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DIY Canning: Tomato Sauce and Salsa

“Those tomatoes that just keep coming? They’re the quintessential ingredient for condiments and sauces, from ketchup to spaghetti sauce studded with basil. Nothing says summer like that fresh tomato flavor.”

The Art of Preserving, by Lisa Atwood, Rebecca Courchesne & Rick Field (Weldon Owen, 2010).

Choosing Tomatoes for Home Canning

Select tomatoes that are disease-free, without blemishes and cracks and that are a firm ripeness. Both round (globe) tomatoes and oblong (plum or paste) tomatoes can be used for home canning. Plum tomatoes are usually preferred due to their meatier texture and higher levels of acidity, sugar and pectin. Juicy globe tomatoes require additional cooking and reduction due to their higher water content.

When selecting tomato plants for your garden, you will notice that some growers indicate whether a particular type of tomato is preferred for canning or for eating fresh. This is usually because of its texture, water content (juiciness) and its growth. For canning, it is best to have a plant that flowers and fruits prolifically in the same time period, thus producing lots of tomatoes all at once for canning.

Preparing Tomatoes

When preparing tomatoes for home canning, it is critical to use stainless-steel or other nonreactive saucepans and cooking utensils. The acid from tomatoes can react with other metals and create an undesirable flavor and color.

Most tomato canning recipes call for peeling and seeding tomatoes, which can be done very easily with a food mill or a tomato press. These devices easily separate out tomato pulp from the seeds and skin, thus allowing for large quantities of tomatoes to be processed quickly. When your recipe calls for whole or chopped tomatoes, the fastest way to remove the skin is to blanch them.

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Classic Ketchup

Make this ketchup when tomatoes are at their summer best. Sweet, juicy garden-fresh tomatoes are reduced to a gently spiced, lusciously thick condiment. Your favorite purchased ketchup will never taste the same after you sample this irresistible homemade version.

Have ready 6 hot, sterilized half-pint jars and their lids.

Blanch, peel and core the tomatoes, then cut into quarters. In a large nonreactive saucepan over medium-low heat, warm the olive oil. Add the onions and bell peppers and cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook until tender, about 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, place the garlic, cinnamon stick, celery seeds, allspice, cloves, peppercorns and red pepper flakes on a square of cheesecloth, bring the corners together and tie with kitchen string. In a small nonreactive saucepan, combine the vinegar and the cheesecloth bag, set over medium-high heat and bring to a boil, then cover and remove from the heat.

Pass the tomato mixture through a food mill into a clean nonreactive saucepan. Discard the cheesecloth bag and pour all but $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vinegar into the tomato mixture. Stir in the 2 Tbs. sugar and the $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt. Set the pan over high heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer, stirring often, until the mixture is reduced by more than half and mounds slightly on a spoon, 45 to 60 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasonings with salt, sugar and the remaining vinegar.

Ladle the hot ketchup into the jars, leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of headspace. Remove any air bubbles and adjust the headspace, if necessary. Wipe the rims clean and seal tightly with the lids.

Process the jars in a boiling-water bath for 10 minutes. The sealed jars can be stored in a cool, dark place for up to 1 year. If a seal has failed, store the jar in the refrigerator for up to 1 month. Makes 6 half-pints.

Adapted from *The Art of Preserving*, by Lisa Atwood, Rebecca Courchesne & Rick Field (Weldon Owen, 2010).

Bruschetta Topping

Have ready 6 hot, clean half-pint jars and their lids.

Blanch, peel and core the tomatoes, then cut them into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch chunks.

In a large nonreactive saucepan over high heat, combine the wine, wine vinegar, balsamic vinegar and garlic and bring to a boil. Cook until reduced by about one-third, about 5 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes. Reduce the heat to medium and cook uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes are hot throughout, about 10 minutes. Stir in the basil and lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper.

Ladle the hot tomatoes into the jars, leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of headspace. Gently push on the tomatoes with a rubber spatula to cover them with liquid. Add more liquid from the saucepan if needed to cover the tomatoes completely. Remove any air bubbles and adjust the headspace, if necessary. Wipe the rims clean and seal tightly with the lids.

