

## SPICE UP YOUR DIET - BAY LEAF

By Shelly Meltzer



The symbolic, medicinal and culinary attributes associated with bay leaves (laurel leaves) are vast. The ancient Greeks and Romans used bay leaves to crown their warriors and literary heroes and to make wreaths for Olympic champions; bay leaves have traditionally been used as a treatment for arthritis and inflammatory conditions, and several phytochemicals (e.g., caffeic acid, rutin, salicylates, quercetin, eugenol and catechins) present in bay leaves have cardio-protective and anti-cancer properties. When the

aromatic leaves of the bay leaf are paired with other spices and cooked for a while in a warm environment, an additional layer of flavor is added to soups, stews, sauces, meat, seafood and dessert. Whether fresh or dried, bay leaves are usually used whole. The whole leaves are added to the dish during the cooking process and removed before the dish is served.

This basic marinara sauce is incredibly versatile. You can serve it as a pasta sauce, use it for lasagna, as topping for homemade pizza, serve it with roasted meat, or combine the sauce with chicken, seafood or minced meat. It can also be pureed and turned into a delicious tomato soup. The sauce can be made 1 day ahead. Cool, then cover and refrigerate. Rewarm over medium heat before using. Leftovers will keep refrigerated for about a week or can be frozen for up to 3 months.

### BASIC MARINARA SAUCE

<p><u>Ingredients:</u></p> <p>5 ml extra-virgin olive oil</p> <p>1 yellow onions, finely chopped</p> <p>2-3 garlic cloves, finely chopped</p> <p>2 stalks celery, finely chopped</p> <p>2 carrots, peeled and finely chopped</p> <p>Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste</p> <p>2 cans (2 x 410g) crushed tomatoes</p> <p>1 fresh or 2 dried bay leaves</p> <p>fresh thyme, basil, oregano, or other herbs – optional</p>	<p><u>Method:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heat the oil over a medium-high flame in a medium sized pot.</li> <li>• Add the onions and garlic and sauté until the onions are translucent, about 7-10 minutes.</li> <li>• Add the celery, carrots, salt and pepper.</li> <li>• Sauté until all the vegetables are soft, about 10 minutes.</li> <li>• Add the tomatoes, their juices and bay leaves (and additional herbs if using), and simmer uncovered over low heat until the sauce thickens, about 25-30 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaf.</li> <li>• Season the sauce with salt and pepper, to taste.</li> </ul>
---	---

**Tip:** If you are using this as a pasta sauce, you can make it more substantial by adding mushrooms.