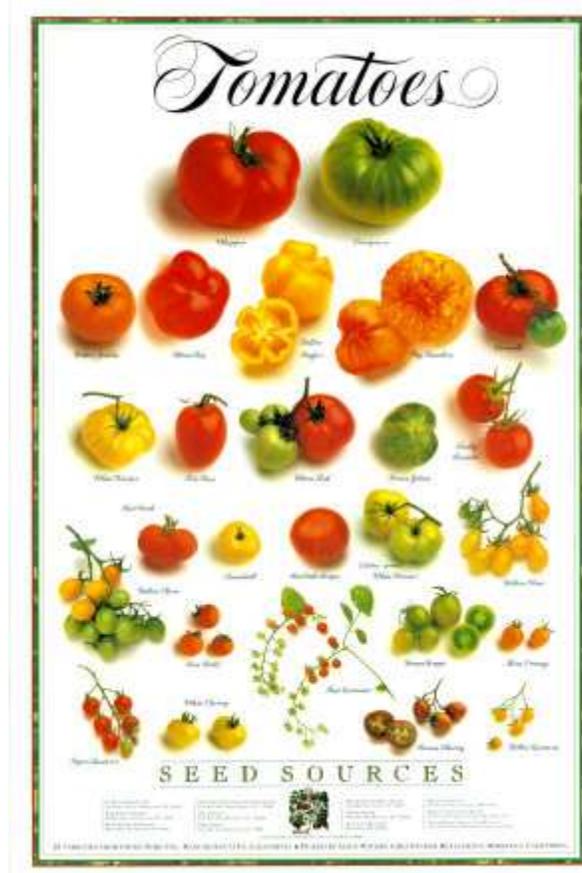


Canning Tomatoes - Hot Water Bath Step-by-Step

Complements of: KitchenGardeners.org, PickYourOwn.org & Provident-Living-Today.com

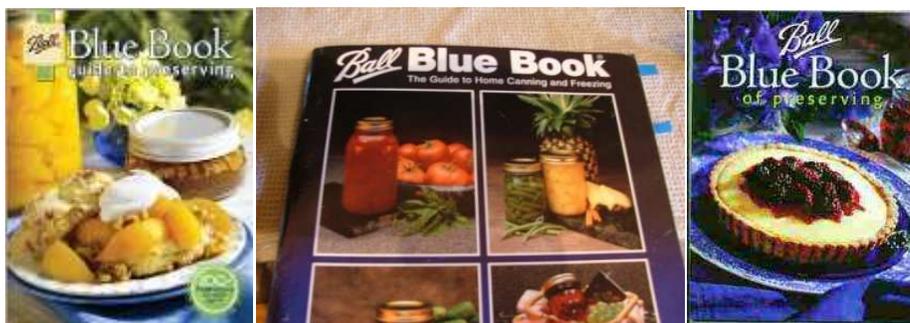


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Tomatoes and other high-acid foods may be processed using a water-bath canner as opposed to a pressure canner.



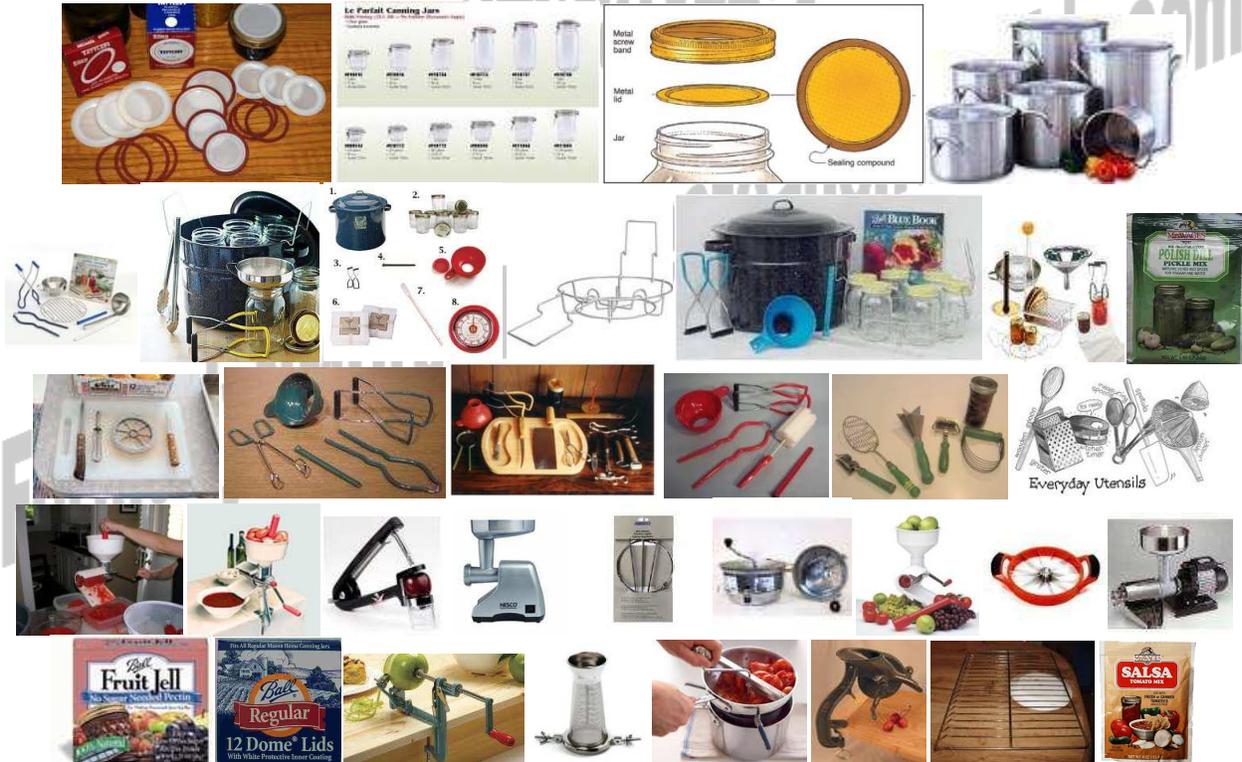
The following are basic guidelines and images coming from the [Ball Blue Book of Preservation](#), PickYourOwn.org and Provident-Living-Today.com.



