

# the cook, the farmer & the tomato

“I want to be able to make the same tomato salad every day, and have it taste different,” says Andreas Viestad, Norwegian TV chef-turned-celebrity farmer. Here, he shares his cooking philosophy and his very best tomato recipes.

by andreas viestad

photographs by john kernick





Andreas Viestad—in khakis and Crocs, opposite—gathers tomatoes for a wood-fired tart (recipe, p. 74).

# If someone had told me five years ago that I would have a farm in South Africa, I probably would have laughed it off with a line from an old Willie Dixon blues song, “I look like a farmer, but I’m a lover.”

Yet somehow I went from keeping a handful of tomato plants on the windowsill of my apartment in Oslo to growing hundreds of heirloom tomatoes—Black Zebra, Green Sausage, Banana Legs, Wild Guess—on a farm in the Elgin Valley outside Cape Town.

As a food writer and TV host—I explore Scandinavian culinary traditions on my television show, *Perfect Day*—I’ve always made an effort to get closer to the source of my food. Beyond those windowsill tomatoes, I have a small plot of land in southern Norway, where I grow a few potatoes and peas and raise chickens. Three years ago, my then-girlfriend (now wife) and I traveled to Cape Town to research my second cookbook, *Where Flavor Was Born*. Before returning to Norway, we decided to rent a house during the South African summers (November through February) and start a project called the Garden of Elgin.

The garden, my experiment in creating flavor, is a collaboration with Dr. Paul Clüver on his family’s vineyard, where he makes excellent wines under the Paul Cluver and Seven Flags labels. Much of his Elgin Valley property is part of a conservancy that lies along the Green Mountain Eco Route (see p. 74). Paul and I share a passion for farming and a common belief in the environmental importance of biodiversity. Most farmers specialize in one crop, but we wanted to grow as many different varieties of fruits and vegetables as possible and focus on diversity.

The garden is a work in progress. We now have more than 50 different citruses, more than 40 kinds of peaches, nectarines and apricots and all kinds of herbs and vegetables, including more than 100 varieties of tomatoes. Some are greenish, some are brown, some are striped. Some don’t even look like tomatoes. When I show people a whitish, oblong tomato, they often refuse to accept that it is indeed a tomato (at least until I pick one and serve it to them).

Every day, new tomato varieties ripen, and every day there is new excitement. What will they taste like? Will they be the best tomatoes we’ve ever grown? What can we use them for? Typically, the green and yellow ones are best raw, while the red ones are ideal for sauces. But I’ve learned that the color of a tomato matters less than the size. A large tomato will normally make a watery sauce that requires more time on the stove to thicken.

During the wine-grape harvest, I feed the cellar workers linguine with heirloom tomatoes, herbs and baby zucchini (recipe, p. 74). I modify the sauce every time I make it, sometimes using fresh fennel, often basil, sometimes oregano or marjoram. And the type of tomato always changes. There is a certain pleasure in using different types of tomatoes for the same recipe. It makes you less inclined to think, “This is the way a dish should taste.”

Sometimes, cooking with a single ingredient so frequently teaches you about other ingredients along the way. For example, one of my favorite summer desserts is a tangy raspberry-and-cherry-tomato granita (recipe, p. tkk). The combination surprised me at first, because it is the delicate raspberry and not the tomato that provides the tartness, while the tomato mellows the flavors—not, as I had assumed, the other way around.

When I started the garden, I was looking to grow the perfect tomato. When our first San Marzanos—Italian plum tomatoes—started to ripen, I thought that they might be it. Then, when the first black-cherry tomatoes exploded with flavor, I was almost certain they were perfection. But there were always new varieties to try, some more tart, some mild, but all with an alluring, ephemeral sweetness. And now I know that my goal is not to find any single, perfect tomato; it’s about being able to make the same tomato salad every day, and have it taste different.



When not on wildlife watch, Viestad might be making tomato parfaits (recipe, p. 92), fresh Bloody Marys (recipe, p. 92) or heirloom tomato salads (recipe, p. 92).