Process the jars in a boiling-water bath for 20 minutes. The sealed jars can be stored in a cool, dark place for up to 6 months. If a seal has failed, store the jar in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. Makes 6 half-pints.

Adapted from *The Art of Preserving*, by Lisa Atwood, Rebecca Courchesne & Rick Field (Weldon Owen, 2010).

12 lb. tomatoes
1 Tbs. olive oil
3 yellow onions, coarsely chopped
3 small red bell peppers, seeded and coarsely chopped
4 garlic cloves, lightly crushed
1 cinnamon stick, crushed
1 Tbs. celery seeds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. whole allspice
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. whole cloves
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. peppercorns
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. red pepper flakes
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups cider vinegar
2 Tbs. sugar, plus more, to taste
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, plus more, to taste

5 lb. tomatoes, preferably plum
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups dry white wine
2 Tbs. white wine vinegar
2 Tbs. golden balsamic vinegar
4 garlic cloves, minced
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup firmly packed chopped fresh basil
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Blanching Tomatoes

Bring a large saucepan filled two-thirds full with water to a boil over high heat. Wash the tomatoes and cut an X in the bottom of each tomato (opposite the stem side). Working in small batches, immerse the tomatoes in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds, until the skin starts to curl. Using a skimmer, immediately remove the tomatoes from the boiling water and plunge them into a large ice bath (half ice and half water). Remove them from the ice water and the skins should easily slip off or can be removed by using a food mill or an Italian tomato press.

Adding Acid to Tomatoes for Canning

Tomatoes are classified as high-acid foods, although their acidity can vary quite a bit, depending on the variety, environmental factors like frost and soil, and the tomatoes' maturity. To ensure a safe home-canned product (safe for storage), home-canning recipes must be "acidified" by adding lemon juice or citric acid before they are heat processed.



Simplest Tomato Sauce

This all-purpose tomato sauce from Canal House Cooking is great for everything from stuffed pasta dishes to simple spaghetti with a little Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.

Put the tomatoes, along with their juice, in a large heavy-bottomed pot. Add the onions and herb branches, and season with salt and pepper. Set over medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer very gently, stirring often with a wooden spoon, until the tomato flesh is completely soft, 2 to 3 hours.

Let the tomatoes cool for about 1 hour. Discard the onions and herb branches. Pass the tomatoes through a food mill into another large clean pot, discarding the solids. Add the lemon juice and a drizzle of olive oil, set over medium heat and heat, stirring, until hot.

Meanwhile, wash 6 to 8 pint canning jars with their lids and rings in hot soapy water and rinse them, then place in a large pan or bowl and cover with boiling water. Keep them in the hot water until ready to use. Remove the jars from the water and pour out any water. Arrange the jars together for easy filling. Put a basil sprig in each jar. At the same time, fill a large pot (large enough to hold the jars in a single layer) with warm water to a depth of 4 inches. A canning kettle with a rack is ideal.

To process the tomato sauce, use a sterilized glass measuring cup and a funnel to pour about 1 cup of the hot sauce into each jar, leaving about ½ inch of headspace. Using a paper towel dipped in hot water, wipe the rims clean. Place the lid on each jar, then screw on the rings. Arrange the jars in the water in the pot (the water should cover the jars by 2 inches) and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Boil for 35 minutes.

Using tongs, remove the jars from the water and place on a tray lined with a kitchen towel. Let the jars cool undisturbed for 12 hours. If the jars have sealed properly, the lids will be slightly indented and not springy to the touch. If a jar did not seal properly, either repeat the water bath process or refrigerate and use the sauce. Makes 6 to 8 pints.

