BASIC TOMATO SAUCE: FREEZING OR CANNING

This time of year, gardens are bursting with juicy ripe tomatoes and it's easy to end up with more than you can handle. Here are two ways to keep those tomatoes last into the cold winter months. This basic recipe keeps the flavor neutral so that your tomatoes can be used in a variety of different ways. You can add seasonings like garlic, onion, and herbs when you decide to use it.



INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

- *15 pounds ripe tomatoes*
- *1/4 to 1/2 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice or red wine vinegar*
- *2 teaspoons salt (optional)*
- *6 1/2-quart or larger Dutch oven or stockpot*
- *Knife and cutting board*
- *Food processor or blender (optional- tomatoes can be chopped by hand)*
- *6 sterilized pint jars for canning, or containers for freezing*

1. Boil a pot of water and prepare the ice bath. Bring a large 6-quart stockpot of water to a boil over high heat. Fill a large bowl with ice and water and set this next to the stove.

2. Prepare the tomatoes for blanching. Core out the stems from the tomatoes and slice a shallow "X" in the bottom of each fruit.

3. Blanch the tomatoes to peel them. Working in batches, drop several tomatoes into the boiling water. Cook until you see the skin starting to wrinkle and split, 45 to 60 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, lift the tomatoes out and place them in the ice water. Continue with the rest of the tomatoes, transferring the cooled tomatoes from the ice water to another large bowl as they cool. Pour the blanching water from the pot (no need to dry).

4. Peel the tomatoes. When finished blanching, use your hands or a paring knife to strip the skins from the tomatoes. Discard the water used to boil the tomatoes.

5. Coarsely chop the tomatoes. Working in batches, place the tomatoes in the food processor fitted with the blade attachment. Pulse a few times for chunkier sauce, or process until smooth for a puréed sauce. Alternatively, chop the tomatoes by hand. For a very chunky sauce, skip this step entirely and let the tomatoes break down into large pieces as they cook. Transfer each batch into the empty stockpot.

6. Simmer the tomatoes. Bring the tomato sauce to a simmer over medium heat. Continue simmering, stirring occasionally, until the sauce reaches the taste and consistency you like, 30 to 90 minutes.

7. Stir in the lemon juice and salt. Stir in at least 1/4 cup of the lemon juice or vinegar and salt. A 1/4 cup is necessary to ensure a safe level of acidity for canning. Taste and add more lemon juice or vinegar as needed. Note: do not alter the recipe if you plan to process can the sauce.

8. Preserving Option 1: Freezing

Let the sauce cool, then transfer it into freezer containers or freezer bags. Sauce can be kept frozen for at least 3 months before starting to develop freezer burn or off-flavors.

9. Preserving Option 2: Canning

Transfer the hot sauce into sterilized canning jars. Top with new, sterilized lids, and screw on the rings until finger tight. Process in a pot of boiling water for 30 minutes. Let cool completely on the counter — if any lids do not seal completely (the lids will invert and form a vacuum seal), refrigerate that sauce and use it within a week or freeze it for up to 3 months or completely reprocess that jar. Canned tomato sauce can be stored in the pantry for at least 1 year.

Marion County Public Health Department
NUTRITION SERVICES

CANNING STEP-BY-STEP

If you are new to canning, it can be intimidating. Here are step-by-step instructions and tips.

CANNING SUPPLIES (THESE ITEMS CAN BE PURCHASED SEPARATELY OR IN A KIT)

- *A water bath canner: basically a large pot that will be filled with boiling water- that the jars will be placed in*
- *Jar rack: holds the cans in place in the water bath canner*
- *Jar lifter: used to place the jars into the boiling water lift the jars out safely*
- *Funnel: keeps the jar rims clean when you pour*
- *Tool for measuring headspace and removing bubbles. One end of this tool helps release bubbles in the jars and the other end measures the headspace between the rim and jar contents*
- *A magnetic lid lifter often comes with canning kits; however it isn't an essential tools*
- *Canning jars with clean, rust free, lids and rims. Rims can be washed and re-used, but lids cannot.*

Step 1: Fill the water bath canner and heat the water to a boil. Make sure you put the rack in the bottom of the canner before filling it. The water level needs to be 1-2 inches above the jars.

Step 2: Wash your jars, lids and rims in hot soapy water. (Because the recipe calls for a processing time over 10 minutes, no need to sterilize the jars).

Step 3: Add the sauce. Use the canning funnel to add the sauce to the jars. Use the measuring tool to ensure you have ½ inch of headspace between the sauce and top of the jar.

Step 4: Remove air bubbles. Insert the flat end of the measuring tool down the side of each jar. Move it in towards the center of the jar. This will remove any air bubbles that might have formed. Repeat this 2 or 3 times around the inside of the jar.

Step 5: Clean the jar rims. Use a damp paper towel or cloth to wipe the rims of the jars. Any sauce left on the rims can keep the jars from sealing properly.

Step 6: Place a clean lid on top of the jars. If you have one, use the magnetic lid lifter to place the lids.

Step 7: Place and tighten the rims on the jar lids. Screw the bands down and tighten them just until you first feel resistance--this is called "fingertip tight". Don't over-tighten.

Step 8: Put jars in canner of boiling water. Use the jar lifter to pick up the jars and place them in the canner. Ensure the jars remain upright.

Step 9: Bring the water back to a rolling boil. Boil for 30 minutes.

Step 10: Remove the jars using the jar lifter and let cool completely on the counter. Test each jar to ensure proper seal (press the lid with a fingertip- it should not "pop" or snap).

FOR MORE CANNING RESOURCES VISIT:

https://www.eatright.org/homefoodsafety/four-steps/cook/home-canning-safety-tips
https://www.fda.gov/media/107843/download
https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/communication/home-canning-and-botulism.html





