

At Nonna's Table by Paola Bacchia  
*Recipes excerpted for Downtime*

# At **NONNA'S**



# TABLE

ONE ITALIAN  
FAMILY'S  
RECIPES,  
SHARED  
WITH LOVE

**Paola  
Bacchia**





**Spaghetti with oven-roasted tomato pesto**  
SPAGHETTI AL PESTO ROSSO

Pesto is most frequently associated with basil (see page 74), but can be made with many other ingredients. In Italian, the word pesto means an amalgam of ingredients that are bashed together. This is my mother's version of red pesto, made with

homemade oven-roasted tomatoes. Using the olive oil the roasted tomatoes are stored in gives the pesto a deep, rich tomato flavour; alternatively, use store-bought sun-dried tomatoes and excellent extra virgin olive oil. You can easily double or triple the pesto recipe if you need a greater quantity. It is also lovely as a spread on crusty bread.

SERVES 2

200–250 g (7–9 oz) spaghetti, depending on your appetite

Tomato pesto

40 g (1½ oz) oven-roasted tomatoes (see page 68) **[see below]**

25 g (1 oz) pitted black olives

20 g (¾ oz) pine nuts, toasted

1 small garlic clove, roughly chopped

25 g (¼ cup) grated parmesan

1 tablespoon parsley leaves

80 ml (⅓ cup) extra virgin olive oil

To serve

4–8 oven-roasted tomatoes, cut into long strips

chopped parsley, for scattering

extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling

grated parmesan, for sprinkling

## Oven-roasted tomatoes preserved in olive oil

### POMODORI SECCHI SOTT'OLIO

Each year, at the end of summer, the top shelf of Mamma's fridge would be laden with jars of her basil pesto and oven-dried tomatoes to last through until the next summer. Not that they ever lasted that long. When my daughter, Tamara, and I went over for lunch, invariably we were gifted a jar of one or the other as we were leaving – and my father would check my basket just to make sure Mamma had not given me more than one jar. The tomatoes and basil had been grown in his vegetable garden, so he felt some ownership on how much could be gifted at any one time!

The tomatoes were really special. Mamma would remove all the seeds before drying them in the oven at low temperature to the point where they were still fleshy and sweet. And after a week, the oil in which they were preserved was divine and tomatoey.

In peak season I usually buy 3–4 kilos (6 lb 10 oz–8 lb 13 oz) of tomatoes from the market, when they are ripe and maybe slightly drying out naturally, and being sold at a fraction of the usual cost. They take a bit of time to prepare – but put on a good podcast or some music, and invite a friend to help you, and you'll be rewarded with jars of tomatoes that taste like a ray of summer sunshine.

The recipe below uses only a kilo of tomatoes, but you can easily scale up the recipe to preserve a larger batch.

MAKES 1 × 500 ML / (17 FL OZ) JAR

1 kg (2 lb 3 oz) small ripe tasty tomatoes  
1½ teaspoons sea salt dried oregano (ideally whole sprigs)  
1 garlic clove, peeled and sliced (optional – see Note)  
good-quality extra virgin olive oil (for covering)

Preheat the oven to 100°C (210°F) fan-forced. Line a large baking tray with baking paper.

Check over the tomatoes and discard any that are too soft or past their best. Wash and thoroughly dry the tomatoes. Cut them in half, then remove the core and scoop out the seeds. Place on the baking tray, cut side up, without crowding them on the tray; depending on the size of your tray, you may need to use a second lined baking tray. Sprinkle the sea salt over the tomatoes.

Roast the tomatoes for 1–1½ hours, until the edges are dry, but the centre is still fleshy. The exact roasting time will depend on the size and quality of your tomatoes. Remove from the oven and place the baking tray on a wire rack to cool.

Turn the oven temperature down to 80°C (175°F). While the roasted tomatoes are cooling, wash a 500 ml (17 fl oz) glass jar, and its lid, in hot soapy water and rinse well. Place the upturned jar and lid in the oven to dry for 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and leave until cool enough to handle.

Using tongs, place the roasted tomatoes in the warm jar, adding a couple of oregano sprigs and the garlic, if using, as you go, and leaving a space of about 5 mm (¼ inch) at the top of the jar. Cover the tomatoes with olive oil and seal the jar.

Store the jar in the fridge and use within 3–4 months. The tomatoes are wonderful as part of an antipasto platter, on their own with crusty bread, or with sliced buffalo mozzarella and a bit of the olive oil from the jar drizzled on top. Mamma would also finely chop them and stir through freshly cooked pasta with a good dash of the olive

oil and some grated parmesan for a simple lunch, or turn them into a red pesto, based on the recipe on page 48.

NOTE: Only add the garlic if you're intending to use the tomatoes within a month, as the garlic does not keep well.

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