

A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN TEN DINNERS

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NEW YORK



Tomato Sauce in the Spanish Style with Rack of Lamb

SALSA DI POMODORO ALLA SPAGNOLA

SERVES 4 TO 6 *This derives from the earliest known tomato sauce recipe, written in 1692 by Antoni Latini in his *Lo scalco alla moderna*, where it is described as “a very tasty sauce, for boiled dishes and anything else.” It is paired with simple racks of lamb, adapted from the same period, as it was meant to go with a meat dish. The classic pairing of tomato sauce with pasta would not appear until much later. This is one of those recipes where the quality of your ingredients is truly paramount. If you have a local farmers market, my advice is not just to shop there, but to haunt it. Make friends. Talk to the tomato guy or gal, the one who is proud of their product and wants you to taste it. Don’t stop there: great olive oil and fabulous vinegar will take this dish where it needs to be.*

1 pound fresh ripe tomatoes,
halved and cored

1 serrano chili, seeded

½ medium red onion, finely chopped

1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme leaves

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons
sherry vinegar

Kosher salt

4 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 teaspoon freshly ground
black pepper

1 tablespoon roughly chopped
rosemary leaves

2 lamb racks, frenched

1 tablespoon canola oil

THE secret to this dish is the intense, smoky flavor of the tomatoes. They can be prepared on a grill or under a broiler. Place them cut side down on a grill or cut side up under a broiler. Let them properly char, 3 to 5 minutes. Char the serrano as well. Remove the skin from the pepper with a sharp knife and discard. Mince the tomatoes with the serrano and mix with the onion, thyme, 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, the vinegar, and 2 teaspoons salt in a medium bowl. Let the sauce marry for at least 30 minutes or overnight.

COMBINE the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil, the garlic, black pepper, and rosemary in a small bowl. Rub this mixture over the lamb racks and marinate in a resealable bag or covered bowl, refrigerated, for at least 1 hour and up to 8 hours.

PREHEAT the oven to 400°F. During this period, lamb like this would have been spit-roasted over a fire, which is lovely but inconvenient, especially if you are the indentured youth spending days by a roaring fireplace turning a spit. Here, pan-searing takes the place of the open flame and the unfortunate spit-boy.