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## **A VAT OF SIMPLE TOMATO SAUCE, GARLICKY OR VEGETABLE with Sausage Creole Recipe**

**Makes more or less 3 quarts or enough for 3 meals (serving 4)**

Whether you flavor the tomatoes with garlic or with celery, carrots, and onions, this sauce will become a kitchen staple. It's certainly true for me. There are many nights when I open the fridge wondering what to cook, and I sigh with relief when I spy a quart of this sauce. Since I'm often in a hurry and mincing 12 garlic cloves is a lot, I buy peeled garlic cloves and mince them in the food processor, or I use the tubed garlic paste you find in the refrigerated section of the produce department. Figure  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the garlic paste for the 12 cloves. Also, if there are kids in the house who don't like spicy, you may want to reduce the pepper flakes to  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon or just omit it.

1/2 cup olive oil

12 large garlic cloves, minced, or 2 medium-large onions,

2 carrots, and 2 celery stalks, cut into small dice

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

4 cans (28 ounces each) crushed tomatoes or whole tomatoes packed in puree (not juice!)

1 cup red or white wine or water

Salt and ground black pepper

1 can (6 ounces) tomato paste (if necessary; see Note/below)

1. FOR GARLICKY TOMATO SAUCE (A): Heat the oil, garlic, and pepper flakes in a large pot over medium-high heat until the garlic starts to sizzle, just a couple of minutes.

FOR VEGETABLE TOMATO SAUCE (B): Heat the oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the onions, carrots, celery, and pepper flakes and cook until vegetables soften, 5 to 7 minutes.

2. Stir in the tomatoes. Use the wine or water to rinse out the cans and add to the pot. Bring to a simmer, then reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, partially covered, until the sauce thickens and the flavors meld, about 15 minutes. Taste the sauce and season with salt and pepper to taste. Add enough tomato paste so that you've made a thick, full-bodied sauce, not soup (see Note). Simmer to blend the flavors, a few minutes longer. Cool the sauce and divide it among 3 sealed containers. (Can be refrigerated for a couple of weeks or frozen for several months.)



Note: If using canned crushed tomatoes, you may not need any tomato paste. If using San Marzano whole tomatoes packed in puree (see *Tips and Tricks*, page 115/*not included\**), you will likely use the whole can of paste.

\*In the *Tips and Tricks* the author suggests you pour the whole tomatoes into a bowl and crush them with your hands.

### **SAUSAGE CREOLE**

This Creole sauce can easily be transformed with a switch in protein. Using 1 pound cubed boneless, skinless chicken thighs instead of sausages makes it Chicken Creole. For Shrimp Creole, omit the sausages and stir in 1 pound peeled shrimp, cut into bite-size pieces, during the last few minutes of cooking. Of course, a combo is always good—especially half of each: sausage and shrimp.

Cook: 1 pound sliced smoked sausage, such as kielbasa, in 1 tablespoon oil in a large pot over medium-high heat until browned, 4 to 5 minutes. Add and sauté ½ large bell pepper, cut into short strips, until softened, 1 to 2 minutes longer.

Add: 1 quart Vegetable Tomato Sauce (page 117/*above*), 1 cup water, and 1 tablespoon Creole seasoning and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer 10 minutes to blend the flavors. Adjust the seasonings and serve.



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