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TOMATOES

Look for tomatoes which are well formed, smooth, well ripened, and reasonably free from blemishes.

Avoid overripe and bruised tomatoes, tomatoes with sunburn (green or yellow areas near the stem scar) and growth cracks (deep cracks around the stem scar). Avoid decayed tomatoes which will have soft, water-soaked spots, depressed areas, or surface mold.

A bushel of tomatoes weighs about 53 pounds and will yield approximately 18 quarts of canned tomatoes.

CANNING TOMATOES

Wash tomatoes. Loosen skins by dipping tomatoes into boiling water for about $\frac{1}{2}$ minute; then into cold water. Skins should slip off easily. Remove stem scar and core. Leave tomatoes whole or cut into halves or quarters.

RAW PACK Pack tomatoes to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of top pressing gently to fill spaces. Tomatoes will make their own juice. Do not add water as it dilutes the flavor. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt to pint jars; 1 teaspoon to quarts. Remove air bubbles by running spatula or knife between jar and food. Adjust jar lids.

Process in boiling water bath canner (212° F.).

Pint jars 35 minutes

Quart jars 45 minutes

HOT PACK Bring tomatoes to a boil; stir to keep from sticking. Pack boiling hot tomatoes in jars leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch headspace. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt to pint jars; 1 teaspoon to quarts. Remove air bubbles by running spatula or knife between jar and food. Adjust jar lids.

Process in boiling water bath canner (212° F.).

Pint jars 10 minutes

Quart jars 10 minutes

CANNING TOMATO JUICE

Wash tomatoes, remove stem scar and core, and cut into pieces. Simmer until softened; stir frequently to keep from sticking. Run through food mill, colander, or strainer. Add 1 teaspoon salt for each quart of juice. Bring juice to a boil.

Pour boiling hot juice into jars leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch headspace. Adjust jar lids.

Process in boiling water bath canner (212° F.).

Pint jars 10 minutes

Quart jars 10 minutes

Tomatoes have always been classified as an acid food which can be safely processed in a boiling water bath canner. Some newer varieties of tomatoes are less acid and there is some question as to whether they are sufficiently acid to prevent bacterial growth. Some authorities have recommended adding small amounts of acid ($\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon lemon juice or $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon citric acid per pint) to increase the acidity. A small amount of granulated sugar may be added to offset the tarter flavor.

FREEZING TOMATOES

It's still not possible to freeze fresh whole tomatoes for fresh use. Freezing and subsequent thawing cause loss of the characteristic texture of the fresh tomato. Stewed tomatoes and tomato juice can be frozen satisfactorily.

To freeze stewed tomatoes, wash, remove stem scar and core, and halve or quarter. Cover and cook until tender, about 10 to 20 minutes. Set pan containing tomatoes in cold water to cool or pack tomatoes into containers and set the filled containers in cold water. Leave $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches headspace--the smaller amount for wide topped pint containers; the larger amount for narrow topped quart containers.

Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

To freeze tomato juice, prepare juice as for canning. Add 1 teaspoon salt for each quart juice. Pour into containers leaving headspace as above. Seal. Freeze; store at 0° F. or below.

The small amount of salt used adds flavor but may be omitted.

Information adapted from USDA Home and Garden Bulletins by Jo Anne Barton, Extension Specialist, Foods and Nutrition.

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