



BREAD AND TOMATO SOUP

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 pounds tomatoes, peeled, cored, seeded and chopped (or 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ pound day-old Italian bread, torn into 1-inch pieces
- 2 cups chicken or vegetable stock, or water
- 1 cup loosely packed chopped fresh basil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese

In a large sauté pan, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat until hot but not smoking. Add the onion, garlic, bay leaf and red pepper flakes. Sauté 2 to 3 minutes, or until the onions are softened.

Add the tomatoes and their juices, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes, or until the tomatoes begin to soften and break down.

Put the bread chunks into a bowl, and pour the stock or water over them.

Transfer the bread and any liquid in the bowl to the sauté pan.

Return to a simmer and cook 8 to 10 minutes, or until the bread has absorbed as much liquid as possible and is the consistency of soft baby food. Stir in the basil and 3 tablespoons of the extra-virgin olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Simmer for another 10 minutes to develop the flavors. Remove the bay leaf. Stir in the butter, then ladle the soup into serving bowls.

Garnish with the cheese, then drizzle with remaining olive oil. Start to finish: 30 minutes.

Serves 4. Recipe from Rick Tramonto's "Fantastico!" Broadway Books, 2007.