



August 2, 2013

Gazpachos Minus the Bread

By MARTHA ROSE SHULMAN

For years I insisted that gazpacho can't be gazpacho if it doesn't have bread as one of its ingredients. After all, bread is what gives classic gazpacho its unique texture. But this week I decided to forget about the bread and focus in on the combination of tomatoes, vinegar, olive oil, onion and garlic that is really behind the signature flavor of gazpacho. The new Spanish chefs have been reinterpreting this lively, low-calorie soup for over a decade now, so I felt free to experiment, too.

This week's recipes are in essence healthy vegetable smoothies, and indeed, without the garnishes they are drinkable from a glass, or a shot-glass if you want to serve them as tapas. They've all got a similar tang, which comes from the marriage of a small amount of onion, raw garlic, vinegar and tomatoes. Don't make any of these unless you've got some juicy ripe tomatoes to work with. I've seen plenty of gazpacho recipes that call for tomato juice and I suspect those came about because sweet ripe tomatoes weren't available. Tomato juice gazpacho has nothing on one made with fresh tomatoes. Gazpacho is a summer soup, incredibly refreshing on a hot day. I was so happy drinking my vegetables for lunch all week. And drinking them again when I felt a little hungry in the late afternoon....and when I was preparing dinner.

Gazpacho sans Bread

The base for this gazpacho is almost classic. It differs from traditional Andalusian gazpacho because it contains no soaked bread, which is what gives the authentic dish its unique texture. But the flavor is the same – ripe tomato blended with vinegar, onion, garlic, and olive oil. Keep it in a pitcher in the refrigerator and enjoy all summer long.

2 slices red or white onion

2 pounds ripe tomatoes

2 to 3 garlic cloves, to taste, halved, green germ removed

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 to 2 tablespoons sherry vinegar or wine vinegar (to taste)

1/2 to 1 teaspoon sweet paprika (to taste)

1/2 to 1 cup ice water, depending on how thick you want your soup to be

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1/2 cup finely chopped cucumber (more to taste)

1/2 cup finely chopped tomato (more to taste)

1/2 cup finely chopped green or yellow pepper

1/2 cup finely chopped celery

Slivered fresh basil or chopped fresh parsley for garnish

1. Put the onion slices in a bowl, cover with cold water and add a few drops of vinegar. Let sit for 5 minutes while you prepare the remaining ingredients. Drain and rinse with cold water. Cut in half or into smaller pieces.

2. Combine the tomatoes, garlic, onion, olive oil, vinegar, paprika, and salt in a blender and blend until smooth. Taste and adjust seasonings. Pour into a bowl or pitcher, thin out as desired with water, cover and chill for several hours.

3. Meanwhile, prepare the remaining ingredients and toss together in a large bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

4. Spoon the chopped vegetables into soup bowls and pour or ladle in the gazpacho. Garnish with basil chiffonade or chopped fresh parsley, and serve.

Yield: Serves 4

Advance preparation: This will keep for a day in the refrigerator.

Nutritional information per serving: 119 calories; 7 grams fat; 1 gram saturated fat; 1 gram polyunsaturated fat; 5 grams monounsaturated fat; 0 milligrams cholesterol; 13 grams carbohydrates; 4 grams dietary fiber; 25 milligrams sodium (does not include salt to taste); 3 grams protein

Martha Rose Shulman is the author of “The Very Best of Recipes for Health.”