

Ciao amici!

As a fundamental ingredient in Italian gastronomy, I always wished I could have a better relationship with tomatoes. I love them cooked down in a sauce or sun-dried but eating them raw with that goop in the middle, has never been easy for me. The mere taste is delicious, but the texture always bothers me, despite the countless times I've had to eat raw tomatoes out of courtesy in Italy.

Here is my favorite whole tomato recipe where we can enjoy the summer flavor without dealing with the seedy slop. This is a traditional Roman recipe that can be served hot or cold and pairs well with a glass of Falanghina or Trebbiano.

Pomodori ripieni

Ingredienti:

6 medium size ripe and firm tomatoes

1 cup of Arborio rice

2 tablespoons of Extra Virgin Olive Oil, plus more for drizzling

Garlic

Basil

Parsley

Salt

Pepper

Optional: red pepper flakes and breadcrumbs

Instructions:

1. Cut the top off the tomatoes, about 2/3 from the top. Scoop out the center, try not to break the skin, otherwise this will not work.
2. With an immersion blender, blend the tomato goop and run through a strainer.
3. Chop a couple cloves of garlic, basil and parsley. Add this to the tomato purée along with the EVOO, salt and pepper (a couple shakes of crushed red pepper doesn't hurt either).
4. Stir in the raw rice with the tomato mixture and let sit at room temperature for 1 hour.
5. Fill the tomato shells with the rice/purée mixture and arrange in an 8x8 or similar sized pan. You can put the top back on or sprinkle with breadcrumbs.
6. Drizzle with EVOO and bake in the oven at 350°F (180°C) for 45 minutes or until rice is cooked.
7. Let cool a bit and serve or serve chilled later on or the next day.

This recipe is super versatile – you can add cheeses such as mozzarella, provolone or scamorza, even meat, tuna or chickpeas.

Buon appetito!

Lisa