## a south african winery & farm tour

Andreas Viestad's Garden of Elgin is on the Green Mountain Eco Route, about an hour from Cape Town. Growers are devoted to promoting biodiversity. Some highlights:

**paul cluver wines** The winery sells crisp Sauvignon Blancs and other bottlings, all great for picnics on the grounds. An amphitheater hosts live music on Saturday nights. 011-27-21-21-844-0605 or cluver.com.

**oude molen distillery** A one-hour tour focuses on the making of the world-renowned brandy, followed by tastings. 011-27-21-859-2517 or oudemolen.co.za.

**houw hoek farm stall** The stand carries pies and cakes and you can rent fly-fishing gear to use at their dams; any trout you catch can be cooked at the restaurant. 011-27-28-284-9015 or houwhoekfarmstall.co.za.

**beaumont wines** Only 85 of the Beaumont family's nearly 1,000 acres have been turned into vineyards; the rest of the estate has been left wild to protect indigenous plants and animals. Call in advance to set up a tour or stay in one of the guest cottages. 011-27-28-284-9194 or beaumont.co.za.

**goedvertrouw wine estate** The bed and breakfast here is a locavore's dream: Owner Elreda Pillmann makes butter with milk from her own cows and feeds the whey to her pigs. 011-27-28-284-9769. —Kristin Donnelly

### Puff Pastry Tomato Tarts

active: 30 min; total: 1 hr 30 min

4 servings

Andreas Viestad's minimalist tarts have a flaky crust topped with tomatoes that become wonderfully sweet as they bake. Viestad likes to halve the tomatoes, but slicing them here concentrates the flavor even more. The recipe was inspired by a dish at one of Viestad's favorite Cape Town restaurants, Savoy Cabbage.

1» pounds large heirloom tomatoes, cored

2 teaspoons light brown sugar

Salt

All-purpose flour, for dusting

» pound chilled all-butter puff pastry

¥ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small cubes

1 tablespoon chopped basil

1. Preheat the oven to 400°. In a saucepan of boiling water, blanch the tomatoes until the skins start to curl, 30 seconds; transfer to a plate and let cool. Peel the tomatoes. Halve them crosswise and squeeze out the seeds, then slice the tomatoes » inch thick. Sprinkle the tomatoes on both sides with the sugar and season with salt; transfer to a rack and let drain for 30 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the puff pastry, » inch thick. Using a 6-inch round plate as a template, cut out four 6-inch rounds. Transfer the rounds to the prepared baking sheet and freeze for 5 minutes. Bake the rounds for 20 minutes, until golden brown and puffed.

3. Pat the tomato slices dry with paper towels. Sprinkle the pastry puffs with half of the grated cheese and arrange the sliced tomatoes in a circle in the center of each pastry round, leaving a »-inch border. Dot the tomatoes evenly with the butter and sprinkle with the remaining cheese.

4. Bake the tarts for 10 minutes, then reduce the oven temperature to 350° and bake for 20 minutes longer, until the pastry is richly

browned and the tomatoes have shrunk slightly. Let the tarts cool for at least 5 minutes, garnish with the basil and serve.

wine These buttery tarts would be delicious with a bubbly wine like a sparkling rosé; its blend of fruit and acidity is also great with tomatoes. Try the berry-inflected 2007 Graham Beck Brut Rosé, made in South Africa, or the peachy NV Taltarni Vineyards Brut "Taché" from Australia.

### Linguine with Tomatoes, Baby Zucchini and Herbs

active: 15 min; total: 25 min

4 servings

"This dish makes you understand the less-is-more approach of Italian cooking," says Viestad about his pasta tossed with a raw tomato-and-zucchini sauce.

