

Recipes for September

French Beans with Cherry Tomatoes and Basil

450g french beans, top and tailed
250g cherry tomatoes, cut in half
2 shallots, finely chopped
3 Tbsp good extra virgin olive oil
2 Tbsp basil, chopped
2 Tbsp white wine or sherry vinegar
sea salt + ground black pepper

Cook beans in boiling water with $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt until just tender. Drain and toss immediately with olive oil, shallots, basil and salt and pepper to taste. Let cool and when ready to serve, add vinegar and tomatoes and toss.

Tomato Salad with Mint

A friend made this for me and though I was a little dubious of the mix of cream and tomatoes, it was an eye-opener. No particular amounts, but the salad shouldn't be too wet. The mint is a must use ingredient!

3 - 4 large tomatoes (heirloom varieties are great!) or mix large toms with cherry tomatoes
splash cream
splash good extra virgin olive oil
splash white wine or sherry vinegar
handful of mint, chopped
sea salt + ground black pepper

Slice tomatoes and arrange on a plate or place in a wide bowl. Sprinkle salt and pepper liberally over the tomatoes, then drizzle cream, olive oil and vinegar over the top. Top with mint and gently push around with a spoon to mix in.

Fried Tomatoes and Gravy

This is a traditional Pennsylvania Dutch dish. It looks like hell on the plate but is perfect comfort food. Yum-my!

For the Fried Tomatoes

Take as many ripe tomatoes as you like depending on how many you are cooking for. The recipe is very forgiving so they can be firm or tender or even just on the point of going over, but they need to be able to hold their form enough to cut (so not too sloppy), however, the riper the better. Blanch them in boiling water for a minute or until the skin breaks, so you can peel and remove the skins easily. Cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 inch slices and dredge in flour seasoned well with salt and pepper. Fry on medium heat turning once or twice in a mixture of butter and olive or sunflower oil, until crisp on the outside (more or less) and soft on the inside (the tomato itself should have lost its firmness.) You will probably need to do a couple of batches if you are cooking for more than two people. Top up butter and oil as you fry—this is not a low-fat dish. As you finish cooking the tomatoes, move them into a bowl where they will become a kind of tomatoey mush with some texture—this is fine; they shouldn't hold their shape as they sit.

For the Gravy

Make a basic white (béchamel) sauce: 2 tablespoons butter; 2 tablespoons flour ; 1 cup of milk (double recipe if making for more than 2 people). Melt butter over medium heat and then add flour and cook until mixture is starting to bubble and foam, stirring constantly. Take off the heat and add milk whisking with a wire whisk to loosen and incorporate butter / flour roux into milk without lumps. Cook gently until sauce has thickened. If it gets too thick or if you want a bit more sauce, add a further splash of milk and cook a bit more. Season generously with salt and pepper to taste.

Add tomato mixture and gently incorporate into gravy being careful not to break down tomatoes too much (just poke it with the whisk a bit.)

You **MUST** serve this with a side of mash potatoes—nothing else will do!