



## The Nose Knows

KATHY HARRISON UPGRADES THE  
QUINTESSENTIAL FALL LUNCH COMBO

RECENTLY SIGNED UP for an adult education class at Northwestern University. Film. The selections were interesting and thought provoking. I was excited to watch movies with a group, after the years of solitary viewing through the pandemic.

The first session. I bought a new notebook and two new pens. I couldn't help myself. There's something about that first day back to school. You must find your class, get settled, meet the teacher, learn the ropes. I was smiling as I remembered all the years of walking to school on those first days. Back then I wore a new outfit but restrained myself this time around.

We were supposed to watch the film, have a short break to eat lunch, then reassemble for our discussion. The ones who had been in the program before brought food from home. They brown bagged it, knowing the intermission was short. I hadn't brought anything to eat. Neither

did a woman sitting next to me. We were newbies. "Let's make a dash for the cafeteria," she said. "I'm hungry."

We raced down the hall, my (new) sneakers squeaking on the polished floor. As soon as we entered the lunchroom, I skidded to a halt. "What's wrong?" she said.

"Just smell," I answered.

"What?"

"Tomato soup!"

Memories came flooding back of walking home from grade school for lunch. My mom made soup from a can made famous by Andy Warhol and served it with a grilled cheese sandwich. Nothing says back-to-school better.

Today I make tomato soup with the amazing bounty of tomatoes we have this time of year. On school days I bring it in a thermos, steaming hot and so very fragrant. I can't keep a grilled cheese sandwich warm and oozy, but cheddar cheese

crackers, buttery and crisp, fill the bill.


Intermission. I unwrap my lunch. The people sitting around me get that far-away look in their eye. They remember. The nose always knows. 



PHOTO: GIRMANTAS URBONAS

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## Charred Tomato Soup

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 pounds large tomatoes, about 4
- Olive oil
- 2 teaspoons sherry vinegar
- 6 fresh mint leaves
- Fleur de Sel

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Use the tip of a small knife to cut the stem end of each tomato, then cut the tomatoes through their equators. Heat a large skillet over high heat for 2 minutes. When the pan is very hot, add 2 tablespoons oil. Place as many halved tomatoes as will fit in a single layer, cut side down, in the pan. Sear over high heat until lightly charred in places, 5-6 minutes. Using tongs, remove the tomatoes to a plate. Add a little more oil and sear the rest of the tomatoes in the same manner.
2. Put the vinegar, mint leaves, and 1 teaspoon salt in a blender. Whir a few seconds to dissolve the salt. Add the tomatoes and any of their juices to the blender. Blend on low speed to break up the tomatoes, then increase the speed to medium and while blending, gradually add ½ cup olive oil. Increase the speed to high and blend for 1 minute. Taste and adjust the seasonings.
3. For a smooth soup, strain the mixture. For a chunkier texture, do not strain. The soup can be served hot or chilled and is even better made a day in advance. Makes 4 cups.

## Cheese Crackers

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/3 cups flour
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 2/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 stick chilled unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons ice water



### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the flour, both cheeses, salt, and pepper in a food processor and pulse to combine. Cut the butter into chunks and place in the processor. Pulse to form a coarse crumb mixture. Add the ice water and pulse just until the dough clumps together.
2. Remove dough from processor and knead briefly to gather the dough into ball. Divide the dough in half or thirds and roll each piece into a cylinder. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap and chill a few hours or overnight until firm.
3. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Slice the dough crosswise into circles about ¼ to ½ inch thick. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake in the center of the oven until just golden, about 20 minutes. Cool on a rack. Cheese crackers can be stored in an airtight container for a month. (Ha. I finish mine in record time.)



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