

## Preserving Tomatoes

### Canning Tomatoes

**Quality:** Select only disease-free, preferably vine-ripened, firm fruits for canning.

**Quantity:** An average of 21 pounds of whole or halved tomatoes (22 pounds of crushed tomatoes), is needed per canner load of 7 quarts; an average of 13 pounds (14 pounds of crushed tomatoes) is 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.

**Caution:** Do not can tomatoes from dead or frost-killed vines. Green tomatoes are more acidic than ripened fruit and can be canned safely with any of the following recommendations.

**Acidification:** To ensure safe acidity in whole, crushed or juiced tomatoes, add 2 tablespoons of bottled lemon juice or ½ teaspoon of citric acid per quart of tomatoes. For pints, use 1 tablespoon bottled lemon juice or ¼ teaspoon citric acid. Acid can be added directly to the jars before filling with product. Add sugar to offset acid taste, if desired. Four tablespoons of vinegar with a 5 percent acidity per quart may be used instead of bottled lemon juice or citric acid. However, vinegar may cause undesirable flavor changes.

**Recommendation:** Use of a pressure canner will result in higher-quality and more nutritious canned tomato products. If your pressure canner cannot be operated above 15 PSI, select a process time at a lower pressure.

**Altitude Adjustments:** The processing time and pressures given for canning tomatoes and tomato products are for an altitude of 0–1000 feet. If you

are canning at a higher altitude, make the following adjustments.

**In a Boiling Water Bath:** At altitudes of 1,001–3,000 feet, add 5 minutes to the processing time.

**In a Dial Gauge Pressure Canner:** As the altitude increases, the processing time for each food stays the same, but the canner pressure must be increased as follows:

At altitudes of 1001–2000 feet, the pressure is not increased; process at 11 pounds pressure.

At altitudes of 2001 – 4000 feet, process at 12 pounds pressure.

**In a Weighted Gauge Pressure Canner:** At altitudes above 1000 feet, the processing time for each food stays the same, but the food must be processed at 15 pounds pressure.

### Whole or Halved Tomatoes (Packed Raw Without Added Liquid)

**Procedure:** 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 the jars. (See acidification directions.) Add 1 teaspoon of salt per quart to the jars, if desired. 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. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process using one of the following options.

Option 1 — Process in a Boiling Water Bath:  
Pints or Quarts.....85 minutes

Option 2 — Process in a Dial-Gauge Pressure Canner at 11 pounds pressure or in a Weighted Gauge Pressure Canner at 10 pounds pressure  
Pints or Quarts.....25 minutes

### **Whole or Halved Tomatoes (Packed in Water)**

**Procedure:** 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. (See acidification directions). Add 1 teaspoon salt per quart to the jars, if desired.

**For Hot Pack:** Add enough water to cover the tomatoes and boil them gently for 5 minutes. Fill jars with hot tomatoes or with raw peeled tomatoes. Add the hot cooking liquid to the hot pack, leaving ½-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process.

**For Raw Pack:** Heat water, for packing tomatoes, to a boil. Add 1 teaspoon salt to each quart; ½ teaspoon to each pint jar, if desired. Pack prepared tomatoes in hot jars, leaving ½-inch headspace. Fill hot jars to ½ inch from top with boiling water. Adjust lids and process using one of the following options.

Option 1 — Process in a Boiling Water Bath:  
Pints.....40 minutes  
Quarts.....45 minutes

Option 2 — Process in a Dial-Gauge Pressure Canner at 11 pounds pressure or in a Weighted Gauge Pressure Canner at 10 pounds pressure  
Pints or Quarts..... 10 minutes

### **Whole or Halved Tomatoes (Packed in Tomato Juice)**

**Procedure:** 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 the jars. (See acidification directions.) Add 1 teaspoon of salt per quart to the jars, if desired.

**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.

**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. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process using one of the following options:

Option 1 — Process in a Boiling Water Bath:  
Pints or Quarts.....85 minutes

Option 2 — Process in a Dial-Gauge Pressure Canner at 11 pounds pressure or in a Weighted Gauge Pressure Canner at 10 pounds pressure  
Pints or Quarts.....25 minutes

### **Crushed Tomatoes (With No Added Liquid)**

This recipe yields a high-quality product, ideally suited for use in soups, stews and casseroles.

**Procedure:** 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.

Heat one-sixth of the quarters quickly in a large pot, crushing them with a wooden mallet or spoon as they are added to the pot. This will draw out the juice. Continue heating the tomatoes, stirring to prevent burning. Once the tomatoes are boiling, gradually add remaining quartered tomatoes, stirring constantly. These remaining tomatoes do not need to be crushed. They will soften with heating and stirring. Continue until all tomatoes are added. Then boil gently 5 minutes.

Add bottled lemon juice or citric acid to jars. (See acidification directions.) Add 1 teaspoon of salt per quart to the jars, if desired. Fill jars immediately with hot tomatoes, leaving ½-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids and process using one of the following options.

Option 1 — Process in a Boiling Water Bath:  
Pints.....35minutes  
Quarts.....45 minutes

Option 2 — Process in a Dial-Gauge Pressure Canner at 11 pounds pressure or in a Weighted Gauge Pressure Canner at 10 pounds pressure  
Pints or Quarts.....15 minutes

## Freezing Tomatoes

Select firm, ripe tomatoes with deep red color. Wash and dip in boiling water for 30 seconds to loosen skins. Core and peel. Freeze whole or in pieces. Pack into containers, leaving 1-inch headspace. Seal and freeze. Use only for cooking or seasoning, as tomatoes will not be solid when thawed.

## Freezing Tomato Juice

Wash, sort and trim firm, vine-ripened tomatoes. Cut in quarters or eighths. Simmer 5 to 10 minutes. Press through a sieve. If desired, season with 1 teaspoon salt to each quart of juice. Pour into containers. If using containers with wide top openings, leave ½-inch headspace for pints and 1-inch for quarts. If using containers with narrow top openings, leave 1½-inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

## Freezing Stewed Tomatoes

Remove stem ends, peel and quarter ripe tomatoes. Cover and cook until tender (10 to 20 minutes). Place pan containing tomatoes in cold water to cool. Pack into containers, leaving headspace. Leave ½-inch headspace for pint containers with wide top opening and 1-inch for quarts. If containers have a

narrow top opening, leave ¾-inch headspace for pints and 1½-inch for quarts. Seal and freeze.

For more information on home canning, contact your local Extension agent or request [HGIC 3040, \*Canning Foods at Home\*](#). For information on preserving tomato products request [HGIC 3340, \*Preserving Tomato Sauces & Ketchup\*](#) or [HGIC 3360, \*Preserving Tomato Products\*](#).

### Source:

USDA. *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539. Reviewed 1994

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This information has been reviewed and adapted for use in South Carolina by P.H. Schmutz, HGIC Information Specialist, and E.H. Hoyle, Extension Food Safety Specialist, Clemson University. (New 06/99.)

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