1 pound tomatoes, cored and finely chopped

1 tablespoon chopped basil

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 teaspoons kosher salt

1 small red chile,

seeded and minced

↪ cup extra-virgin olive oil

12 ounces linguine

3 baby zucchini, thinly sliced

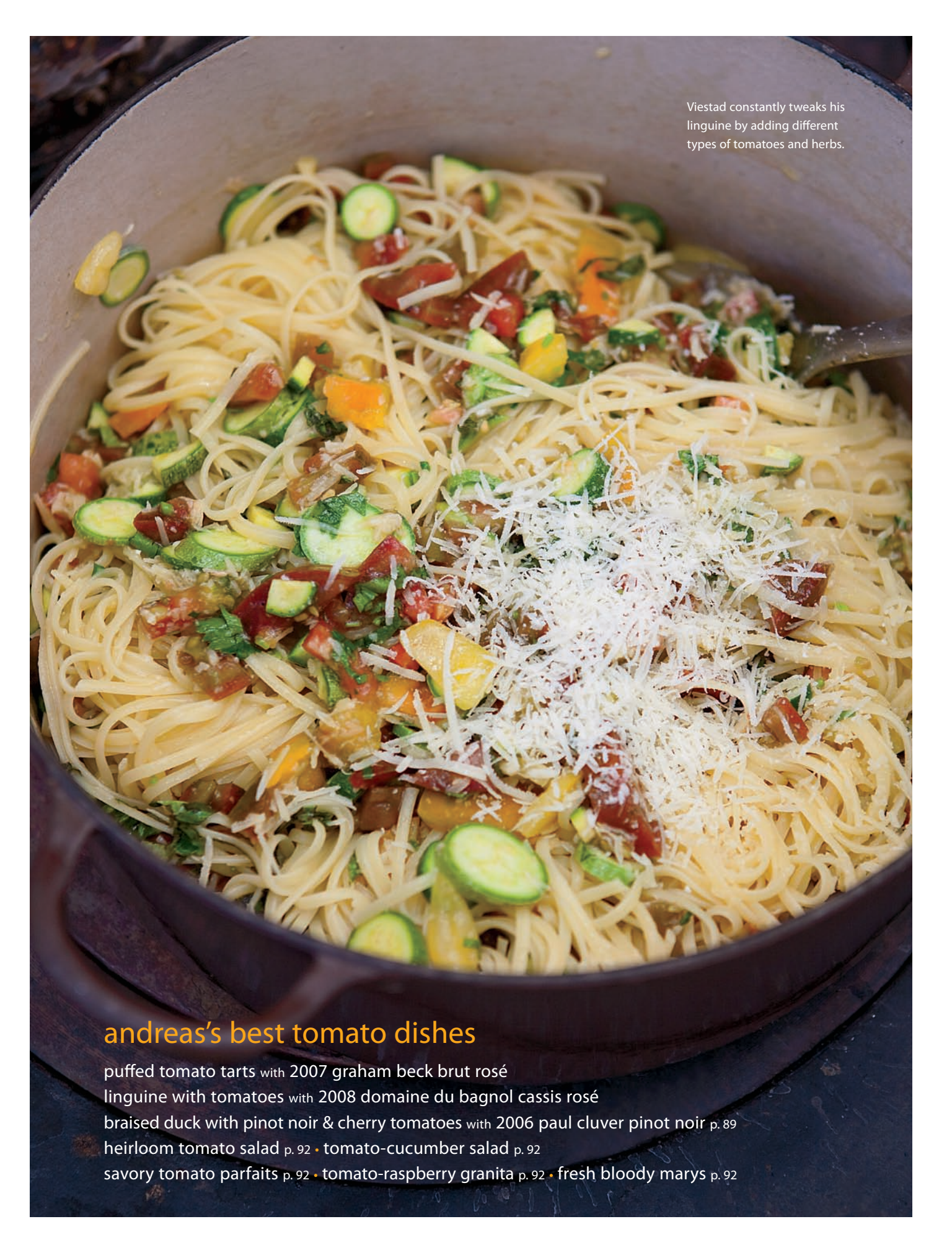
¥ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, plus more

for serving

1. In a large bowl, toss the tomatoes with the basil, parsley, garlic, salt, chile and olive oil.

2. In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook the linguine until al dente; drain well. Add the linguine to the bowl along with the sliced zucchini and toss. Add the ¥ cup of grated cheese, toss again and serve in bowls, passing more cheese at the table. wine Cooked tomato sauces are a great match with high-acid red grapes like Barbera and Sangiovese, but a raw tomato sauce such as this one calls for something more delicate, like a dry rosé. Two good ones from Provence are the mineral 2008 Domaine du Bagnol Cassis Rosé and the berry-scented 2008 Château de Pibarnon from Bandol.

continued on p. 89



Viestad constantly tweaks his linguine by adding different types of tomatoes and herbs.

