

Strategies Applied:

I often double or even triple this recipe - just use a large, wide pan - and reduce it longer. I portion out and freeze. Three cups is a good size for most pasta dishes.

- **Whole Tomatoes:** For the greatest versatility, I'll generally buy plain whole tomatoes, but I don't really mind if I can get the other varieties cheaper. I'll crush them myself, by hand, removing any hard bits around the stem. (Watch for squirters, and don't do this while wearing a white blouse!) Sometimes I'll throw them in the blender or food processor. I like to buy the larger cans as they are generally inexpensive – I'll put what I don't use in a Ziploc bag in the freezer, labeled. If I'm not using the juice, I always measure and put in a Ziploc bag and use it instead of tomato juice in the occasional casserole or when making meatloaf, stew or soup. Bought October 2011, 8 cans of 15 ounce Red Gold tomatoes for free, 6 29 oz cans of Red Gold Tomatoes for 59 cents each.
- **Garlic:** Runs around 59 to 99 cents a head in my area in the boxes. It can be a little tricky to discern the best prices because it can also be bought by the pound, and generally you'll pay less this way. I do cheat and buy a jar off season. I hang my head in shame, but to tell you the truth for most dishes, I can't discern a difference – if I were making a dish solely based on garlic flavor, of course I'll buy the fresh, but for any longer simmering sauces or dishes it doesn't matter that much. This is of course, a home cook perspective, not a Chef's...it's also a time saver – how long does it take to peel and chop garlic? Not long, but it might be enough to slow me down on nights when timing is already an issue. I'll also use the oil it was packed in to brush garlic bread or crostini.
- **Onions:** Usually cheapest in the fall, I bought last at 33 cents a pound. I generally look for larger bags as they have larger onions; less time peeling. I'll also stock up because they keep for quite a long time. Do not keep them next to your potatoes, however. Whenever I peel my onions, I save the tops and bottoms and skin for my stock. If I only need a partial onion, I'll often just saute up the whole thing and put the excess in a zip bag in my freezer for a later use. This saves that odd 1/2 onion lurking around in the fridge, getting stronger and drying out. Update: It's spring now, and I'm paying 66 cents for two pound at Aldi. An onion is about 5 ounces, cost: 21 cents.
- **Wine:** I don't use expensive wines to cook with, but I take more care when something is simmered and reduced for a long time - use an inexpensive Chianti or Merlot here. I scored recently while driving through Iowa - I stopped at a gas station and noticed two for one on their Yellow Tail - cost per bottle, \$2.75. Who knew you could buy wine at a gas station! Always keep your eye out for bargains...cost for this recipe (about 3 1/2 cups in a bottle) 40 cents.
- **Other ingredients:** negligible - but do grow you basic herbs in your garden or window!