

Sundried tomato soup | SCRAPS by Carolina Gelen

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cook time: 50 minutes | Total time: 1 hour 5 minutes | Makes 4 servings

Tomato Soup

8.5 ounce jar sun-dried tomatoes in oil
½ teaspoon black peppercorns
½ teaspoon chili flakes
1 teaspoon fennel seeds
1 teaspoon coriander seeds
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 yellow onion, chopped
Kosher salt
3 celery stalks, chopped
5 to 6 garlic cloves, crushed
¼ cup white wine, such as Pinot Grigio, or water
15-ounce canned whole tomatoes
3 cups water
½ cup heavy cream or canned full-fat coconut milk

Grilled cheese

Sliced white bread
American cheese
Kosher salt

Place a sieve over a small bowl (small enough to hold about ½ cup of oil). Pour the sundried tomatoes through the sieve, and let the oil drip in the bowl. Set everything aside.

In a mortar and pestle, add the peppercorns, chili flakes, fennel and coriander. Roughly crush and set aside. If you don't have a mortar and pestle, place the whole spices on a cutting board, place the back of the knife over the spices and gently hit it to open up the spices — similar motion to crushing a garlic clove. Set aside.

In a medium pot (3 to 4-quart pot) over medium heat, add ¼ cup olive oil or ¼ cup sundried tomato oil. Heat for 2 minutes, then add the chopped onions and a hefty pinch of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon, until the onion develops a golden color, and crispy edges, for about 10 to 12 minutes. Lower the heat as needed. If the onion starts browning too fast, add a splash of water and continue cooking.

Once the onion reaches the desired golden color, add in the celery. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 to 6 minutes, or until the celery has softened. Add the whole garlic cloves, the spices and stir everything until fragrant, for about 2 minutes.

Add the strained sundried tomatoes and cook for 3 to 4 minutes, mixing everything together. Carefully pour in the ¼ cup of wine or ¼ cup of water to deglaze the pan — the liquid will immediately start bubbling and steaming. Scrape the bottom of the pan to release any caramelized bits. Add the canned tomatoes, 3 cups of water, more salt and bring everything to a boil.

Lower the heat to low or medium-low and simmer the soup for 15 to 20 minutes.

Carefully blend the soup using an immersion blender or a countertop blender (if using a countertop blender, make sure to remove the center plug in the blender lid to allow the steam to escape during the blending process). Return the blended soup to the pan. Add the heavy cream and stir to combine. Taste and season with more salt, as needed. If you prefer a thinner consistency, add an additional splash of cream or water.

To make the grilled cheese sandwich: In a nonstick pan, add a tablespoon of the reserved sundried tomato oil. Add one slice of bread, a few cheese slices on top, then sandwich another slice of bread on top. Cook for about 2 minutes per side, adding more tomato oil, as needed. Slice each sandwich into 16 croutons using a serrated knife.

You can make a bunch of these ahead, and reheat them in the oven right (maybe add a drizzle of oil all over before reheating) before serving. I'd say go for 400°F (205°C) for 5 to 8 minutes, or until the cheese looks melty.