



Tomato Soup with Pesto Grilled Cheese Sandwich

By Chef Veera Gaul, Ph.D.



Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons O&V [Unflavored Extra Virgin Olive Oil](#) *
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped fennel
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 (28oz) can crushed tomatoes
- 1-3 thyme sprigs
- ¼ cup dry O&V [Bruschetta \(Originale, Piccante, or Olive\)](#) *
- Salt and fresh cracked pepper
- 8 slices thick cut sour dough bread or French bread
- 8 tablespoons shredded mozzarella cheese
- Slices of white cheddar
- 4 tablespoons O&V [Pesto alla Genovese](#) *
- 4 tablespoons O&V [Basil EVOO](#) *
- 4 tablespoons Greek Yogurt (beaten well, till smooth)

Preparation

Heat the Unflavored EVOO in a large Dutch oven or pot over medium-high heat. Add onion and sauté for 3-5 minutes. Add the chopped fennel and continue sautéing an

additional 5 minutes. Add the garlic and thyme, continue cooking till fragrant (another 3-4 minutes).

Add the broth and tomatoes to the pan, add cracked pepper and Bruschetta. Bring to boil, partially cover, reduce heat and simmer for 35 minutes. Remove from pan, discard the thyme and let cool enough to handle. Place the tomato mixture in a blender or food processor (you may need to do this in batches). Blend until smooth. Return the soup to a clean pot, season with salt to taste, and keep warm.

While the soup is cooking, lay the slices of bread on a clean surface. Sprinkle half the shredded mozzarella on 4 pieces of bread. Top with slices of cheddar. Carefully spoon one tablespoon of Pesto over the cheese (keeping away from the edges of the bread). Top with the other half of the shredded mozzarella cheese, and then with the remaining four slices of bread.

Brush the outside of the bread with half the Basil EVOO. Place a large pan on a low heat and add the cheese sandwiches placing them in the pan with the oiled bread directly on the pan. Let them cook for 8-10 minutes on low. While they are cooking, brush the tops of the sandwiches with the remaining Basil EVOO. After the bottoms have browned, flip the sandwiches over and let the other side brown for an additional 6-8 minutes. Remove sandwiches to a cutting board. Allow to sit for a few minutes and then cut in half.

Serve the soup hot with a garnish of basil and cracked pepper. You can also add a dollop of Pesto or just a drizzle of Basil EVOO. Serve with the grilled cheese sandwiches.

Serves 4

Total Time: 50 minutes

Notes

- * The [Bruschetta](#) adds that slow and long cooked flavor that is hard to replicate. Alternatively, roast a pint of cherry tomatoes with pepper, salt, olive oil and thyme for one hour at 375 F and add them to the soup along with the broth and crushed tomatoes.
- * The [Pesto alla Genovese](#) is absolutely fantastic, but you can use another high-quality store-bought Pesto or make your own. Although I love the layered flavoring created by brushing the bread with the [Basil EVOO](#), you can use a good quality unflavored oil instead.

Categories: Entrees, Soups & Salads, Snacks & Sides, Vegetarian, Dairy Free Option, Gluten Free Option, Unflavored EVOO, Basil EVOO, Pesto Alla Genovese, Bruschetta, Olive Bruschetta, Bruschetta Piccante, Grilled Cheese Sandwich, Best Pesto Grilled Cheese, Tomato Soup, Home-Made, Fennel, Sourdough Bread, Weeknight Meal, Mediterranean Diet, Plant Based