

## SOFRITO

A million recipes have been published, it seems, or maybe it's only a thousand. The region makes a big difference. In Latin America and the Caribbean it's often just the fresh vegetables pureed together, emphasis on hotter peppers and de-emphasized tomato. In Mexico and Puerto Rico the vegetables are often roasted. But in Spain, which is where the Mediterranean Diet study (PREDIMED) comes from, the cooking of onion & tomato in olive oil is the main idea. This recipe I've borrowed (Tony & Lisa Sierra: <http://spanishfood.about.com/od/sidedishes/r/sofrito.htm>) from a writer's mother who grew up in Avila, Spain (Avila is in central Spain, in the region of Madrid). For company fare I add my own embellishment. I make it in this large amount (7 C or so) because I keep using it during the week as per the Mediterranean Diet, and even more than 3 servings/wk (the extra servings I count as vegetable servings). I use it on grilled fish, on pan-sautéed trout, on toast with egg, on baked beans (veggie style baked beans), and on and on (I haven't tried it on ice cream or frozen yogurt... yet).

## INGREDIENTS

Long green pepper (Anaheim, or any sweet—not hot—pepper), 2  
Canned tomato (crushed, 28 oz size), 2      Garlic, large cloves, 4: finely minced  
Onion, yellow, medium, 2      Olive oil (extra virgin)  
Sweet paprika, 2 tsp      Salt & black pepper (freshly ground)

## PREP

Use a large metal or enameled heavy-bottomed pan or Dutch oven; a medium-to-biggish frying pan is not large enough.

Finely chop the onion: cover the bottom of the pan generously with olive oil, heat (medium or just a bit higher); add the onion, stir from time to time; you want the onion to become transparent. While this is going on, chop the peppers into moderately fine pieces.

Add the chopped pepper to the transparent onion in the pan, same heat, and cook the mixture for 5 min; stir frequently to prevent burning (add more olive oil if needed). Add the minced garlic to the pan, cook (stirring) another minute; then add abruptly the two cans of crushed tomato, plus the paprika; stir well, and continue cooking for 10-12 min (stirring from time to time). Off heat, add salt and ground pepper to taste: do this carefully: you want enough salt to bring forward the vegetable-tastes, but no more.

The *sofrito* is now ready. Store what you don't use in the refrigerator if you are going to use it up within a week or so; otherwise freeze it in cubes in ice-trays.

FOR COMPANY FARE... Cook the onion a bit past transparent (very early caramelization), then add the sherry of your choice (about 3 Tbsp) and cook until the liquid is nearly evaporated, stirring all the while: then proceed with the pepper-addition, and so forth. Off heat, at the end once seasoned adequately with salt & black pepper, add finely chopped parsley (broad-leaf), oregano, or rosemary; if you like the Hispanic influence, use cilantro instead.