cup balsamic vinegar

12 large cloves garlic, peeled but left whole

finely ground sea salt, preferably gray salt

freshly ground black pepper

1 cup finely chopped yellow onion

2 cups water

2 cups lightly packed fresh basil leaves

This recipe was created to celebrate the tomato in all its summer glory. Too many tomato soups are made with tasteless tomatoes. You need to roast them, and roast them really well until they are black in spots. Use good olive oil and vinegar, plenty of salt and pepper, and of course, lots of garlic.

When you use tomatoes at the absolute height of their season, their skins are thin, so you don't need to peel them for this soup or strain the skins out of the finished soup.

This soup can be made hours ahead and served warm, at room temperature or chilled.

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Preheat oven to 500 degrees F.

Prepare the tomatoes for the soup. Core the tomatoes and quarter them lengthwise. In a large bowl, mix the tomatoes, $1/4$ cup of the olive oil, the vinegar, garlic, 1 teaspoon salt, and $1/2$ teaspoon peppper. Spread the tomatoes on a nonreactive rimmed baking sheet. Roast the tomatoes in the oven until very dark in spots, 35 to 40 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool.

The tomatoes should be roasted until they develop a deep color

In a large saucepan, combine the remaining $1/4$ cup olive oil, the onion, and a pinch of salt over medium heat. Cook the onion, stirring occasionally, until very soft, 8 to 10 minutes. Raise the heat to high and add the roasted tomatoes and water. Bring to a simmer, adjust the heat to maintain the simmer, and cook for 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Remove from the heat and let cool slightly. Working in batches, puree the tomato mixture with the basil, starting at a slow speed and increasing the speed gradually. The mixture should be very smooth. Alternatively, you can use an immersion blender right in the pan.