

TOMATO SOUP & CROUTONS

2¼ pounds ripe cherry tomatoes on the vine, red and yellow if you can get them
4 large tomatoes
1 fresh red chile
4 cloves garlic
1 ciabatta loaf
2 small red onions
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
a small bunch of fresh basil
a few dollops of crème fraîche or sour cream, to serve

SEASONINGS

olive oil
extra virgin olive oil
sea salt & black pepper

GUACAMOLE PLATTER

a handful of heirloom mixed cherry tomatoes
1–2 fresh red chiles
a handful of fresh cilantro
2 ripe avocados
2 limes
½ bulb fennel
1 carrot
½ cucumber
3 ounces grissini or other breadsticks

PRUNE SPONGE

1¼ cups canned prunes, drained with some juice reserved
heaping ¾ cup all-purpose flour
¼ cup dark brown sugar
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature
1 heaped teaspoon ground ginger
½ level teaspoon baking soda
1 egg
½ cup milk
golden syrup (such as Lyle's), to serve
a few dollops of crème fraîche or whipped cream, to serve

TO START Get all your ingredients and equipment ready. Turn the oven on to 425°F and put a large saucepan on a low heat. Put the standard blade attachment into the food processor.

TOMATO SOUP Pull the tomatoes off the vines, but leave some of their green tops on. Quarter the larger tomatoes, then put all the tomatoes onto a baking sheet. Drizzle over a good lug of olive oil and season. Halve and seed the red chile and add to the pan. Crush in 4 peeled cloves of garlic. Quickly toss everything, then put on the top shelf of the oven for 12 to 15 minutes.

CROUTONS Get another baking sheet and rip the ciabatta loaf into 8 equal chunks. Add a good lug of olive oil, a pinch of salt, and put on the bottom shelf of the oven.

TOMATO SOUP Peel and roughly chop the onions and put them into the hot saucepan with a lug of olive oil and a good pinch of salt. Turn the heat up to medium and leave to soften, stirring occasionally.

PRUNE SPONGE Get 4 cups that will all fit into your microwave at the same time. Tip the prunes into a bowl, then spoon 1 tablespoon of their syrupy juice into each of the cups. Divide all the prunes between the 4 cups.

TOMATO SOUP Stir ¼ cup of balsamic vinegar into the onions and let it cook away and reduce down.

PRUNE SPONGE Put the flour, sugar, butter, ground ginger, and baking soda into a food processor and whiz. Crack in the egg, then add the milk. Let it whiz until smooth (you may need to scrape round the edge and whiz again), then divide between the cups (they should be two-thirds full) and put to one side.

GUACAMOLE Squeeze a handful of cherry tomatoes onto the biggest board you have, then finely chop up the flesh with 1 to 2 red chiles and a handful of cilantro leaves, including the top part of the stalks.

TOMATO SOUP Take the pan of tomatoes out of the oven and add everything to the pan of onions.

CROUTONS Check them—if they are crisp and golden, turn off the oven, but leave them in there to keep warm.

GUACAMOLE Halve and pit the avocados, then squeeze them over a board so the flesh comes out of the skins. Discard the skins, add a pinch of salt, squeeze over the juice of 2 limes, and chop everything together until fine. Taste and adjust the flavors if needed, then use your knife to sweep everything to one side of the board. Cut the ½ bulb fennel into wedges. Peel the carrot, quarter lengthways, and cut into batons, then do the same with the cucumber. Sprinkle over a pinch of salt, then arrange the vegetables next to the guacamole. Put a handful of grissini into a glass and take them to the table with the board of guacamole.

TOMATO SOUP In 2 batches, carefully pour the vegetables from the saucepan into a blender. Add most of the basil, put the lid on, cover with a tea towel, and whiz to a fairly rustic consistency, pouring the mixture into a large saucepan or serving bowl as you go. Once finished, mix well, season to taste, and top with a dollop of crème fraîche, a few basil leaves, and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Take to the table with a stack of soup bowls and the pan of croutons from the oven.

PRUNE SPONGE Just before serving, pop the desserts into the microwave to cook on full power for 6 minutes.

TO SERVE Put a crouton or two in the bottom of each soup bowl. Ladle the soup on top, then dig in and let everyone help themselves to the guacamole. When the desserts are ready, bring to the table, drizzle over a little golden syrup, top with crème fraîche, and go for it (use a spoon to turn them upside down in the cups and you'll be in for a treat).