

Sugo di Nonna Nonna's Simple Sauce

About tomatoes: When fresh tomatoes are out of season, Italians turn to the next best thing—canned San Marzano tomatoes, because of their firm flesh and sweet taste. This recipe also calls for “strained tomatoes,” which are simply whole tomatoes that have been put through a food mill to remove their skins and seeds. This differs from tomato sauce, which is often seasoned with salt, pepper, and spices. In a pinch, tomato sauce can be substituted, but the finished sugo will be far from authentic.



- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small-medium onion, finely minced
- ¼ cup water
- 2 large cloves garlic, finely minced
- ½ cup wine (Nonna used either red or white, whatever was left from the previous night's dinner)
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled Italian tomatoes (preferably San Marzano tomatoes), placed in a bowl and crushed by hand, reserving all of the liquid
- 1 cup strained tomatoes, such as Pomi brand *
- ½ teaspoon salt, or more to taste
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or more to taste
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf Italian parsley
- 1 pound pasta (spaghetti, bow tie, fettuccine, penne, or your favorite)

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the onion and sauté for a minute, stirring constantly. Add the water and cook until the water has almost evaporated, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the garlic and cook another minute. Add the wine and cook until the wine has reduced by half, stirring occasionally, another 2 to 3 minutes. Add the crushed tomatoes with all their juices, strained tomatoes, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer.

Simmer the sauce for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat, adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper and stir in the parsley. To serve the *sugo*, prepare the pasta, cooked *al dente*—tender but firm to the bite—in plenty of boiling, salted water. Drain the pasta and add to the *sugo* skillet, tossing until the pasta is well coated. Garnish with freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, Pecorino Romano or Grana Padano cheese. Serve immediately.

**Note: Strained tomatoes can be readily found in most supermarkets in either the canned tomato or pasta aisles. Sometimes the product may be referred to by its Italian name “passato” and can be found either bottled or cartoned, as is the case with the Pomi brand.*