Sides / France

Confit Garlic

Whole garlic cloves poached with the patience of a slow afternoon in extra-virgin olive oil at barely 90°C — the sharp, pungent allium slowly melting into something butter-soft, golden-tinged, honeyed and completely sweet. The oil becomes liquid gold. Both are a kitchen staple that transforms everything they touch.

Time 70 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 40 parts Garlic cloves, peeled (about 2 whole heads)
- ☐ 100 parts Extra-virgin olive oil (enough to submerge)
- ☐ 3 sprigs Fresh thyme sprigs
- ☐ 1 leaf Bay leaf
- ☐ 6 peppercorns Black peppercorns

Let's make it.

01 Peel the garlic cloves individually, keeping them whole and intact — any nick or cut will cause the clove to break down prematurely in the oil and cloud it. Discard any that are bruised or have gone soft. If any have a green sprout in the center, split the clove and remove it — the sprout is bitter and will muddy the finished oil. Pat the peeled cloves completely dry with paper towels. Place them in a small, heavy-based saucepan — they should fit in a single close layer. A vessel that is too large requires excessive oil to submerge them.

02 Pour enough olive oil over the garlic cloves to submerge them by 1–2cm. Add the thyme, bay leaf and peppercorns. Set the pan over the lowest possible heat on your smallest burner. Bring the oil to 85–90°C — use a thermometer; this is the critical range. The oil should show tiny, lazy bubbles rising occasionally from the garlic, like a very gentle spring rather than a simmer. Too hot (above 100°C) and you are frying the garlic, which will brown and turn acrid. Too cool and the collagen won't break down and the cloves won't turn silky. Maintain this gentle warmth, checking occasionally, for 45–60 minutes. The cloves are done when they can be pierced easily with a cake tester and have turned a very pale, golden-ivory colour throughout.

03 Remove the pan from the heat and let the garlic cool completely in its oil — do not attempt to transfer while hot. Once cooled, transfer the cloves and oil together to a sterilised glass jar, ensuring all cloves are completely submerged in oil. They will keep refrigerated for up to 2 weeks. Use the cloves whole, mashed onto toast, stirred into pasta or mashed potato, or dissolved into sauces. Use the perfumed oil for salad dressings, pasta, roasting vegetables, drizzling over soups — it is possibly more versatile than the cloves themselves. Never store confit garlic at room temperature for extended periods (the anaerobic, low-acid environment creates a botulism risk).

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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