Ingredients and Equipment

Canning Tomatoes Step-by-Step - Continued

- **Tomatoes** - about 20 lbs to make 7 quarts (7 large tomatoes will fill one quart jar.)
- **lemon juice** - fresh or bottled, about 1/2 cup
- **1 quart tomato juice** (or plain water)
- **1 Water bath Canner** (a huge pot to sanitize the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 - \$30 at mall kitchen stores and local "big box" stores. Tomatoes are on the border between the high-acid fruits that can be preserved in a boiling-water bath and the low-acid fruits, vegetables and meats that need pressure canning)
- **1 large pot** (to scald the tomatoes, step 3) and **1 medium sized pot** to heat the tomato juice or water to add to the jars (step 6) and **1 small pot** to sanitize the lids.
- **Large spoons and ladles**
- **Pint or quart canning jars** (Ball or Kerr jars can be found at Publix, Kroger, Safeway and local "big box" stores - about \$8 per dozen jars including the lids and rings). Quart jars are more economical!
- **Lids** - thin, flat, round metal lids with a gum binder that seals them against the top of the jar. They may only be used once.
- **Rings** - metal bands that secure the lids to the jars. They may be reused many times.
- **Jar grabber** (to pick up the hot jars)
- **Lid lifter** (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sanitize them. (\$2 at mall kitchen stores and local "big box" stores, but it's usually cheaper online from our affiliates)t)
- **Jar funnel** (\$3-Grocery stores, like Publix, Kroger and Safeway and local "big box" stores; sometimes even hardware stores)



Instructions



1. Visually examine canning jars for nicks, cracks, uneven rims or sharp edges that may prevent sealing or cause breakage. Examine canning lids to ensure they are free of dents and sealing compound is even and complete. Check bands for proper fit.



2. Wash jars and two-piece caps in hot, soapy water. Rinse well. Dry bands; set aside. Heat jars and lids in a saucepot of simmering water (180°F or 82°C). DO NOT BOIL LIDS. Allow jars and lids to remain in hot water until ready for use, removing one at a time as needed. 3. Fill boiling-water canner half-full with hot water. Elevate rack in canner. Put canner lid in place. Heat water just to a simmer (180°F or 82°C). Keep water hot until used for processing.



* The dishwasher is fine for the jars; especially if it has a "sanitize" cycle. Be sure to let it go through the rinse cycle to get rid of any soap!



4. Select fresh tomatoes at their peak of quality and flavor. Use firm tomatoes free of cracks, spots and growths. Prepare only enough for one canner load. Wash tomatoes; drain.



Top left: Beefsteak
Top right: Lemon Boy, yellow
Bottom left: Roma, paste-type
Bottom right: Better Boy



The best variety of tomato to use: Roma; also called paste tomatoes. They have fewer sides, thicker, meatier walls, and less water. And that means thicker sauce in less cooking time! You may can cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes, etc., but they do tend to be more watery, and you must be sure to add the lemon juice as recommended in the recipe, because they tend to be lower in natural acidity.

