

Creamy Tomato Soup with Grilled Cheese “Croutons”

INGREDIENTS:

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 onion, diced
3 garlic cloves, minced
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1 bay leaf
2 (28-ounce) cans of whole tomatoes
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon brown sugar
3/4 cup low-sodium vegetable broth
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley leaves, for garnish

FOR THE GRILLED CHEESE CROUTONS:

1 tablespoon olive oil
4 slices white or wheat bread
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
4 ounces shredded sharp cheddar cheese

DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat olive oil in a grill pan over medium-high heat. Spread 1/2 tablespoon butter over 1 side of each bread slice. Turn the slices over and top 2 slices with cheddar and place the remaining 2 slices of bread on top, buttered sides up. Add sandwich to pan and grill until the bread is golden and the cheese is melted, about 2-3 minutes per side. Let cool for 1 minute and cut into 1-inch cubes.
2. Heat olive oil in a large stockpot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onion, garlic, red pepper flakes and bay leaf and cook, stirring frequently, until onion is translucent, about 3-5 minutes.
3. Stir in tomatoes and mash, using a potato masher, until broken down into smaller pieces. Stir in heavy cream and brown sugar.
4. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer until slightly thickened, about 8-10 minutes. Remove bay leaf.
5. Puree with an immersion blender. Stir in vegetable broth until heated through, about 2 minutes; season with salt and pepper to taste.
6. Serve immediately with “croutons”, garnished with parsley.