

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
 - Cook Time: 45-60 minutes
 - Total Time: 1 hour 15 minutes
 - Intensity Level: Easy / Beginner
 - Yield: Approximately 6 servings (enough for 1 lb of pasta)
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Ingredients

To make a truly great sauce, quality ingredients matter. If you can find San Marzano tomatoes (certified D.O.P.), grab them. Otherwise, a good quality whole peeled tomato is your best bet.

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (plus more for finishing)
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced or minced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste (double concentrate is best)
- 2 cans (28 ounces each) whole peeled tomatoes (San Marzano preferred)
- **1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional, for heat)
- 1 large bunch fresh basil (divided)
- 1 teaspoon salt (plus more to taste)
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

- 1-2 teaspoons sugar (optional, only if the tomatoes are too acidic)
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Instructions

Phase 1: The Base (Soffritto)

Time: 10 Minutes | Intensity: Low

1. Heat the Oil: In a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat.
2. Sauté the Aromatics: Add the diced onion. Sauté for about 5-7 minutes until the onions are translucent and soft, but not browned. If they start to brown, lower the heat.
3. Add Garlic: Add the sliced garlic and cook for another 1 minute until fragrant. Be careful not to burn the garlic, as it will turn bitter.

Phase 2: The Depth

Time: 5 Minutes | Intensity: Medium

4. Tomato Paste: Add the tomato paste to the pot. Stir it into the onions and garlic. Cook for 2-3 minutes. This step is crucial; frying the paste in the oil removes the metallic tinny taste and deepens the flavor.

5. Deglaze: If the pot looks dry, add a splash of water or red wine to scrape up the fond (the brown bits) at the bottom of the pan.

Phase 3: The Simmer

Time: 45–60 Minutes | Intensity: Low (Simmering)

6. Crush the Tomatoes: Pour the canned tomatoes into a large bowl. Using your hands (the best tool for the job) or a potato masher, crush the tomatoes until they are broken down but still slightly chunky. Pour them into the pot.
7. Season: Add the oregano, red pepper flakes, salt, and pepper. Stir well.
8. The Basil: Take half of your basil bunch, tie it together with kitchen twine (or just throw it in whole), and drop it into the sauce. You will remove this later. This infuses the sauce with flavor without leaving dark green specks everywhere.
9. Simmer: Bring the sauce to a gentle simmer, then reduce the heat to low. Let it bubble gently, uncovered, for 45 to 60 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking.

Phase 4: The Finish

Time: 5 Minutes | Intensity: Low

10. Taste and Adjust: After 45 minutes, taste the sauce. If it tastes flat, add more salt. If it tastes too acidic or metallic, add the sugar (start with 1 teaspoon). If it tastes too thick, add a splash of pasta water or regular water.

11. The Final Touch: Remove the cooked basil bundle. Tear the remaining fresh basil leaves by hand and stir them into the hot sauce. Add a final drizzle of high-quality extra virgin olive oil. Stir, cover, and let sit for 5 minutes off the heat.

Serving Suggestions

This sauce is incredibly versatile. Here are a few ways to use it:

- Pasta: Toss with spaghetti, penne, or rigatoni. Add a ladle of pasta water to the sauce to help it cling to the noodles.
 - Lasagna: Use as the meatless layer in a vegetable lasagna.
 - Pizza: Use as a base sauce for homemade pizza (reduce it further for a thicker consistency).
 - Meatballs: Simmer cooked meatballs in this sauce for 20 minutes before serving.
 - Eggs: Poach eggs directly in the simmering sauce for *Uova in Purgatorio* (Eggs in Purgatory).
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Storage and Leftovers

- Refrigerator: Store in an airtight container for up to 5 days.
 - Freezer: This sauce freezes beautifully. Allow it to cool completely, then transfer to freezer-safe bags or containers. It will keep for up to 6 months. Pro tip: Freeze in portion sizes (e.g., 2 cups) so you only thaw what you need.
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Nutrition Information

Note: Nutritional values are estimates and will vary based on specific brands of ingredients used. This calculation does not include pasta.

Serving Size: ~1/2 cup sauce

Calories: 85

Total Fat: 4.5g

Saturated Fat: 0.6g

Sodium: 480mg

Total Carbohydrates: 9g

Dietary Fiber: 2g

Total Sugars: 6g

Protein: 2g

Vitamin C: 15% DV

Iron: 6% DV