

Italian Gazpacho

This cold soup of Spanish origin is perfect for summer. The balsamic vinegar and the fresh basil give it the Italian twist!

3 or 4 large tomatoes
1 large cucumber regular or seedless
1 red bell pepper
1 small red onion
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 ½ cups tomato juice (we like Sacramento)
1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste
Red pepper flakes
1/3 cup chopped fresh basil for garnish

Finely chop the tomatoes, cucumber, pepper and onion. Place in a deep mixing bowl. Add the minced garlic. Veggies may be added to the bowl of a food processor and pulsed just a few times to just coarsely chopped. Add the tomato juice, vinegar, salt and pepper and red pepper flakes. . If using the food processor, pulse again until the veggies are finely chopped. Be careful not to over process as the mixture should have some texture. Place all the ingredients in a large bowl. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 4 hours so that flavors have a chance to blend. Remove from the refrigerator just before serving and adjust seasoning to taste. Ladle cold soup into chilled bowls and sprinkle with fresh basil.

Serve with an extra cruet of good olive oil and balsamic vinegar.