- Prep Time: 15 minutes
- Cook Time: 45 minutes
- Total Time: 1 hour
- Servings: 4
- Intensity Level: Moderate (Requires multitasking and attention to detail, but no advanced techniques)
- Cuisine: American

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Ingredients

For the Roasted Tomato Soup:

- 2 lbs (about 1 kg) ripe Roma tomatoes, halved lengthwise
- 1 medium yellow onion, quartered
- 4 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 3 tbsp olive oil, divided
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 4 cups (1L) vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp granulated sugar (optional, to balance acidity)

- ½ cup (120ml) heavy cream
- ¼ cup fresh basil leaves, chopped (plus extra for garnish)

For the Grilled Cheese Sandwiches:

- 8 slices of high-quality sourdough or country white bread
- 4 tbsp salted butter, softened at room temperature
- 2 cups (200g) freshly grated sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 cup (100g) freshly grated Gruyère cheese (or substitute with mozzarella for a milder flavor)

Instructions

Part 1: The Soup (Time: 35 minutes | Intensity: Low to Moderate)

Step 1: Roast the Vegetables (15 minutes)

- Time: 15 minutes

- Intensity: Low

- Action: Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). On a large baking sheet, toss the halved tomatoes, quartered onion, and unpeeled garlic cloves with 2 tablespoons of olive oil, salt, and pepper. Arrange them in a single layer, cut-side down. Roast for 15-20 minutes, or until the tomatoes are softened and their skins are beginning to blister and char slightly. The char is where the flavor lives!

Step 2: Sauté and Build the Base (10 minutes)

- Time: 10 minutes

- Intensity: Moderate

- Action: While the vegetables roast, start the soup base. In a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot, melt the butter with the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil over medium heat. Add the flour and whisk constantly for about 1 minute to create a light roux. This will thicken the soup. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for another minute until it darkens slightly.

Step 3: Simmer and Blend (10 minutes)

- Time: 10 minutes

- Intensity: Moderate

- Action: Once the roasted vegetables are done, carefully squeeze the softened garlic out of its skin and add all the roasted vegetables (including any juices on the pan) to the pot. Pour in the broth and add the sugar (if using). Bring the mixture to a simmer, then reduce the heat to low and let it cook for 10 minutes to allow the flavors to meld.

Step 4: The Final Touch (5 minutes)

- Time: 5 minutes
- Intensity: Moderate
- Action: Using an immersion blender, purée the soup directly in the pot until it is completely smooth and velvety. (If using a countertop blender, work in batches and vent the lid to allow steam to escape). Stir in the heavy cream and chopped fresh basil. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper if needed. Keep warm on low heat while you make the sandwiches.

Part 2: The Grilled Cheese (Time: 10 minutes | Intensity: High)

Step 5: Assemble the Sandwiches (2 minutes)

- Time: 2 minutes
- Intensity: Low
- Action: Butter one side of each slice of bread. This is the key to a golden, crispy crust.

Mix the grated cheddar and Gruyère together in a bowl. Place 4 slices of bread, buttered-side down, on your work surface. Pile the cheese mixture evenly onto these slices, then top with the remaining 4 slices of bread, buttered-side up.

Step 6: Griddle to Perfection (8 minutes)

- Time: 8 minutes
- Intensity: High (Requires constant attention to prevent burning)
- Action: Heat a large non-stick skillet or griddle over medium-low heat. This is crucial—too high heat will burn the bread before the cheese melts. Place two sandwiches in the pan (or as many as fit without crowding). Cook for 3-4 minutes per side, pressing down gently with a spatula. You are looking for a deep golden-brown crust and for the cheese to be fully melted and oozing. The key is patience. If the bread is browning too quickly, lower the heat. Remove from the pan and let them rest for 1 minute before slicing. Repeat with the remaining sandwiches.

Serving and Presentation

To serve, ladle the hot tomato soup into bowls. For a touch of elegance, drizzle a swirl of cream or a few drops of olive oil on top and garnish with a fresh basil leaf. Cut each grilled cheese sandwich in half diagonally and serve immediately alongside the soup for the ultimate dipping experience.

Nutrition Information (Estimated per serving)

Please note that nutritional values are estimates and will vary based on the specific ingredients and brands you use.

- Calories: 720 kcal
- Total Fat: 48g
- Saturated Fat: 25g
- Cholesterol: 115mg
- Sodium: 1100mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 50g
- Dietary Fiber: 5g
- Sugars: 12g
- Protein: 24g