## andreas's best tomato dishes

puffed tomato tarts with 2007 graham beck brut rosé

linguine with tomatoes with 2008 domaine du bagnol cassis rosé

braised duck with pinot noir & cherry tomatoes with 2006 paul cluver pinot noir p. 89

heirloom tomato salad p. 92 • tomato-cucumber salad p. 92

savory tomato parfaits p. 92 • tomato-raspberry granita p. 92 • fresh bloody marys p. 92

### Braised Duck with Pinot Noir, Cherry Tomatoes and Grapes

active: 25 min; total: 2 hr 40 min

4 servings

"This is sort of a cousin to coq au vin," says Viestad, who braises duck in local Pinot Noir, along with tomatoes and grapes that grow in a vineyard that's a two-minute walk from his kitchen. Viestad likes to serve this dish "country-style"—he carves the duck at the table and returns the pieces to the pot so they can sop up the cooking juices. Here, the cooked duck is split and broiled after braising to crisp the skin.

One 5-pound duck, giblets removed

Salt

One 750-milliliter bottle Pinot Noir

10 black peppercorns

2 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled

1 bay leaf

1 pound cherry tomatoes

» pound red or black seedless  
grapes, stems discarded

1. Preheat the oven to 450°. Rub the duck inside and out with salt. Let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes.

2. Set the duck, breast side down, in a very large enameled cast-iron casserole. Pour the wine over the duck and add the peppercorns, garlic and bay leaf. Roast the duck uncovered for 20 minutes, until it starts to brown. Turn the duck breast side up, sprinkle with salt and add the tomatoes and grapes. Roast uncovered for 20 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 300°. Cover the casserole and braise the duck for about 45 minutes longer, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the thigh registers 160°.

3. Transfer the duck to a large rimmed baking sheet. Strain the pan juices into a large saucepan; reserve the tomatoes and grapes and discard the peppercorns, garlic and bay leaf. Skim off the fat and boil the juices until reduced to 1 cup, about 20 minutes. Add the reserved cherry tomatoes and grapes and season with salt and pepper.

4. Preheat the broiler. Using poultry shears or a large, sharp knife, cut the duck in half. Arrange the duck halves on the baking sheet, skin side up. Broil the duck 6 inches from

continued on p. 92

RXECIPE RXECIPE continued

the heat for about 4 minutes, rotating the pan as necessary, until the skin is crisp. Carve the duck and serve with the pan sauce.

wine For Viestad's gutsy take on a classic Burgundian coq au vin—made with duck instead of chicken—a robust Pinot Noir is a natural choice. Viestad doesn't have to go far for a good bottling—his farm is located on winery owner Paul Cluver's estate and is part of the Elgin region, an up-and-coming source for this cool-climate-loving grape. Look for the spicy 2006 Paul Cluver or the cherry-inflected 2007 Hamilton Russell, from the more southerly Walker Bay region.

### Heirloom Tomato Salad



total: 10 min

4 to 6 servings

"This is the tomato salad I make almost every day," says Viestad. He seasons it with little more than salt, olive oil and basil, but since he always uses different varieties of tomatoes as they ripen, the salad tastes different each time.

- 2 pounds multicolored heirloom tomatoes, cored—large tomatoes sliced 1/4 inch thick, small tomatoes halved

Salt

Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling

- 2 tablespoons minced chives
- 2 tablespoons chopped basil
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Crusty bread, for serving

Arrange the tomatoes on a platter. Sprinkle with salt and drizzle with olive oil. Scatter the chives, basil and cheese over the tomatoes and serve with crusty bread.