Also, you don't want mushy, bruised or rotten tomatoes!

And for those of you with an abundance of green tomatoes, the USDA says that since green tomatoes are more acidic than ripened fruit, they can be canned safely with any of the standard tomato directions. I prefer to store them in the basement, where they slowly ripen, but if you have a use later for canned green tomatoes, go for it.



5. Place tomatoes in wire basket and lower into a large saucepot of boiling water.

Blanch tomatoes 30 to 60 seconds or until skins start to crack.

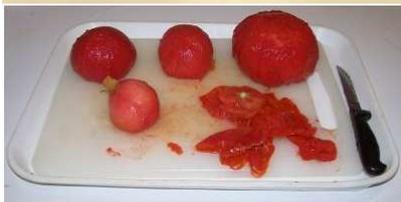
Remove from boiling water.

Dip immediately into cold water.



6. Slip off skins; trim away any green areas; cut out core.

Leave tomatoes whole or cut into halves or quarters.



7. For tomatoes packed in water, place tomatoes in a large saucepot, adding just enough water to cover.

Boil gently 5 minutes.



8. Remove canning jar from hot water with a jar lifter; set jar on towel.

Add 1 tablespoons bottled lemon juice to each pint jar, 2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice to each quart jar. This helps to reduce the odds of spoilage and to retain color and flavor.

Then fill to 1/2 inch of the top with either boiling water or hot tomato juice.

Add any basil, bay leaf, garlic or other seasoning you desire.



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9. Carefully pack tomatoes into hot jar, leaving 1/2-inch headspace.

Ladle boiling water or cooking liquid over tomatoes, leaving 1/2-inch headspace.

Add 1/2 teaspoon salt per pint jar or 1 teaspoon salt per quart jar, if desired.





10. Slide a nonmetallic spatula between tomatoes and jar; press back gently on tomatoes to release trapped air bubbles.

Repeat procedure 2 to 3 times around inside of jar.



I often use a plastic spoon, up side down and gently sliding it up and down around the inside edge.

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11. Wipe rim and threads of jar with a dean, damp cloth.

Remove lid from hot water using a lid wand.

Place lid on jar, centering sealing compound on rim.

Screw band down evenly and firmly, just until resistance is met-fingertip tight.



Be sure the contact surfaces (top of the jar and underside of the ring) are clean to get a good seal!

** You need only put the gasket disk on the jar, however I have had nothing but trouble doing that.



12. As each jar is filled, set it onto the elevated rack in the boiling-water canner.

Water in canner should be kept at a simmer (180°F or 82°C).

After all jars are filled and placed onto the rack, lower rack into canner.

Water must cover the two-piece caps on the jars by 1 to 2 inches.

Add boiling water, if necessary.



13. Put lid on canner. Bring water to a boil.

Start counting processing time after water comes to a rolling boil.

Process pints 40 minutes, quarts 45 minutes, at a gentle but steady boil for altitudes at or below 1,000 feet above sea level.

For higher altitude areas, consult your local extension office or use a thermometer to be sure water is hot enough. Boiling = 212 degrees F



14. When processing time is complete, turn off heat and remove canner lid.

Let canner cool minutes before removing jars.

Remove jars from canner and set them upright, 1 to 2 inches apart, on a dry towel to cool.

Do not retighten bands. Let jars cool 12 to 24 hours.



* Do not place them on a cold hard surface or you risk cracking them.

During their time in the canner, the pulp in the juice will have separated, and the tomatoes will have floated to the top because of the air in them. They will look funny.



Don't despair! It seems that people's first instinct is to think water somehow got into their jars. It didn't.

This is just how it works.

Wait for the jars to cool enough to handle then tip them upside down a couple times.

The air will start to settle out of the tomatoes, and everything will normalize a little bit. In the end, they will look like the image at left.



15. After jars have cooled, check lids for a seal by pressing on the center of each lid.

If the center is pulled down and does not flex, remove the band and gently try to lift the lid off with your fingertips.

If the lid does not flex and you cannot lift it off the lid has a good vacuum seal.

Wipe lid and jar surface with a clean, damp cloth to remove food particles or residue.



Label, date. Store jars in a cool, dry, dark place.



Ready to store and waiting to be opened ;-}

Frequently Asked Questions about Canning Tomatoes

Why do my tomatoes separate from the liquid?

A frequent problem is the separation of water from the tomatoes. Why does the water separate from the solids in tomatoes?

Scenario 1 - liquid at the top and solids at the bottom

Home canned tomatoes, tomato juice, and tomato sauces with liquid at the top and solids at the bottom is quite normal. It only reflects that the juice was made prior to heating. For example, the tomatoes were chopped, run through the steamer, sieve, or food mill while still raw and prior to heating.

