Fresh Tomato Bisque

Makes 4 servings.

From Nancy Byal, Better Homes and Gardens magazine. This recipe came from Martha's Vineyard Restaurant in Homestead, Fla. It's important to fully ripen the tomatoes. Store at at room temperature for a few days, until they're bright red and slightly softened. Do not refrigerate them because cold stops the ripening process.

1¾ pounds tomatoes (about 5 medium), peeled and seeded
1 slice bacon, chopped
2 tablespoons margarine or butter
½ cup chopped onion
¼ teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
2 cups chicken broth
2¼ teaspoons sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons whipping cream

■ Use tomatoes held at room temperature until fully ripe. Coarsely chop tomatoes (makes about 4 cups); set aside.

■ In a large, heavy saucepan, place bacon and butter; cook over medium heat 4 to 5 minutes or until bacon is done. Add onion; cook for 1 minute. Add thyme and tomatoes. Bring to boiling; reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes.

■ Add chicken broth, sugar, salt and white pepper. Bring to boiling; reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, 10 minutes longer.

■ Meanwhile, in a small bowl blend flour and cream until smooth; whisk into soup 1 tablespoon at a time; cook and stir until mixture comes to boiling. Cook 1 minute more.

■ In a food processor fitted with a metal blade, blend half the tomato mixture at a time until smooth. Return to saucepan; heat through. Serve garnished with lemon slices, if desired.

Nutrition information:

■ Per serving: 208 calories, 6 grams protein, 16 grams carbohydrate, 14 grams fat, 31 mg cholesterol, 658 mg sodium. U.S. RDA: 43 percent vitamin A, 62 percent vitamin C, 17 percent thiamine, 14 percent riboflavin, 24 percent niacin.

Notes: