

***Pappa al pomodoro***  
**Tuscan Tomato and Bread Soup**

Yield: 3 or 4 servings (about 5 cups)

4 to 5 ounces (about 1/3 loaf) stale Italian bread (see Note, below)  
1 can (14 ounces) whole tomatoes with juice  
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, plus more for garnish  
3 or 4 large garlic cloves, minced  
1/3 cup packed parsley, chopped or 12 fresh basil leaves, torn  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes  
5 to 6 cups chicken broth, preferably homemade  
Freshly grated black pepper  
Finely shredded Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Cut the bread into 3/4 inch thick slices. Tear into 3/4-inch cubes; set aside (or toast if not stale, see Note, below). Remove the tomatoes from the juice; reserve the juice and chop the tomatoes. Heat the oil over medium in a large pot; add the garlic. Cook until tender but not brown, about 1 minute. Add the parsley, salt, and red pepper; cook 30 seconds. Stir in the tomatoes and tomato juice. Simmer 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Use an immersion blender to puree some of the tomatoes, leaving some chunks. (Alternatively, smash the tomatoes with a fork.) Stir in 5 cups of the broth; bring to a boil over high heat. Simmer gently over low heat for about 10 minutes. Stir in the bread; simmer until the bread is soft, about 3 minutes. Add the remaining broth (and/or water, as needed) if too thick; heat. Season to taste with salt and pepper. At the table, drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and sprinkle with the cheese.

Note: Ciabatta, Pugliese, or Italian batard are ideal breads for this recipe. If you cannot find Italian bread, non-sourdough French bread will work. If using fresh bread, you'll need to dry it out. Preheat the oven to 300°F. Arrange the torn bread cubes on a large baking sheet; bake until slightly dry, tossing a couple of times, 12 to 15 minutes. Let cool.