

A SUGAR SHAKE Recipe

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Sugar's Tomato Water Gin Shooters

Start the tomato water at least the night before you want to make the cocktails. Yields approx. 1½ – 2 cups of tomato water.

- 6 or 7 large, very ripe tomatoes
- 1 small garlic clove, peeled and smashed gently (a little goes a long way)
- 3 – 4 sprigs cilantro, gently crushed (again, don't pulverize them, just bruise them up to release their scent)
- Salt (I prefer Hawaiian, but you could use kosher or coarse sea salt; do *not* use iodized table salt)
- Pepper, fresh cracked
- Hendrick's (or your favorite) gin
- Currant tomatoes for garnish (if you can't find them, use grape or cherry tomatoes)

To make the tomato water: You'll need both a fine strainer and some coffee filters (large ones) or cheese cloth. Line the strainer with the coffee filters. I prefer the filters over cheese cloth because the fabric tends to soak up some of the precious tomato water and they're cheaper than buying cheesecloth all the time.

Purée the tomatoes. Place the smashed garlic and cilantro at the bottom of the filter-lined strainer. Set the strainer over a bowl or Tupperware container. Pour the purée over the garlic and cilantro. Sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper. Leave the container/strainer apparatus in the fridge overnight or up to 24 hours. Check obsessively to see how fast it's dripping.

If you're very impatient, or pressed for time, you can gently press on the purée to express more liquid. Even more daringly, you can VERY CAREFULLY pull up on the edges of the filter paper and bring them together to make a little dumpling pouch of purée. Squeeze ever so slowly and gently. You may want to line the strainer with an extra layer of filter paper in case some of your purée sneaks out of the pouch.

Tomato water has a very slight orange-yellow tint to it and looks a bit like pale chicken broth. When combined with the gin, it gets even more transparent and pretty close to colorless. If you have the patience to refrain from smooshing on your tomato purée during the draining process, your water will be even more colorless.

When you're done draining the water, DON'T throw away the purée! You can freeze it and use it later to make tomato sauce or add more tomato-y flavor to dishes, just like you would use canned tomato paste. Leftover tomato water can be used the same way, to boost tomato flavor in other dishes when you don't want to affect the color.

If you're making it way ahead of time, you can store the tomato water in the fridge for a few days in a glass bottle. Don't keep it too long—it'll start to get cloudy. To keep it longer, freeze it.

To make the shooters: Combine tomato water and gin in a one-to-one ratio; shake with ice. Serve in shot or martini glasses. Garnish with currant tomatoes on a cocktail pick.