



Tomatoes

Tomatoes ripening on the vine are a familiar sight in Pacific Northwest gardens during the late summer months. Because storage life of fresh tomatoes is limited, many households preserve them for year-round enjoyment. Home canning is one of the most popular preservation methods. Never can tomatoes from dead or frost killed vines. Only use ripe or underripe ones. Green tomatoes can be substituted in all recipes.

Processing Times Have Changed

Recommendations for canning tomatoes changed significantly in 1988. After extensive testing, the following changes were made:

- ☞ Processing times were lengthened to cover all varieties.
- ☞ Acidification guidelines were updated.
- ☞ Pressure canner recommendations were added as an alternative to boiling water processing.
- ☞ Altitude adjustments for both boiling water canning and pressure canning were added.

Failure to use updated recommendations increases the chance of spoilage and illness.

What determines processing time?

Processing times are scientifically determined, based on the temperature and time needed to kill micro-organisms. They will vary according to:

- ☞ Method of preparation
(Crushed, whole or halved)
- ☞ Type of liquid added
(juice, water, none)
- ☞ Addition of other ingredients
(Such as vegetables or meat)
- ☞ Packing temperature
(Hot or raw pack)
- ☞ Consistency of tomato product
(thick, thin)
- ☞ Size of jar
- ☞ Elevation

All USDA published processing times are carefully tested to offer adequate safeguards against variables encountered during home canning.

**Processing times must be followed exactly.
It is not safe to shorten them!**

Not all tomatoes are created equal.

Because tomatoes vary in acidity precautions must be taken to can them safely. Acid must be added before processing. This is true whether they will be processed in a boiling water bath or a pressure canner.

Adding Acid

One of the following methods may be used to acidify tomatoes before processing.

Bottled lemon juice:

- 1 Tablespoons per pint
- 2 Tablespoons per quart

Citric acid:

- 1/4 teaspoons per pint
- 1/2 teaspoons per quart

Vinegar of 5% acidity:

- 2 Tablespoons per pint
- 4 Tablespoons per quart

Sugar may be added to mask any sour flavor at 1 teaspoon per pint and 2 teaspoons per quart. The vinegar may cause undesirable flavor changes in the amounts needed and is not recommended.

Adding Salt

Salt is added to tomatoes for flavor, not to preserve them. Therefore, it may be omitted. If you use salt, add 1/2 teaspoon per pint and 1 teaspoon per quart.



Adding Other Ingredients

It is extremely important to follow updated recipes for canning tomato products. Changes in the amount or type of ingredients or method of preparation will influence the safety of the product. For example, the addition of vegetables to a tomato recipe will change the acidity, possibly to a dangerous level. Products that are not prepared according to current USDA instructions should be frozen - never canned!

Before Using

Before opening any jar, look for a bulging lid, leaking, or any unusual appearance of the food. After opening, check for off-odor, mold, foam, or spurting liquid. Never taste questionable foods. If there is any sign of spoilage, call the WSU Extension office nearest you for recommendations on disposal.

To avoid the risk of botulism, tomato products not canned according to USDA recommendations** should be boiled even if you detect no signs of spoilage. Boil foods for 10 minutes. Add one additional minute of time for each 1,000 feet of elevation.

****Reference WSU Extension publications: PNW 300 - Canning Tomatoes and Tomato Products and PNW 395 - Salsa Recipes for Canning". (Available in English and Spanish)**

Stewed Tomatoes

(About 3 pint jars)

2 quarts chopped tomatoes
1/4 cup chopped green peppers
1/4 cup chopped onions
2 teaspoons celery salt
2 teaspoons sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt

Combine all ingredients. Cover and cook 10 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Pour into hot jars, leaving 1 inch head space. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process.

Process in a Dial gauge Pressure Canner at
11 pounds pressure
at elevations 0 - 2000 feet,

*** OR ***

Weighted Gauge Pressure Canner at
10 pounds pressure at elevations
0 - 1000 feet:

Pints.....15 minutes
Quarts20 minutes

For further information call:
WSU Benton County Extension Office
(509) 735-3551
or toll free (866) 986-4865

or check the USDA recommendations online
at: www.homefoodpreservation.com

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
BENTON COUNTY EXTENSION



Tomatoes How to Preserve Them Safely

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