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Canning Tomatoes

Introduction

Tomatoes are the most widely home-canned product in the United States. Home canned tomatoes can be prepared in a ready-to-use crushed format, or left whole or halved. Whole or halved tomatoes may be canned by covering with water or tomato juice; or, with no added juice. **Crushed tomatoes must be hot packed.** It is very important to match the preparation process you have selected with the correct processing times from either Tables 1 or 2.

General Instructions

Selection — When canning, select only disease-free, preferably vine-ripened, firm fruit. **Do not can tomatoes from dead or frost-killed vines.** Unripened tomatoes are more acidic than ripened fruit and can be canned safely with any of the following recommendations. For best results process tomatoes within 2 to 3 hours after harvest or purchasing. **Canning whole cherry or grape tomatoes is not advised.**

Acidification — Tomatoes have a pH between 4 and 4.6. To ensure safe acidity of whole, crushed, or juiced tomatoes use the recommendations in the chart below. Acidification is required when pressure canning or boiling water bathing tomatoes.

Acid	Pint	Quart
Bottled lemon juice	1 Tablespoon	2 Tablespoons
Citric Acid	¼ teaspoon	½ teaspoon
Vinegar (5 percent acidity)	2 Tablespoons	4 Tablespoons

Add acid directly to the jars before filling with tomatoes. If desired, add up to 1 tablespoon of sugar per quart to offset 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 1 and 2), recent research shows that for some tomato products, pressure processing will result in a more nutritious and higher quality canned good. 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.

Crushed Tomatoes (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.

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

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.

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 jars immediately with hot tomatoes. Leave ½-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Tables 1 or 2.

Whole or Halved Tomatoes

About 21 pounds of tomatoes are needed per canner load of 7 quarts; 13 pounds are needed per canner load of 9 pints.

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.

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 — Add enough water to cover the tomatoes, and then boil gently for 5 minutes. Fill jars with hot tomatoes. Add hot cooking liquid to cover

leaving ½-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Tables 1 or 2.

Raw pack — Fill clean jars directly with raw peeled tomatoes. Add hot water to cover, leaving ½-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Tables 1 or 2.

PACKED RAW WITHOUT ADDED LIQUID

Fill jars with raw tomatoes, leaving ½-inch headspace. Press tomatoes in the jars until spaces between them fill with juice. Leave ½-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process jars as describe in Tables 1 or 2.

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. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Tables 1 or 2.

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. Adjust lids and process jars as described in Tables 1 or 2.

Table 1. Recommended processing times for tomatoes in a pressure canner

				<i>Canner gauge pressure for different altitudes (in pounds)</i>		
				<i>Dial gauge</i>	<i>Weighted gauge</i>	
Product	Style of pack	Jar size	Time (minutes)	0–2,000 ft.	0–1,000 ft.	1,000+ ft
CRUSHED tomatoes	HOT	pints or quarts	20 min	6 lbs	5 lbs	10 lb.
		pints or quarts	15 min	11 lbs	10 lbs	15 lbs
Whole or halved tomatoes PACKED IN WATER	HOT or RAW	pints or quarts	15 min	6 lbs	5 lbs	10 lbs
		pints or quarts	10 min	11 lbs	10 lbs	15 lbs
Whole or halved tomatoes PACKED IN JUICE OR WITHOUT ADDED LIQUID	HOT or RAW	pints or quarts	40 min	6 lbs	5 lbs	10 lbs
		pints or quarts	25 min	11 lbs	10 lbs	15 lbs

Table 2. Recommended process times for tomatoes in a boiling-water canner

<i>Product</i>	<i>Style of pack</i>	<i>Jar size</i>	<i>Time in minutes for altitudes of</i>	
			<i>0–1,000 ft.</i>	<i>1,001–3,000 ft.</i>
CRUSHED TOMATOES	HOT	Pints	35 min	40 min
		Quarts	45 min	50 min
Whole or halved tomatoes PACKED IN WATER	HOT or RAW	Pints	40 min	45 min
		Quarts	45 min	50 min
Whole or halved tomatoes PACKED IN JUICE OR WITHOUT ADDED LIQUID	HOT or RAW	Pints or Quarts	85 min	90 min

References

- Complete Guide to Home Canning*. United States Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539. Revised 2006.
- So Easy to Preserve* (Fifth Ed.). Cooperative Extension Service, The University of Georgia, Athens. Revised 2006.

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