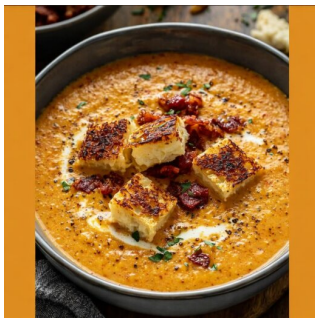


Cozy Up with the Best Creamy Tomato Soup and Mini Grilled Cheese Bites

Creamy Tomato Bisque with Grilled Cheese Croutons



OVEN
400°F

TIME
40 min

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INGREDIENTS

For the Bisque:

4 cups roasted tomatoes: (See instructions for roasting fresh heirlooms or Romas).

6 strips candied bacon: Roughly chopped (adds a salty-sweet smoky undertone).

2 tbsp olive oil: For sautéing your aromatics.

1 medium onion: Finely chopped.

4 garlic cloves: Minced fresh.

6-8 tbsp tomato paste: This provides that deep, concentrated "umami" punch.

2 tbsp dry cooking wine: Optional, but great for deglazing the pot.

4 cups vegetable or chicken stock: Use high-quality stock for the best base.

1 cup heavy cream: This transforms it from a soup to a true bisque.

1 tbsp maple syrup or brown sugar: To balance the acidity of the tomatoes.

Spices: 1 tsp smoked paprika, 1 tsp garlic powder, 1 tsp dried oregano, 1 tsp dried thyme, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp red pepper flakes.

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly grated Parmesan: For a nutty, salty finish.

Thickener: 1 tbsp cornstarch mixed with 3 tbsp warm water.

For the Grilled Cheese Croutons:

4 slices rustic bread: Brioche or sourdough works best here.

4 tbsp garlic-herb butter: The secret to that golden, savory crust.

1 cup shredded cheddar cheese: Sharp cheddar provides the best flavor contrast.

DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare Roasted Tomatoes: Preheat your oven to 200°C (400°F). Wash and halve your tomatoes. Spread them on a baking sheet, drizzle with olive oil, and toss with minced garlic, salt, and pepper. Roast for 30-40 minutes. You're looking for soft, slightly charred edges-that's where the flavor lives!
2. Make Candied Bacon (The Pro Move): Lower the oven to 190°C (375°F). Lay bacon strips on parchment paper, sprinkle with brown sugar, and bake for 15-20 minutes until crisp. Once cooled, chop them up. Some go into the blender, and some stay out for garnish.
3. Prepare Grilled Cheese Croutons: Keep the oven at 200°C (400°F). Butter one side of your bread slices with garlic-herb butter. Create sandwiches with the shredded cheddar, buttered sides out. Bake on a tray for 10-15 minutes, flipping once. Let them cool slightly before slicing into small, adorable squares.
4. Build the Soup Base: In a large heavy-bottomed pot, sauté your onions in olive oil until translucent. Add the garlic and all your dried spices (paprika, oregano, thyme, etc.). Stir in the tomato paste and let it "cook out" for 2 minutes until it turns a deep rust color.
5. Blend and Simmer: Transfer your roasted tomatoes, the sautéed onion mixture, the stock, and half of your candied bacon into a blender. Blend until velvety smooth. Pour it back into the pot and stir in the heavy cream, Parmesan, maple syrup, and cooking wine. Stir in your cornstarch slurry and simmer until thickened to your liking.

SWAPS & NOTES

The Tomato Shortcut: If you are short on time and can't roast fresh tomatoes, you can use high-quality canned San Marzano tomatoes.

Just be sure to simmer them a bit longer with the aromatics.

Vegan Option: Swap the heavy cream for full-fat coconut milk and use a vegan butter and cheese for the croutons.

The Bacon: If you want to keep it vegetarian, omit the candied bacon.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Don't Rush the Onions: Let them get truly soft.

Crunchy onions in a smooth bisque are a texture nightmare.

The Blender Rule: If using a standard blender for hot liquid, never fill it more than halfway and keep a hand on the lid with a towel to prevent "steam explosions." **Balance the Acid:** Tomatoes vary in acidity.

Always taste at the end; if it's too sharp, add a tiny bit more maple syrup.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/cozy-up-with-the-best-creamy-tomato-soup-and-mini-grilled-cheese-bites/>