

## Beetroot gazpacho

*This twist on the traditional Spanish tomato and bread soup was inspired by a delicious beetroot version I had at La Taberna del Pindal in Arenas de Cabrales in Asturias, Spain. The trick is to roast half the beetroot to bring out its lush sweetness, and grate the other half raw to keep its vibrant colour and fresh taste. Combined with the usual tomatoes, peppers and onions it makes a fantastic purple gazpacho, which is even better the day after it's made, when the sweet, sour, earthy and bright flavours really seem to sing together. So, if possible, start this recipe one or two days ahead. I used sourdough rye bread as it's what I had, and it seemed right with beetroot, in a northern European sort of way.*



Serves: 8 as a starter

1kg beetroot  
500g ripe and flavoursome tomatoes  
1 large bell pepper, red or green  
1 large red onion  
1 baby cucumber  
2 or 3 cloves of garlic  
extra virgin olive oil  
salt and pepper  
1 slice of rye bread  
approx 1 tbsp red wine vinegar  
approx 1 to 2 tbsps aged sherry vinegar  
8 thin slices of toasted rye bread, to serve  
walnut oil (or extra virgin olive oil), for the garnish  
Maldon sea salt



1. Place half the beetroot in a small roasting tin, season and drizzle with olive oil and a good splash of water. Cover tightly with foil and roast at 200C until tender to the core, one to two hours.
2. While the beetroot is roasting prepare all the other vegetables: Peel and grate the remaining beetroot. Core and roughly chop the tomatoes. Deseed and roughly chop the pepper. Peel and roughly chop the onion. Peel and roughly chop the cucumber. Peel and crush the garlic to a paste, using a little coarse salt as an abrasive. Remove the crusts from the bread and tear it into pieces. Mix everything together in a big bowl with a generous sprinkling of salt and good lug of olive oil.
3. While the roasted beetroot are still warm, rub off their skins, chop them up, sprinkle with the red wine vinegar and mix them into the bowl of other ingredients. Leave everything in a covered container in the fridge for several hours or, preferably, overnight.
4. Blitz the mixture in batches in a blender until it is a really smooth puree, adding another good lug of olive oil. If necessary, loosen with some cold water. It should be *just* thin enough to run off a spoon, rather than blob off like cake mix. Taste and season with salt, pepper and sherry vinegar until it sings.
5. Chill for several hours before serving, and taste for seasoning again. I like to serve it with a really thin, crispy slice of rye toast, a sprinkle of Maldon salt and a drizzle of walnut oil. Yum.