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Canning Tomatoes
William D. Evers,
Extension Nutrition Specialist

Selection
Use only fresh, firm tomatoes. Do not can overripe tomatoes, eat them fresh or cook them for immediate use. The acid content of tomatoes decreases as tomatoes ripen on the vine or under certain storage conditions. If you must store tomatoes before canning, keep them in a cool, airy place. If you buy tomatoes, try to get them from a nearby source.

Processing
Tomatoes can be safely processed in a boiling-water-bath. Put filled glass jars into a canner containing water. Add boiling water to bring water level one or two inches over the tops of the canning jars (see illustration). Don’t

Preparation

Whole Tomatoes
For easy peeling, dip tomatoes into boiling water for approximately 1/2 minute; then dip quickly into cold water. Cut out stem ends and peel tomatoes. The peeled tomatoes should be packed as follows:
Quarter the peeled tomatoes and place in a clean saucepan. Bring them to a boil, stirring to keep tomatoes from sticking.

Using clean glass jars pack the boiling hot tomatoes to within 1/2 inch of the top. Add salt if desired, although it is not necessary. Wipe jar rim clean. Adjust lids and process as described under “Processing.”

Tomato Juice
Use ripe, juicy tomatoes, wash, remove stem ends, and cut into pieces. Simmer until softened, stirring often. Put through a strainer or a few layers of cheesecloth. Add 1 teaspoon salt to each quart of juice, if desired. Reheat juice to the boiling point.

Fill clean, hot, glass canning jars with boiling-hot juice to within 1/2 inch of top. Adjust lids and process as described in “Processing.”

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Time

Process in boiling-water-bath (212°F) as indicated below. Time is determined by jar size. Start timing after water has returned to a full boil.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processing Time*</th>
<th>Pints</th>
<th>Quarts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Tomatoes</td>
<td>35 min.</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato Juice</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Start counting time after water has returned to full boil.

Cooling

Take jars from the canner as soon as processing is complete. If liquid boiled out of a jar during processing, do not open jar to add more. Check the seals carefully on jars which have lost liquid. Food particles may become lodged under the rim, and the jar seal may break in a few days or even months later. Loss of liquid will not cause spoilage of the tomatoes. The tomatoes which are not covered by water in the jar may become discolored and less attractive. Use these jars first.

Cool jars, top side up, on a rack or folded cloth. Allow air to circulate around all sides of each jar. Keep hot jars away from drafts, but don’t slow the cooling process by covering them.

Day-After Jobs

Test the seal according to the directions for the jar lids being used. Usually, when using flat metal lids, you press the center of the lid. If the lid is down and will not move, the jar is sealed. If the jar is sealed, remove the screw bands, wipe the jars clean, then label and date them. Store in a cool, dry place. If a jar is unsealed, use the contents right away or can it again. To re-can, empty the jar and then pack and process the tomatoes in a clean jar as described above.

Acid vs. Low-Acid Varieties of Tomatoes

The acid content of hundreds of varieties of tomatoes used for home canning has been tested. All tested varieties contained enough acid to be safely canned in a boiling-water-bath if recommended procedures are used. However, 1/4 teaspoon of citric acid or 1 tablespoon of lemon juice may be added to each pint of tomatoes before processing.

On Guard Against Spoilage

Don’t use any canned food that shows any sign of spoilage. Before opening, look closely at each container. Bulging jar lids or rings, or a leak may mean the seal has broken and the food is spoiled. When opening a container, look for other signs of spoilage such as spurting liquid, mold, or an “off” odor.

If mold is present, destroy contents of the container. Do you have other canning questions? Contact your county Extension office.

This publication was originally prepared by Jean M. Howe, former Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist, Purdue University.
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Master Canner

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