Prep time	15 minutes
Marinating time	30 minutes minimum / 2–4 hours ideal / up to 24 hours
Cook time	0 minutes (no-cook recipe)
Total time	45 minutes (minimum) to 4 hours 15 minutes (ideal)
Difficulty	Easy
Intensity level	Low — no heat, no special equipment
Equipment	Chef’s knife, cutting board, mixing bowl, measuring spoons, citrus juicer (optional), airtight container
Diet	Vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, dairy-free, nut-free

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Ingredients

For the tomatoes

- 1½ lbs (680 g) cherry or grape tomatoes — mixed colors if available

- 1 tsp kosher salt (or ¾ tsp fine sea salt)

For the marinade

- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1½ tbsp red wine vinegar (or white balsamic)
- 1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 small garlic clove, finely grated or minced
- ½ tsp honey or sugar (optional, to round acidity)
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp red pepper flakes (optional, for gentle heat)

Aromatics and finish

- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves, torn (plus more to serve)
- 1 tbsp fresh oregano or parsley, chopped (optional)

- 2 tbsp thinly sliced red onion (optional)
- ¼ cup crumbled feta or small mozzarella pearls (optional, for serving — omit for vegan)

Instructions

Step 1 — Prep the tomatoes (5 minutes, low intensity)

Wash and dry the tomatoes thoroughly — dry tomatoes absorb marinade better than wet ones. Halve them lengthwise through the stem end, or leave smaller grape tomatoes whole and simply prick each one twice with a paring knife so the marinade can penetrate.

Intensity note: Halving 1½ lbs of tomatoes takes about 5 minutes of steady knife work. If you're short on time or want a chunkier texture, leave them whole and prick them instead — this cuts prep to about 2 minutes.

Step 2 — Salt and rest (10 minutes, no effort)

Transfer the tomatoes to your mixing bowl, sprinkle with the kosher salt, and toss gently. Let them sit for 10 minutes. The salt draws out juices and lightly seasons the flesh from the inside — this is what makes the finished dish taste seasoned throughout rather than just on the surface. You'll see a shallow pool of tomato liquid form at the bottom of the bowl; do not drain it. That liquid becomes part of the marinade.

Step 3 — Mix the marinade (2 minutes, low intensity)

In a small bowl or jar, whisk together the olive oil, red wine vinegar, lemon juice, grated garlic, honey (if using), black pepper, and red pepper flakes. Whisk vigorously for 20–30 seconds until it looks slightly thickened and uniform — this brief emulsion helps the oil and

acid coat the tomatoes evenly instead of separating on the plate.

Intensity note: Whisking by hand is sufficient; no blender needed. If using a jar, secure the lid and shake for 15 seconds.

Step 4 — Combine and marinate (30 minutes minimum, zero effort)

Pour the marinade over the salted tomatoes and their juices. Add the sliced red onion (if using) and half the torn basil. Toss gently with a spoon — avoid crushing the tomatoes.

Cover and refrigerate. Marinating times by intensity of flavor desired:

Marinating time	Result
30 minutes (room temperature)	Bright, fresh, lightly marinated — tomatoes still firm
2 hours (refrigerated)	Balanced — tomatoes softened slightly, flavors melded
4 hours (refrigerated)	Ideal. Full flavor, tomatoes tender but intact, marinade slightly rosy
8–24 hours (refrigerated)	Deepest flavor; tomatoes very soft. Best used as a topping or spooned over bread

Important: If marinating longer than 2 hours, keep the bowl covered in the fridge and stir once halfway through. Do not marinate at room temperature beyond 2 hours for food-safety reasons.

Step 5 — Finish and serve (2 minutes, low intensity)

Let the tomatoes sit at room temperature for 15 minutes before serving to take the chill off. Taste and adjust: add a pinch of salt if the flavor feels flat, a splash of vinegar if it needs brightness, or a drizzle of olive oil if it tastes sharp. Stir in the remaining basil and, if using, scatter the feta or mozzarella over the top.

Serving suggestions:

- As a side dish with grilled chicken, fish, or steak
- Spooned over toasted sourdough or bruschetta
- Tossed through hot pasta (the residual heat warms the marinade into a light sauce)
- Over white beans, lentils, or grains
- On a cheese board or as part of an antipasto spread

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. The flavor deepens each day; the tomatoes will continue to soften. Stir before serving and refresh with a little fresh basil. Not recommended for freezing — the tomatoes become mushy upon thawing.

Nutrition (per serving)

Based on 4 side servings, without optional feta/mozzarella. Values are estimates and will vary by brand and exact quantities.

Nutrient	Amount per serving
Calories	~110 kcal
Total fat	10 g

Nutrient	Amount per serving
— Saturated fat	1.5 g
— Monounsaturated fat	7 g
Sodium	~290 mg
Total carbohydrates	5 g
— Dietary fiber	1.5 g
— Total sugars	3 g (0 g added, unless honey used)
Protein	1 g
Vitamin C	~20% DV
Vitamin A	~10% DV
Potassium	~260 mg
Iron	~2% DV