

Roasted Red Bell Pepper and Tomato Bisque with Manchego Croutons

For the bisque:

- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 roasted red peppers
- 8 Campari tomatoes or 2 medium regular tomatoes
- 1 can (28 oz.) diced tomatoes and juice (I love Muir Glen fire roasted)
- 2 -2 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 3 Tbs. honey
- 1-1/2 tsp. coarse salt; more to taste
- 1 tsp smoked paprika, or to taste
- 1/4 tsp. finely ground black pepper; more to taste
- 1/2 cup heavy cream, plus more for garnish
- 2 Tbs. julienned basil (optional)

For Manchego Croutons:

- 6 slices good quality white bread, crusts removed, 1/2 inch dice
- olive oil
- salt and pepper
- 1/2 cup grated Manchego

Make Croutons:

Preheat oven to 350. Toss diced bread with olive oil until lightly coated and season with salt and pepper. Toast for 10-15 minutes. When they begin to turn golden, sprinkle them with shaved manchego (parmesan would work as well), turn oven up to 400 and toast another 2 minutes until cheese melts and gets crispy on croutons. (Any extra croutons work well with any salad)

Roasted Tomatoes:

Preheat oven to 350 and place whole tomatoes on baking sheet. Season with salt, pepper and drizzle with olive oil and bake for about 30 minutes until tomatoes begin to burst. Save juices and tomatoes to add to soup along with roasted peppers.

Roasted Red Peppers:

Preheat oven to 400. On a foil lined baking sheet, split peppers down the middle length-wise, and place cut-side down on baking sheet. Roast for about 25-30 minutes until pepper skin begins to brown and burn. Remove from oven, wrap in foil and place in a brown bag until cool enough to handle, so they can "sweat" and skin can be easily removed.

Assemble Soup:

In a medium pot, heat the oil. Add the onion and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until tender and lightly browned on the edges, about 7 min. Add the garlic and stir until fragrant, about 1 min. Add the tomatoes, broth, honey, salt, and pepper along with roasted tomatoes and roasted peppers. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat and simmer, stirring frequently, until reduced by a quarter and thickened, about 15 min. Using a stand or immersion blender, purée the soup (the immersion blender is great and you don't dirty an extra bowl). You can add a bit more broth if soup is too thick. Return it to the pot if you have used a blender and stir in the cream. Heat gently and adjust the seasonings including the smoked paprika. Ladle into bowls, sprinkle with the basil, drizzle in a bit of extra cream in a circle and top with croutons. Serve immediately.



