

Seasonal Squash

By [Sara Cabot](#) of [Little Lettice](#)

[Back in January](#) I wrote about how it's not that much more time consuming to make your child's favorite recipes from scratch rather than buying them in a packet. And it's much healthier too. And while it's not exactly quicker to make tomato sauce than to open a jar of the stuff, you can make a large amount and freeze it in batches, then simply pop the sauce out of its container under hot water and defrost either in a ceramic bowl in the microwave, or heat it up in a saucepan and add the cooked pasta directly to the sauce.

Some kids love tomatoes raw, but others find them too acidic. In the below tomato sauce recipe, the acidity of the tomato is countered by the addition of carrot and basil. This can make all the difference to your child's tomato experience. And while it's true that when you cook tomatoes you lose some of their vitamin C, you gain in much greater amounts an antioxidant called *lycopene*, which gives tomatoes their red color. Antioxidants protect the body from cell and tissue damage, and lycopene is specifically known for decreasing the risk of heart disease.

Homemade Tomato Sauce

I always recommend checking the farmer's markets for seasonal produce; buy local and you will taste the difference! Make a big batch and freeze the sauce in 4 oz containers.

Ingredients:

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, finely chopped
- 2 celery sticks, finely chopped
- 2 lbs fresh ripe tomatoes
- Salt & freshly ground pepper
- Water
- 1 tablespoon butter
- Some fresh basil leaves

1. Heat the olive oil in a thick-based saucepan. Add finely chopped veggies (you can make quick work of these by chopping in a food processor) and cook over low heat until soft. Add tomatoes (many recipes call for tomatoes to be skinned and de-seeded, but I don't usually bother) and season with salt & pepper.

2. Simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally and adding a little water from time to time if sauce becomes too dry.

3. If you like your sauce smooth, blend in a food processor (I usually don't bother). Add the butter for a little richer taste and tear the basil leaves into the sauce. Serve with spaghetti or noodles and a generous sprinkling of grated cheese.