As soon as they are chopped or crushed, enzymes start to break down the pectin that helps to hold tomato cells together. The enzyme that causes separation is activated by exposure to air and inactivated by heat. In commercial production, tomatoes are flash heated nearly to boiling in a matter of seconds, using equipment not available to consumers. Because the pectin holding tomato cells together is not exposed to air when cold, it remains intact, and a thick bodied, homogeneous juice is produced.

The solution is to leave tomatoes whole or in large chunks (do not chop). Heat before chopping or juicing to minimize the separation.

The best way to do that at home is to heat quartered tomatoes quickly to boiling temperatures WHILE crushing. You can also heat the blanched, peeled whole tomatoes in the microwave, then crush them!

Make sure the mixture boils constantly and vigorously while you add the remaining tomatoes. Simmer 5 minutes after all tomatoes are added, before juicing. If you are not concerned about juice separating, simply slice or quarter tomatoes into a large saucepan. Crush, heat and simmer for 5 minutes before juicing.

Scenario 2 - liquid at the bottom and solids at the top (note the photo is step 10)

What about the reverse: liquid at the bottom and solids at the top? That indicates too much preheating (more than 5 minutes). Pectin breaks down when it is overheated; then separation results. If separation occurs, just shake the jar before opening or decant the water off.

References: Ohio State University

I recently canned tomatoes but had one little jar that I didn't have room for in the water bath. So I decided to just refrigerate it. All I've done to those tomatoes is blanch them -- haven't cooked them, stewed them, done anything else. There is some lemon juice in them. They've been refrigerated since I packed them -- how long will they be okay to use?

They'll last about the same length of time that a can of tomatoes from the grocery store will last once you open it and put it in the fridge. I'd guess a couple of weeks, but that depends on how cold your fridge is.

After I removed the jars of tomatoes from the canner, the jars had lost a lot of liquid and were about half-empty. What happened? Are they safe?

There are several possible causes:

1. The food was not heated prior to filling (Raw pack method) -
2. The food was packed too tightly (or loosely) in the jars
3. All air bubbles were not removed prior to sealing the lids and rings on the jars
4. The jars were not completely covered with water (applies to a water bath canner only)
5. Starchy foods, such as corn, peas or lima beans, absorbed all the liquid. Use more liquid with these starchy vegetables.
6. The jars were filled too full.
7. Fluctuating pressure in the pressure canner. Let pressure return to zero gradually, avoiding the sudden release of pressure through the vent. Do not hasten the cooling with cold water.

As long as the jars remained sealed, they'll be ok, but they should be checked more frequently and used up first!

What did I do wrong if my jars spoil?

Tomatoes are a borderline acid / low acid fruit - adding lemon juice helps, processing at least 35 minutes in the water bath canner, or better still, using a pressure canner almost eliminates spoilage. If you don't have a pressure canner, you must boost the acid level of the sauce, by adding 2 tablespoons of lemon juice or 1/2 teaspoon of citric acid per quart of sauce.

Summary – 2008 Cost of Making Homemade Canned Tomatoes - makes 7 quart jars, 32 oz each*

Item	Quantity	Cost in 2008	Source	Subtotal
Tomatoes	20 - 25 lbs (to make about 16 cups of prepared tomato)	free from the garden, or \$0.50 cents at a PYO	Garden	\$0.00
Canning jars (quart size, wide mouth), includes lids and rings	7 jars	\$8.00/dozen	Grocery stores, like Publix, Kroger and Safeway and local "big box" stores; sometimes Big Lots and even hardware stores	\$4.50
Lemon juice	14 Tablespoons	\$0.50	Grocery store	\$0.50
Total				\$5.00 total or about \$0.72 per jar INCLUDING the jars - which you can reuse!

* - This assumes you already have the pots, pans, ladles, and reusable equipment.
Note that you can reuse the jars! Many products are sold in jars that will take the lids and rings for canning. For example, Classico Spaghetti sauce is in quart sized jars that work with Ball and Kerr lids and rings. **Caution:** the Classico's manufacturer does not recommend reuse of their jars: [see what they have to say on this page.](http://www.pickyourown.org/PYO.php?URL=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.classico.com/flavors/faqs.aspx)
(<http://www.pickyourown.org/PYO.php?URL=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.classico.com/flavors/faqs.aspx>)

See: Canning Basics – Hot Water Bath for more details <http://www.scribd.com/doc/55051516/Canning-Basics-%E2%80%93-Hot-Water-Bath>

Enjoy & Have Fun ;-}

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