



## **What goes into an authentic Italian tomato sauce**

There is no single authentic Italian tomato sauce for pizzas. Families pass down recipes through generations, they adapt, improve, rethink the ingredients, always changing with the times.

The only nailed down 'authentic' Italian tomato sauce is the one laid out by the AVPN, the Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana, which insists all its tomato sauce ingredients come from Campania, the countryside surrounding Naples.

On a marinara, the AVPN allows oregano and garlic to join the tomato, but the Margherita has nothing more than the "densely enriched" tomato spiralled on to the pizza dough as a bed for the mozzarella and – after cooking – a few sprigs of fresh basil.

## **How do I make a pizza tomato sauce at home?**

As with all cooking, the fresher and better your ingredients, the tastier your meal. And what ingredients you use really does come down to your own taste and preferences.

Some recipes recommend chopping all your uncooked ingredients or sticking them into a blitzer until the sauce has the consistency you like and using that as your sauce, straight on the pizza dough. Other recipes involve hours of toil over the stove, reducing and deepening the flavour.

## **What are good ingredients to use in a pizza tomato sauce?**

Tomatoes, obviously, are a good start. A natural partner is garlic, as is balsamic vinegar, which pulls out the sweet tomatoey flavour and reduces the acidity. While mass-produced pizza tomato sauces use sugar, you really don't have to. Instead, you could add a cube of dark chocolate, tomato puree or sun-dried tomatoes, fresh oregano, parsley or, if you like a little heat, a few chilli flakes.

## **What tomatoes should I use for a pizza tomato sauce?**

Tomatoes come in many shapes and sizes. You might just use the traditional whole pomodoro pelato S.Marzano dell'Agro Sarnese-Nocerino D.O.P., the famous San Marzano tomatoes, with the stamp of approval from



the AVPN. Or you might be happy to settle for organic chopped or crushed tomatoes. If you choose cheap chopped tomatoes, you might not get the flavour you want.

### **Should I cook the tomato sauce?**

Some cooks blitz all the ingredients, which is fine – not very traditional, but fine. But cooking tomatoes gives you benefits that go way beyond taste. Cooked tomatoes have increased lycopene, which helps fight heart disease and cancer, and their antioxidants are even better at protecting against cell and tissue damage. The TL;DR: cooked tomatoes are more nutritious than uncooked.

The other benefit of cooking your tomato sauce is that all those flavours melt into each other, adding a depth you won't get otherwise. Reducing the sauce also removes the excess liquid, creating a thicker sauce which is easier to spread and keeps your pizza crisp. We all know no-one wants a soggy bottom.

What is your pizza tomato sauce tip, trick or favourite ingredient? Let us know.

