

Tomatoes Provençale

3 or 4 ripe tomatoes	2 tablespoons fresh oregano or basil
Salt and pepper to taste	1 tablespoon fresh thyme
3 cloves garlic	Pinch of dried chili peppers
1 medium shallot	⅓ cup, plus 2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup panko crumbs	1 teaspoon Sherry vinegar
2 tablespoons minced parsley	

Place the rack at the top level of your oven, and preheat the oven to 400°.

Cut the tomatoes in half. With a sharp paring knife, remove about ½ inch of the inner flesh of the tomatoes, being careful not to pierce the skin. Clean any seeds from the removed flesh, and chop it very finely. Set aside.

Gently squeeze out the juice and seeds into a sieve over a small bowl. Press down on the seeds to extract as much liquid as possible. Set aside the liquid.

Sprinkle the insides of the tomato halves with salt and pepper.

Press the garlic cloves in a garlic masher. If you don't have a garlic masher, mince the garlic as finely as possible and mash with a heavy object.

Mince the shallot, the parsley, the oregano or basil, and the thyme.

In a small bowl, combine the panko crumbs, the mashed garlic, minced shallot, the minced parsley, oregano or basil, thyme, and the pinch of chili peppers. Pour ⅓ cup of olive oil into the mixture and combine thoroughly. Season with salt and pepper. Taste the final mixture to correct the seasoning to your liking.

Line a baking pan large enough for the 6 or 8 tomato halves with lightly oiled aluminum foil. Spoon the filling equally into the tomato halves, pressing down lightly with the spoon to be certain it's securely in place. Drizzle a little extra olive oil over the tops of each tomato half.

Place the tomatoes in the oven and bake for 10-15 minutes until the tomatoes are tender but still retain their shape, and the crumb filling is lightly browned.

In the meantime, combine the tomato liquid and the minced tomato pulp in a small sauce pan. Place it over medium heat until the liquid is reduced by half. Remove it from the heat, and whisk in 1 tablespoon of olive oil, 1 teaspoon of Sherry vinegar, and salt and pepper to taste.

Spoon the liquid into 3 or 4 serving bowls. Place the baked tomatoes on top. Serve with a spoon so that diners can scoop up the liquid along with the tomato.