Recipe by Canal House Cooking

15 lb. ripe Italian plum tomatoes, halved
4 yellow onions, halved through the root end
4 branches fresh rosemary, thyme, oregano, basil or other herb of choice
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
¼ cup fresh lemon juice
Good-quality extra-virgin olive oil
6 to 8 fresh basil sprigs



Roasted Tomato-Garlic Salsa

Plum tomatoes have firm flesh that holds up well during cooking, making them a good choice for this spicy salsa. Other varieties can be substituted, but make sure the tomatoes are not overripe. To tame the heat in this versatile salsa, use only 1 jalapeño chili.

Have ready 6 hot, clean half-pint jars and their lids. Preheat a broiler.

On a baking sheet, stir together the tomatoes, chilies and 2 Tbs. of the olive oil. Broil until lightly and evenly charred, 6 to 10 minutes. Transfer to a plate and let cool slightly. Halve, core and seed the tomatoes. Halve and seed the chilies. Place the chilies in a food processor.

Preheat an oven to 425°F.

On the same baking sheet, stir together the onion, garlic and the remaining 1 Tbs. olive oil. Roast until tender and charred at the edges, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the onion to the processor. Squeeze the cloves from the garlic skins and add the cloves to the processor. Process until finely chopped. Add the tomatoes and pulse until finely chopped. Transfer the mixture to a large nonreactive saucepan and stir in the lime juice and salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, reduce the heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Add the cilantro and simmer for 5 minutes.

Ladle the hot salsa into the jars, leaving ¼ inch of headspace. Remove any air bubbles and adjust the headspace, if necessary. Wipe the rims clean and seal tightly with the lids.

Process the jars in a boiling-water bath for 15 minutes. The sealed jars can be stored in a cool, dark place for up to 6 months. If a seal has failed, store the jar in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Makes 6 half-pints.

Adapted from *The Art of Preserving*, by Lisa Atwood, Rebecca Courchesne & Rick Field (Weldon Owen, 2010).

3½ lb. plum tomatoes or other firm-fleshed sauce tomatoes
1 or 2 jalapeño chilies
3 Tbs. olive oil
1 large white onion, cut into chunks
10 large garlic cloves, unpeeled
¼ cup fresh lime juice, or to taste
1 tsp. salt
½ cup chopped fresh cilantro, or to taste

Tomato Jam

Here's a fantastic way to spread your summer tomato crop out through the year. Once opened, the jam keeps for a couple of months in the fridge, and the Christmas-y spice here makes it just right when the weather turns cooler. Serve it with vanilla ice cream or simply spoon it inside prebaked tartlet shells and top it with whipped cream. This jam is also delicious spread on toast with butter.

Score an X on the bottom of each tomato with a sharp knife. Plunge the tomatoes into a large pot of boiling water, in batches if necessary, until the scored Xs start to peel back, about 1 minute. Transfer the tomatoes with a slotted spoon to a large bowl of ice water and let them sit for a few minutes. Peel the tomatoes by slipping off the skins with your fingers, then trim the stem ends. Cut the tomatoes into large chunks. Quarter the orange, discarding any seeds, then slice as thinly as possible, including the rind.

Bring the tomatoes, orange slices, sugar, vanilla bean, vinegar, cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice and salt to a boil in a large heavy pot. Boil the jam, stirring occasionally, until thickened, 45 minutes to 1¼ hours. To test the jam for doneness, drop a teaspoonful on a chilled plate and chill for 1 minute. Tilt the plate: the jam should remain in a mound and not run. If the jam runs, continue cooking it at a slow boil, testing every 5 minutes. Cool the jam completely.

Divide the jam among 3 sterilized pint canning jars, leaving ¼ inch of space at the tops. Cap the jars and process in boiling water for 15 minutes. Let the jars cool at room temperature until they seal. They will keep for at least a year in a cool, dry, dark place. Makes about 3 pints.

Adapted from *The Farm*, by Ian Knauer (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012).

2 lb. tomatoes (beefsteak, plum)
1 navel orange
1½ cups sugar
½ vanilla bean, split lengthwise
1 tsp. apple cider vinegar
½ tsp. ground cinnamon
¼ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
¼ tsp. ground allspice
¼ tsp. kosher salt