

Crème de Tomate en Croute (Cream of Tomato Soup)

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4 tablespoons butter
2 pieces thick-sliced bacon, diced
1 whole carrot, peeled, diced
1/2 large onion, peeled, diced
1 stick celery, diced
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
8 tablespoons tomato paste
6 cups chicken broth, or vegetable broth
15 ounces chopped tomatoes, San Marzano brand, with juice
2 sprigs rosemary, fresh
5 sprigs thyme, fresh
1 whole bay leaf
kosher salt & freshly ground pepper
1 cup heavy cream
3 cups croutons, homemade, not packaged

Serving Ideas: The original recipe called for using puff pastry, cut into squares and rolled out thin, then draped over an ovenproof bowl filled with the soup, then baked at 425° for 10-15 minutes until toasty crisp. We in the class felt that the pastry was very hard to cut - how do you do that with only a spoon, but awkward for sure even with a knife or fork when it's perched on top of a bowl. So we all decided that making croutons with butter and olive oil would be a better choice.

Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 306 Calories; 21g Fat (59.5% calories from fat); 9g Protein; 23g Carbohydrate; 4g Dietary Fiber; 59mg Cholesterol; 915mg Sodium.
 Exchanges: 1 Grain(Starch); 1/2 Lean Meat; 1 1/2 Vegetable; 0 Non-Fat Milk; 4 Fat.

A traditional French method, and oh, so tasty.

A serving will be about 1 1/2 cups or less. The instructor highly recommended Swanson's Natural Goodness chicken broth, but it's too high in sodium for me, so I used Health Valley. The instructor also mentioned that carrots help round out the flavor of tomatoes - she uses them often in any dish that uses a lot of tomatoes.

Servings: 8

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Start to Finish Time: 1 hour

1. In a large, heavy bottomed pot melt the butter. Add bacon, onion, carrot and celery. Sauté until lightly browned. Mix in the flour, forming a roux, then cook until the mixture resembles a fine sandy texture. Do not burn. Remove from heat and add the tomato paste. Return the pan to the heat and gradually add the 6 cups broth and bring to a boil, stirring constantly to break up any tomato paste chunks.
2. Combine the fresh herbs and bay leaf into a bouquet garni (tie up with a string) and add to the soup. Add tomatoes with juice and season lightly. Simmer for 40-45 minutes, occasionally skimming off any fat that might arise to the top.
3. Meanwhile, prepare the croutons (chunks of white bread drizzled with olive oil and butter, then baked or drizzle olive oil and butter in a frying pan and brown them).
4. Remove the herbs (bouquet garni) from the soup and discard. Use a stick blender (or food processor or blender) and liquidize the soup until smooth. Or, if you prefer to have a bit of texture, just blend the ingredients part way, then return to the pot and add the cream. Adjust the consistency - if the soup is a little too thick, add a bit more broth or cream. If you prefer a very smooth soup you can strain through a conical strainer at this point. Adjust the seasonings again, then ladle into bowls, top with some hot croutons and serve.