### Tomato-Cucumber and Sweet Onion Salad with Cumin Salt



total: 15 min

4 to 6 servings

Only slightly more involved than Viestad's supersimple tomato salad, this version is inspired by the flavors of the Middle East. A sprinkling of toasted cumin seeds ground with kosher salt gives the summery salad a warm depth of flavor. Any leftover cumin salt

is terrific on grilled chicken or roasted potatoes.

- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 1» tablespoons coarse sea salt
- 2½ pounds tomatoes, cored and sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 1 pound cucumbers, peeled and sliced 1/4 inch thick
- 1 large sweet onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1. In a small skillet, toast the cumin seeds over moderately high heat until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Transfer the seeds to a mortar and let cool. Add the salt to the cumin seeds and grind to a coarse powder.

2. In a large bowl, toss the tomatoes with the cucumbers, sweet onion, olive oil and lemon juice. Sprinkle 2 teaspoons of the cumin salt over the salad and toss well. Arrange the salad on a platter and serve.

make ahead The cumin salt can be stored in an airtight container for up to 6 months.

### Savory Tomato Parfaits

active: 15 min; total: 1 hr 30 min

4 servings

For this multihued starter, Viestad creates thick purees with three different colors of tomatoes, seasoning each with salt, but little else. "Nothing masks the flavors of the tomatoes," he says. Try this recipe with other varieties of tomatoes.

- » pound medium dark heirloom tomatoes, such as Black Krim, cored and chopped

Salt

- » pound yellow plum tomatoes, cored and chopped
- 1 teaspoon chopped parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme leaves

A few drops of white wine vinegar

- » pound red cherry tomatoes, halved

Breadsticks, for garnish

1. In a blender, puree the dark tomatoes. Scrape down the side of the blender and blend at high speed until very smooth, about 2 minutes. Season the puree with salt and carefully pour it into 4 narrow glasses. Refrigerate for about 30 minutes, until the puree

has firmed up slightly.

2. Rinse and dry the blender. Repeat the two-step pureeing process with the yellow tomatoes. Add the parsley, thyme and vinegar and season with salt. Carefully pour the yellow puree into the glasses and refrigerate for about 15 minutes, until the yellow puree is set.

3. Rinse and dry the blender and repeat with the cherry tomatoes to make the top layer of the parfaits. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes, until set. Garnish the parfaits with breadsticks and serve.

make ahead The parfaits can be refrigerated overnight.

### Tomato-Raspberry Granita

active: 10 min; total: 1 hr 20 min

4 servings

"One thing we often forget about tomatoes is that botanically, they are fruits, not vegetables," Viestad says. As a light, refreshing dessert, he freezes chopped cherry tomatoes and raspberries to make a sweet, chunky granita. The flavors of the two fruits are surprisingly wonderful together.

- 1 cup raspberries, halved
- » pound cherry tomatoes, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons chopped mint

In a wide, shallow dish, toss the raspberries with the tomatoes, sugar and mint and let stand at room temperature for 10 minutes, until the raspberries and tomatoes release their juices. Stir well. Smooth the mixture to an even layer, cover and freeze for about 1 hour, stirring a few times, until just frozen. Using a fork or spoon, break up the granita, scoop it into bowls and serve.

### Fresh Tomato Bloody Marys



total: 15 min

makes 4 drinks

The ingredients for Andreas Viestad's frothy, fiery Bloody Mary all come from his garden. Like a classic Bloody Mary made with tomato juice, it's a delicious brunch cocktail—with or without the vodka. For extra-savory flavor, add a few drops of Worcestershire sauce to each drink.

garnish

2 small celery  
2 tablespoons  
1 medium ripe  
tomato, such  
minced  
» teaspoon fir  
1 teaspoon fre  
Salt  
bloody mary  
1» pounds chil  
coarsely cho  
» cup chilled v  
1 cup ice cube  
1 teaspoon to  
» small red ch  
coarsely cho  
» teaspoon ce  
4 medium cel  
4 thin green  
for serving  
1. prepare the  
the celery with  
and juice and se  
while you make  
2. make the bl  
puree the toma  
tomato paste, ch  
drink into tall gla  
top, add a celery  
glass and serve.