

Cream of Tomato Basil Soup

4 T butter
4 15 ounce cans of diced tomatoes, drained and juice reserved
1 onion, chopped fine
2 T brown sugar (optional)
1 T tomato paste (optional)
2 T all purpose or Wondra flour
2 cups chicken broth
2 T prepared pesto or 3T chopped fresh basil leaves (optional)
1/2 cup heavy cream
salt, pepper and a pinch of cayenne (optional)

Melt butter in a large heavy dutch oven. Sauté the onion for a couple minutes over medium high heat then add drained tomatoes, brown sugar and tomato paste. Cook until the tomatoes begin to caramelize, about 15 minutes. At first you will have to stir it about once a minute, but towards the end much more often to keep it from burning. The mixture is caramelizing and drying out. Sift the flour through a strainer over the tomatoes and cook 1 minute, stirring constantly. Stir in the chicken broth and tomato juice and scrape up any fond off the bottom of the pan. Bring to a simmer and cook covered 10 minutes. Stir in pesto or basil leaves. Season with salt, pepper and cayenne. Blend with an immersion blender, if desired, off the heat. Stir in cream. Adjust seasoning, if necessary.