Healthy Soups to Master

They're the original one-pot meals—easy, delicious, and good for you, too. And homemade soups are foolproof, thanks to these simple recipes from Mark Bittman's *How to Cook Everything: The Basics*. Cook today, and satisfy your cravings all week long.

TOSS A FEW INGREDIENTS into a saucepan with water or stock and you'll have a near-perfect meal. "The right soups are absolutely an appetite suppressant, thanks to their high water content," says Dawn Jackson Blatner, RD, author of *The Flexitarian Diet*. Plus, the nutrients from vegetables that might otherwise leach out enrich the broth instead. You can't do better than these yummy classics from best-selling cookbook author Mark Bittman.

Why snack on soup? It's filling, nourishing, and low in fat and calories, making it the perfect mid-afternoon pick-me-up.

tomato soup
page 128

OCTOBER 2012  HEALTH.COM  127
**Tomato Soup**

To ramp up heartiness but not fat or calories, puree half the batch in a blender, then stir it back into the pot.

**Time:** 35–40 minutes  
**Makes:** 4 servings

- 2 TBSP olive oil  
- 1 large or 2 medium onions, halved and thinly sliced  
- 1 carrot, chopped  
- Salt and freshly ground pepper  
- 2 TBSP tomato paste  
- 1 sprig fresh thyme, or ½ tsp dried  
- 2 lbs tomatoes, cored and chopped, or 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, including the juice  
- 2–3 cups water or tomato juice  
- 1 tsp sugar, optional  
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil leaves for garnish, optional

1. Put the oil in a large pot over medium heat. When it’s hot, add the onion and carrot. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring, until the vegetables begin to soften (3–5 minutes). Add the tomato paste, lower the heat a bit, and continue to cook, stirring to coat the vegetables with the paste, until the paste begins to darken—don’t let it burn (1–2 minutes).

2. Strip the thyme leaves from the stem and add them to the pot along with the tomatoes. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes break down (10–15 minutes). Add 2 cups of the water or juice and bring to a boil, then adjust the heat so that the mixture bubbles gently. Let cook until the flavors meld (5 more minutes).

**Adding the Tomato Paste**  
It’s OK if the vegetables are lightly colored when you add the tomato paste, but don’t let them get too dark, as they have more cooking to do.

**Cooking the Tomato Paste**  
This step gives the paste time to brown and lose any bitter flavor—so don’t rush. Lower the heat if the mixture is darkening too fast.

**Stripping Leaves from Hard Herb Stems**  
Hold the sprig by the thick end and pull downward so the leaves come free.

3. Taste and adjust the seasoning: if the soup tastes flat (but salty enough), stir in the sugar. If it’s too thin, add more water, ¼ cup at a time. If it’s too thick, cook until it thickens and reduces slightly (this will also intensify the flavors). Garnish with basil, if using, and serve.

**Serving Size:** About 1½ cups  
**Calories:** 129; **Fat:** 7.3g (sat 1g, mono 5g, poly 0.9g); **Cholesterol:** 0mg; **Protein:** 3g; **Carbohydrate:** 14g; **Sugars:** 9g; **Fiber:** 4g; **Iron:** 1mg; **Sodium:** 174mg; **Calcium:** 42mg

**Change It Up!**

1. **Hearty Tomato Soup**  
Add ½ cup white rice, bulgur, or couscous with the water in Step 2, along with 1 more cup liquid. Cook until the grain is tender (5–15 minutes) and be prepared to add a little more water if the soup gets too thick.

2. **Spiced Tomato Soup**  
Instead of the fresh thyme and basil, add 1 TBSP curry or chili powder or 1 tsp smoked paprika (pimentón) along with the tomato paste in Step 1.

**Soup Tips**

- There’s no need to peel the tomatoes: tomato skins intensify the flavor of the soup.
- If you don’t want big pieces of skin in your bowl, cut the tomatoes into small pieces.
- Tomato paste comes in cans and tubes: Grab a tube if you see one: use what you need and keep the rest handy in the fridge.