

OVEN DRIED PLUM TOMATOES

When it comes to preserving tomatoes by means of drying or dehydration, there are numerous methods to follow.

The following method results in an oven dried tomato with some moisture and softness in the center. It is a tomato that will have to be refrigerated or frozen when finished.

This is not to be compared with sun-dried tomatoes that are stored at room temperature and require extensive and precise drying methods.

This particular method produces an intensely flavored; sweet, chewy oven dried tomato, perfect with cheese, bread or just for snacking.

12 plum tomatoes, washed, cored and cut in half lengthwise
1 tsp kosher salt

Pre-heat oven to 200 degrees.

Set up a sheet pan with a baking rack or cake rack on it, preferably a coated baking rack. Lay the tomatoes on the baking rack leaving approximately ½ inch of space between the tomatoes to allow for airflow. The baking rack also allows for better air circulation.

Sprinkle the tomatoes generously with salt.

Bake the tomatoes for 2 hours and rotate them in your oven. Continue baking (drying out) the tomatoes for another 2 hours and rotate the pan again. Depending on the size of the tomatoes and your oven it could take anywhere from 5 – 6 hours total.

The tomatoes are done when the skin is shriveled and the sides of the tomato are caving in. The center of the tomatoes will be slightly moist.

Let the oven dried tomatoes completely cool and then store in airtight containers. Lay a piece of plastic over the surface of the tomatoes to prevent air exposure.

They will last in your refrigerator for up to 3 weeks. Oven dried tomatoes can be stored in freezer bags, removing as much air as possible, and frozen for up to 4 months.

Variation: Add a few rosemary leaves to the cavity of the tomato at the start of the drying process.

ROASTED TOMATO-OLIVE RELISH

The deep, rich and sweet flavor of the roasted tomatoes against the salty olives and the fresh herbs make this a wonderfully versatile relish. Serve it over pasta, in your favorite sandwich or alongside grilled meats.

8 roasted plum tomatoes, skins removed
Red pepper flakes, a pinch
2 Tbsp chopped oregano
2 Tbsp chopped basil
1 tsp balsamic vinegar or lemon juice
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
½ cup Kalamata olives pitted and chopped
½ tsp salt
Cracked black pepper to taste

Roughly chop the tomatoes into a ½ inch dice and place them in a bowl. Add the red pepper flakes, oregano, basil and vinegar (or lemon juice) and stir to combine. Add the olive oil, olives, salt and black pepper. Taste and adjust seasonings as you like.

TOMATO AND GINGER CHUTNEY

Here is an adventurous relish made with locally grown tomatoes. This chutney is great served with lamb, chicken, rice and lentil dishes.

3 Tbsp canola oil
1 medium onion, finely diced
3 cloves of garlic, finely diced
1 Serrano chili, finely diced
2 inch piece of ginger, finely diced
2 cinnamon sticks
2 tsp ground cumin, toasted
1 tsp ground coriander, toasted
¼ cup rice wine vinegar (or cider vinegar)
2 tsp sugar
8 plum tomatoes, peeled and finely diced
¼ cup chopped cilantro
Juice of 1-2 limes
Salt and pepper

Heat the oil in a medium saucepan on medium heat. Add the onions and cook until they are soft or wilted about 3 minutes. Add the garlic, chilies, ginger, cinnamon stick, cumin and coriander and stir with a wooden spoon. Continue to cook until softened, about 2-3 minutes. If anything starts to stick, reduce the heat and add more oil.

Add the vinegar, sugar and tomatoes and bring the ingredients to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and cook until the tomatoes are softened and the flavors are blended, about 10 – 12 minutes. Depending on the size of your pan, you may need to add water if the chutney becomes too thick. Transfer to a bowl and let cool.

Add the cilantro, juice of one lime, salt and pepper. Taste the chutney and add more lime juice as needed. If the chutney is acidic, add a pinch of sugar.