

# 15-Minute Creamy Tomato Soup (Vegan)

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**Note:** For the four weeks between January 14th and February 11th, I'm adopting a completely vegan lifestyle. Every weekday I'll be updating my progress with a diary entry and a recipe. For past posts, check [here!](#)

Most of us have some sort of nostalgic idea of eating sweet, creamy, canned tomato soup with a side of grilled cheese sandwich, right? I mean, I *never* ate tomato soup as a kid, but even I have nostalgia for the stuff. It's something that's just ingrained in the collective conscious as an essential part of childhood, and a flavor combination that as adults we take joy in turning back to.

Well, the canned stuff is all fine and good in my mind, but when I actually taste it these days, the nostalgia disappears in a puff of high fructose corn syrup-scented smoke. Cloyingly sweet and one dimensional, it's a tough dish to swallow.

**The good news:** Making excellent tomato soup from scratch at home is almost as easy as simply opening a can, and the return on your minor time investment is significant.

This variation of a tomato soup recipe I first wrote down for [Cook's Illustrated Magazine](#) a few years ago starts with a sauté of onions, garlic, dried oregano (which, in applications like this, is just as good as fresh), and crushed red pepper in really good olive oil. I use canned tomatoes because we're cooking them anyway, and canned tomatoes are more reliably fresh year-round than actual fresh tomatoes are. Plus, the fact that they're cooked already means that you have little more to do than bring them to a boil before pureeing in a blender.

But where does the creaminess come in?

When push comes to shove, I suppose that the recipe here should more aptly be entitled "hot gazpacho" rather than "dairy-free creamy tomato soup," because a hot gazpacho is exactly what it is. If you read my [piece on gazpacho](#) last summer, you'd know that at its heart, gazpacho is really a soup of bread and olive oil, and that's exactly what I use to make this vegan version of creamy tomato soup, well, creamy.

See, when olive oil and a water-based soup come together, they don't exactly like to mix. Oil and water and all that. If you can somehow manage to force the two to come together harmoniously, what you end up with is a creamy, rich liquid that is thicker and richer than either the soup or the olive oil on their own, much in the same way that mayonnaise is thicker than the eggs or oil that comprise it.

The key to getting the olive oil and liquid to emulsify? Sliced bread and a blender. A blender on its own will break down large oil droplets into microscopic ones that get dispersed evenly throughout the soup. But this on its own is not enough; Eventually those microscopic droplets come together and coalesce into visible droplets that turn the soup greasy. **Enter bread.** Sliced sandwich bread adds plenty of starch and wheat proteins to the soup. Both of these act as physical emulsifiers, both thickening the liquid, and preventing dispersed oil droplets from coalescing and separating from the mix.

A quick whizz in the blender, and you've got a soup that you could swear has some dairy richness to it, but with a far more intense, bright flavor than an actual cream soup.

A drizzle of olive oil, a few grinds of black pepper, a sprinkling of fresh herbs, and lunch is served.

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