

Gazpacho

Kathy's Note: This classic Spanish-style cold summer soup is like drinking a garden salad. I urge you to shop at a farmer's market or find a friend with an overflowing garden because this is all about using the best summer vegetables. A bowl of gazpacho is like a bowl of summer. Serve with a green salad and crusty bread and olive oil.

Serves 8

Ingredients:

4 pounds ripe summer tomatoes (the more varieties the better), cored and chopped
1 to 2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
1 cups stale* bread cubes (from leftover bread), cut into 1/2-inch pieces
12 large basil leaves
6 scallions, chopped
1/2 cup sweet onion, chopped
1 medium sweet green or red bell pepper, chopped
1 small cucumber, peeled and chopped
4 tablespoons olive oil
4 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon honey, if tomatoes aren't very sweet, optional
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Garnish:

2 medium tomatoes or 12 cherry tomatoes, chopped
1 medium cucumber, chopped
1 large red or green bell pepper, chopped
4 scallions, chopped
8 basil leaves, thinly sliced
Lemon-flavored olive oil or olive oil mixed with 1/2 teaspoon grated lemon zest

*Stale doesn't mean moldy. It means day or two-day-old bread that is beginning to turn crusty and hard. If the bread is too hard to cube, place it in a warm 250 degree oven for a few minutes to soften it up.

Instructions:

Mix all the ingredients for the soup in a large salad bowl and toss. Working in batches in the container of a food processor or blender, combine the mixture. Blend until almost smooth. The soup will be chunky. If you like it smoother, blend a little longer. Taste for seasoning and add more oil and vinegar if too thick. Season to taste with more salt, pepper and honey.

Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

Serve cold topped with any or all of the garnishes.

Plum Tart with a Hazelnut Crust

Kathy's Note: You can make this simple tart using fresh seasonal ripe plums, peaches, or nectarines or any combination you like. The pastry needs to chill for at least 2 hours so plan your time accordingly.

Serves 4 to 6. Or less. It's pretty delicious.

Ingredients:

The Pastry:

1 cup all-purpose or pastry flour
1 cup hazelnut flour
Salt
2 tablespoons sugar
2 sticks butter, well chilled and cut into small cubes
About 1/4 cup ice cold water

The Fruit Filling:

About 8 medium-sized ripe plums, peaches, or nectarines, or a combination, pitted and cut into thick slices or quarters
About 1/4 cup sugar
1 tablespoon flour or cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1 1/2 tablespoons melted butter

Instructions:

Make the pastry: in the container of a food processor pulse the white flour, hazelnut flour, salt and sugar. Add the butter cubes and pulse about 15 times, or until the mixture looks like coarse cornmeal. With the motor running, add only enough water so that the dough begins to pull away from the sides of the food processor bowl and come together. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for about 2 hours, or until well chilled.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and, working on a well floured work surface, roll the dough out about 9 inches in diameter. Drape the dough into a 9-inch tart pan with a removable bottom and press the edges. Chill for at least 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Meanwhile, gently toss the fruit with the sugar (if your fruit is very sweet 1/4 cup will be fine but if it's tart you might want to add an extra few tablespoons of sugar), ginger, and flour. Drizzle the melted butter on top.

Add the fruit to the tart pan. Bake on the middle shelf for 20 minutes. Reduce the heat to 350 and bake another 35 to 40 minutes or until the edge of the crust looks like it's turning golden brown and the fruit looks tender and the juices are bubbling. Don't worry if the pie looks too juicy; when it cools the juices will set.