

Canning Tomatoes

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Introduction

What reminds you more of summer than those delicious red tomatoes hanging on the vine? They are just as tasty as your garden, the neighbor's garden, or the local farmer's market. With proper canning equipment and a reliable recipe, you can enjoy those tomatoes when the vines have long withered away. Did you know tomatoes are canned more than any other produce from the garden? They may be canned in various ways – crushed, whole, or halved. Let's look at safe ways to process tomatoes.

General Instructions

- **Quality & Selection** – Be sure to select disease-free tomatoes, preferably those that were ripened on the vine and are firm to hold their shape during the canning process and reduce mushiness. Do not can tomatoes from dead or frost-killed vines. Green tomatoes can be safely canned using the following recommendations due to their higher acidity than ripened fruit.
- **Acidification** – To ensure the safe acidity of whole, crushed, or juiced tomatoes, use the recommendations in Table 1. Acidification is required when pressure



canning or boiling water
bathing tomatoes.

Add acid directly to the jars before filling them with tomatoes. Add 1 tablespoon of sugar per quart to offset the acidic taste. Vinegar may cause undesirable flavor changes.

- **Sodium** – The use of salt is optional in all canned tomato products. Salt can be used for flavor or color protection.

Processing

Even though both boiling water bath and pressure processing times are given (see Tables 2 and 3), recent research shows that for some tomato products, pressure processing will result in more nutritious and higher-quality canned goods. Recipes that specify pressure canning only may contain many low-acid ingredients and can only be safely canned in a pressure canner at the specified pressure and time.

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Acid	Pint	Quart
Bottled Lemon Juice	1 tablespoon	2 tablespoons
Citric Acid	¼ teaspoon	½ teaspoon
Vinegar (5% acidity)	2 tablespoons	4 tablespoons

Table 1. Acidity recommendations for canning tomatoes.

Crushed Tomatoes (With No Added Liquid)

About 22 pounds of tomatoes are needed per canner load of 7 quarts; 14 pounds are needed per canner load of 9 pints. A bushel weighs 53 pounds and yields 17 to 20 quarts of crushed tomatoes, an average of 2¾ pounds per quart.

Wash tomatoes and dip them in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds or until the skin splits, then dip them in cold water. Slip off skins and remove cores. Trim off any bruised or discolored portions and proceed to quarter the tomatoes.

In a large pot, quickly heat one-sixth of the tomato quarters. As tomatoes are added to the pot, crush them with a wooden mallet or spoon. This draws off some juice. Continue heating the tomatoes. Stir to prevent burning.

As soon as the tomatoes boil, gradually add the remaining quartered tomatoes. Stir constantly. The remaining tomatoes do not need to be crushed; they will soften with heating and stirring. Continue until all tomatoes are added. Boil gently for 5 minutes.



Photo courtesy of the National Center for Home Food Preservation.

Add bottled lemon juice or citric acid to jars as listed in the acidification table. If desired, add 1 teaspoon of salt to each quart jar, or ½ teaspoon to each pint. Fill hot jars immediately with hot tomatoes. Leave ½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Table 2 or 3.

Whole or Halved Tomatoes

About 21 pounds of tomatoes are needed per canner load of 7 quarts; about 13 pounds are needed per canner load of 9 pints. A bushel weighs 53 pounds and yields 15 to 21 quarts — an average of 3 pounds per quart.

Wash tomatoes. Dip in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds or until skins split; then dip in cold water. Slip off skins and remove cores. Leave whole or halve.



Photo courtesy of the National Center for Home Food Preservation.

Add bottled lemon juice or citric acid to jars as listed in the acidification table. If desired, add 1 teaspoon of salt per quart or ½ teaspoon to each pint.

Packed in Water

Hot Pack - Put prepared tomatoes in a large saucepan and add enough water to cover them completely. Boil tomatoes gently for 5 minutes. Fill hot jars with hot tomatoes, leaving ½-inch headspace. Add cooking liquid to the jars to cover the tomatoes, leaving ½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles. Wipe the rims of jars. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Table 2 or 3.

PRODUCT	STYLE OF PACK	JAR SIZE	PROCESS TIME	CANNER GAUGE PRESSURE FOR DIFFERENT ALTITUDES (IN POUNDS)		
				DIAL GAUGE	WEIGHTED GAUGE	
				0-2,000 ft	0-1,000 ft	1,000+ ft
CRUSHED tomatoes	HOT	pints or quarts	20 min	6 lb	5 lb	10 lb
		pints or quarts	15 min	11 lb	10 lb	15 lb
Whole or halved tomatoes PACKED IN WATER	HOT or RAW	pints or quarts	15 min	6 lb	5 lb	10 lb
		pints or quarts	10 min	11 lb	10 lb	15 lb
Whole or halved tomatoes PACKED IN JUICE OR WITHOUT ADDED LIQUID	HOT or RAW	pints or quarts	40 min	6 lb	5 lb	10 lb
		pints or quarts	25 min	11 lb	10 lb	15 lb

Table 2. Recommended processing times for tomatoes in a pressure canner

PRODUCT	STYLE OF PACK	JAR SIZE	TIME IN MINUTES FOR ALTITUDES OF			
			0-1,000 ft	1,001-3,000 ft	3,001 – 6,000 ft	Above 6,000 ft
CRUSHED tomatoes	HOT	pints	35 min	40 min	45 min	50 min
		quarts	45 min	50 min	55 min	60 min
Whole or halved tomatoes	HOT or RAW	pints	40 min	45 min	50 min	55 min
PACKED IN WATER		quarts	45 min	50 min	55 min	60 min
Whole or halved tomatoes PACKED IN JUICE OR WITHOUT ADDED LIQUID	HOT or RAW	pints or quarts	85 min	90 min	95 min	100 min

Table 3. Recommended processing times for tomatoes in a boiling-water canner

Raw Pack – Heat water for packing tomatoes to boiling. Fill hot jars with prepared raw tomatoes, leaving ½-inch headspace. Cover tomatoes in the jars with boiling water, leaving ½-inch headspace. Wipe the rims of jars. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Table 2 or 3.

Packed Raw Without Added Liquid

Fill clean, hot jars with raw tomatoes. Press tomatoes in the jars until spaces

between them fill with juice. Leave ½-inch headspace. Wipe the rims of jars. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Table 2 or 3.

Packed in Tomato Juice

Hot Pack – Put tomatoes in a large saucepan and add enough tomato juice to completely cover them. Boil tomatoes and juice gently for 5 minutes. Fill jars with hot tomatoes, leaving ½-inch headspace. Add hot tomato juice to

the jars to cover the tomatoes, leaving ½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust head space if needed. Wipe rims of the jars. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Table 2 or 3.

Raw Pack – Heat tomato juice in a saucepan. Fill jars with raw tomatoes, leaving ½-inch headspace. Cover tomatoes in the jars with hot tomato juice, leaving ½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust the headspace if needed.

Wipe the rims of the jars. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Table 2 or 3.

References:

Complete Guide to Home Canning. United States Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539. Revised 2015.

So Easy to Preserve (Sixth Ed.). Cooperative Extension Service, The University of Georgia, Athens. Revised 2015.

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