

# Sprig of Thyme

## LUTENITSA-PEPPER TOMATO SPREAD

*Makes 8-10 16oz jars*

### EQUIPMENT:

- 8-10 16oz jars with screw on lids
- 1 large pot (at least 7" deep)

### INGREDIENTS:

- 10-11 pounds (25-30 peppers) of sweet red peppers
- 6 medium carrots, peeled and sliced in half
- 2 sticks of celery, sliced in four
- 1 cup parsley, chopped
- 18oz (1 medium + 1 small cans) tomato paste
- 1.5 tsp salt
- 3/4 cup olive oil
- 1/2 tblsp balsamic or red wine vinegar (optional)



PHOTOGRAPHY AND STYLING BY IGLIKA PETROVA

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Wash and dry the jars.
2. Preheat your grill to 400 F.
3. Wash the peppers and remove the stems and seeds. Keep the peppers whole, do not slice them. If you prefer you can roast the peppers with the stems and seeds and remove them later\*. Grill the peppers in batches until evenly charred on all sides. Place and keep the roasted peppers in a large metal pot with a lid and keep the lid on through the entire grilling process (this is an important step because it will allow the peppers to steam which will make their skin easier to remove later). When done grilling, place the pot with roasted peppers aside.
4. Place carrots and celery in a medium pot, cover them with water and bring to a boil. Lower down to a low-heat and simmer until the carrots and celery are soft, about 10-15 minutes. Drain the water and let the carrots and celery to cool down for 15 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, remove the skin of all peppers using your hands or scrape them with the back of a knife. Remove any seeds or stems if left. Working in batches, place the peppers in a food processor and pulse until chopped into small pieces. Make sure that the peppers are not pureed. If you don't have a food processor, stack 3-4 peppers and finely chop them using a large kitchen knife. Place the chopped peppers in a large bowl.
6. Place the boiled carrots and celery in a food processor or blender and puree until smooth. Place the puree in the large bowl with the peppers.
7. Add all the remaining ingredients to the bowl and mix with a large spoon until everything is well incorporated.

8. Take a jar, make sure it is dry, and fill it with Lutenitsa using a spoon. Make sure the jar is not filled all the way to the top, fill only to the point where the jar neck starts. Wipe clean the jar top, otherwise it might not create a solid vacuum with the lid. Close the jar with a lid and make sure the lid is tight. Repeat the process with the remaining jars until no Lutenitsa is left.
9. Working in batches if necessary, place the closed Lutenitsa jars in a large pot. Make sure that the pot is deep enough; you need at least 2 inches of space above the top of the jars. Fit as many jars as you can but make sure the jars are not touching each other. Fill the pot with water so that it covers the jar lids by at least an inch. Bring the pot to a boil, lower to low-heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Check the jars from time to time to make sure no jar is leaking or broken.
10. Dump the water from the pot carefully, it will be really hot! Using clamps or a thick kitchen towel, carefully remove jars from the pot and place them on a kitchen towel. Make sure all the lids had popped up, This will ensure that the sterilizing process was successful. If a lid has not popped up, let the jar cool down and replace or re-close the lid and sterilize again. Repeat the sterilizing process with the remaining jars.
11. Allow the jars to cool for about an hour and flip them with their neck down on the towel (this flattens the lid and makes the jars easier to stack).
12. Cool the jars completely and store in a cool place. Lutenitsa can be stored for up to 2 years.

\*Removing the stems and seeds after the peppers are roasted is a bit more difficult and messier. The seeds might be quite stubborn; briefly run the peppers under water to remove the seeds if necessary.