



# Roast cherry tomatoes

# The take-home

Tomatoes contain water and less water through **roasting means a more concentrated tomato.**

At warmer temperatures sweeter tastes are heightened and aroma molecules are more active. So **roasting boosts sweetness.**

This can be used to enhance (sweet and aromatic) peak season tomatoes and not-so-peak season tomatoes (in need of sweetness and flavour).

## Peak season tomatoes

180°C | 20 minutes

## Not-so-peak season tomatoes

+ honey

200°C | 40 minutes (turning halfway)

# The story

We agree roasting tomatoes intensifies flavour but beyond that Brandon and I diverge.

I like to coax the most out of little tomatoes at their peak, in the height of summer, watching them closely until they're just right. Brandon is more forgiving in both his method and choice of tomato and makes his all year round.

I like mine on an aglio olio style pasta, Brandon likes his spooned onto tiger-striped slices of sourdough that have been toasted in a grill pan.

We'll leave you to choose for yourself.

– Nikki

# Peak season

The aim is to roast the tomatoes just until they puff and swell but not until flesh and juices pop out of the skins. In a way, just warming them with some aromatics so they have a little more intensity, as I might do with a fig or an apricot for dessert.

When coming to the end of summer, we applied this method to (the aptly named) Bite Size tomatoes, so they were maximally fragrant and juicy. And served them and the syrupy juices at room temperature with slices of soft goat's cheese and fresh mint leaves dressed in a Dijon vinaigrette.

In early summer we applied it to yellow vine tomatoes tipping the just-short-of-bursting fruit onto fresh spaghetti tossed with gently cooked garlic and red chilli and finely chopped parsley.

# The tomatoes

Makes one pan | feeds two to four

## Key point

Arrange the tomatoes in a single layer, otherwise they will stew rather than concentrate. They can be snugly side-by-side but not overlapping.

Preheat the oven to 200°C with the rack in the middle. Halve **500g cherry or small vine tomatoes** crossways and arrange in a baking dish that is big enough for them to sit in a single layer. If using vine tomatoes, pluck them off the vine but tuck the vine between or under the tomatoes to lend flavour during cooking.

Add **2 peeled garlic cloves, 6 small pieces of peeled lemon zest** (if you have on hand). Pour over **two tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil**

and season well with **sea salt** and **freshly ground black pepper**.

Place the tray into the oven, turn the temperature down to 180°C and roast for 20 minutes or until just puffed and juicy. Remove and serve warm or at room temperature. You can also store them in an airtight container in the fridge for serving as a side (as described above) or spooning onto sourdough toast spread with creamed cottage cheese or thick crème fraiche.

## The pasta

An Aglio Olio e Peperoncino style spaghetti with topped roast cherry tomatoes. It is reminiscent of a restaurant dish that was once cooked up for me in the moment, in answer to the question: 'What do you feel like eating tonight.' I could eat this almost every night.

To create a foundation of flavour, finely chop **seven peeled plump and fresh cloves of garlic** and **one to two red chillies** (depending on the heat). Add to a small pot with **two tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil** and cook gently over a low heat until softened but without colour. Take off the heat and add **two tablespoons of finely chopped parsley**.

Cook **500g fresh spaghetti** in a large pot of salted water at a rolling boil for two to three minutes until just al dente. Drain, return to the pot, add the garlic-chilli-parsley and toss well. Tip in the tomato juices and toss again. Tip in the tomatoes but don't toss them with the pasta. Using a pair of tongs and avoiding the tomatoes, divide the spaghetti between two bowls, gently spoon the tomatoes over the spaghetti as you go. Season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper if necessary – but it shouldn't be necessary!

# Not-so-peak season

When styling a shoot for our friends Leigh and Lucy, one of their dishes was 'Leigh's Mum's Tomatoes' or 'Brenda's tomatoes'.

It reminded me of a tray of honey-roasted cherry tomatoes I'd developed for the food pages of a magazine, so these are Brenda's but slightly tweaked.

The aim is not just to emphasise flavour but also boost sweetness. And if for some reason you have a need for tomatoes in winter, this method, can bring a very average punnet of supermarket cherry tomatoes to life.



# The tomatoes

Makes one pan | feeds four

## Key difference

Here there are more tomatoes cooked for longer at a higher heat and it doesn't matter if they overlap slightly. There's also no need to hover at the stove watching over them, just come back once halfway through cooking to toss gently.

Preheat the oven to 200°C with the rack in the middle. Halve **700g cherry or small vine tomatoes** crossways and arrange in a large baking dish that is big enough for them to sit (more or less) in a single layer.

Add **3 garlic cloves**, strips of lemon zest from one lemon and **three small sprigs of rosemary or thyme**. Spoon over **one tablespoon of raw honey** and **three tablespoons of extra-virgin**

olive oil and season well with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Place the tray into the oven and roast for 20 minutes. Toss gently and roast for another 20 minutes (40 minutes in total). Serve warm or at room temperature on slices of grilled sourdough toast.



Nikki and Brandon

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