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Do You Have Tips For Safe Home Canning Of Tomatoes And Salsa?

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A weekly question/answer column

Do You Have Tips For Safe Home Canning Of Tomatoes And Salsa?

Jean Alder answers:*

The two most common ways that people preserve tomatoes are canning or making salsa. Tomatoes may be canned as juice or as whole tomatoes or used in a variety of recipes. Here are some tips:

- To make tomato juice, you need about 23 pounds of tomatoes per canner load of 7 quarts. Wash, remove the stems and trim off bruised or discolored portions. To prevent the juice from separating, quickly cut about 1 pound of fruit into quarters and put directly into saucepan. Heat immediately to boiling while crushing. Continue to slowly add and crush freshly cut tomato quarters to the boiling mixture. Make sure the mixture boils constantly and vigorously while you add the remaining tomatoes. Simmer 5 minutes after you add all the pieces.
- If you are not concerned about juice separation, simply slice or quarter tomatoes into a large saucepan. Crush, heat and simmer for 5 minutes before juicing. Press both types of heated juice through a sieve or food mill to remove skins and seeds.
- There are specific food mills that separate the seeds and skin from the pulp, putting the seeds and skins out one side and the nice pulpy juice out the other. These strainers are not expensive and well worth the money if you plan to can a lot of tomatoes, apples or other fruit purees.
- After you have separated the seeds and skin from the pulp, put the juice back in the pot and bring it to a boil and then put it into warm quart or pint jars. Add lemon juice, citric acid or vinegar to those jars before you process them in a boiling water bath.
- The acidification of tomatoes is important. The tomatoes that are raised today commercially or in a home garden do not have as much acid in them as in our grandmothers' day. To insure safe acidity in whole, crushed or juiced tomatoes, add 2 tablespoons bottled lemon juice or one-half teaspoon citric acid per quart of tomatoes. You may also add one-fourth cup of vinegar as an alternative. For a pint, use one tablespoon bottled lemon juice, one-fourth teaspoon of citric acid or two tablespoons of vinegar.
- For a boiling water bath at 3,000 to 6,000 ft process pints for 45 minutes and quarts for 50 minutes (1,000 to 3,000 ft, pints for 40 minutes, quarts for 45 minutes; above 6,000 ft, pints for 50 minutes, quarts for 55 minutes.). If you are using a dial gauge pressure canner at 4,000 to 6,000 ft, process pints at 8 pounds for 20 minutes or quarts at 13 pounds pressure for 15 minutes (2,000 to 4,000 ft, pints 7 lbs for 20 minutes and quarts 12 pounds for 15 minutes; 6,000 to 8,000 ft, pints 9 lbs for 20 minutes and quarts 14 lbs for 15 minutes). If you are using a weighted gauge canner, process pints at 10 pounds

pressure for 20 minutes, and quarts at 15 pounds pressure for 15 minutes.

- Crushed tomatoes, which can be used later in stews, soups or chili, are also popular. Blanch tomatoes in boiling water for 30 seconds, then cut out the cores and remove the skin. Put them back in a pot and bring them to a boil and boil for 5 minutes. Process them in a boiling water bath, pints for 45 minutes (3,000 to 6,000 ft), quarts for 55 minutes (1,000 to 3,000 ft, pints for 40 minutes and quarts for 50 minutes; above 6,000 ft, pints for 50 minutes and quarts for 60 minutes). If you process crushed tomatoes in a dial gauge pressure canner, do pints at 8 pounds pressure for 20 minutes and quarts at 13 pounds pressure for 15 minutes (1,000 to 3,000 ft, pints at 7 lbs for 20 minutes and quarts at 12 lbs for 15 minutes; 6,000 to 8,000 ft, pints at 9 lbs for 20 minutes and quarts at 14 lbs for 15 minutes). If you use a weighted gauge pressure canner, process pints at 10 pounds pressure for 20 minutes and quarts at 15 pounds pressure for 15 minutes.
- For traditional cold pack tomatoes just peel them, remove the cores and squish them into the bottle the way grandma use to do. Process them in a boiling water bath (3,000 to 6,000 ft) 95 minutes for quarts or pints (1,000 to 3,000 ft for 90 minutes; above 6,000 ft for 100 minutes). In a dial gauge pressure canner used at 4,000 to 6,000 ft, process pints at 8 pounds pressure for 40 minutes, for quarts, 13 pounds pressure for 25 minutes (2,000 to 4,000 ft, pints at 7 lbs for 40 minutes and quarts at 12 lbs for 25 minutes; 6,000 to 8,000 ft, pints at 9 lbs for 40 minutes and quarts at 14 lbs for 25 minutes). Of course each time you fill a pint or quart jar of tomatoes, before you process them, add the acid either lemon juice, citric acid or vinegar.

Making salsa with your tomatoes is also popular. Canned salsa recipes need to have a tested, approved processing time. It is not safe to take a wonderful home-made, home-developed salsa recipe and then decide on a processing time. If you have such a wonderful recipe, I recommend you freeze and not can it.

Here is a tested salsa recipe for canning.

Chili Salsa

5 pounds of tomatoes

2 pounds of chili peppers

1 pound onions

1 cup of vinegar

3 teaspoons of salt

1/2 teaspoon of pepper

Yields: 6 to 8 pints of salsa

It is preferable that the chili peppers be roasted and peeled before they are used in this salsa but you can use chili peppers, the variety of your choice, without peeling them. Prepare the chili peppers. Wash the tomatoes, dip in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds until skins split, then dip in cold water, slip off skins, and remove cores. Coarsely chop tomatoes and combine chopped peppers and onions and remaining ingredients in large saucepan. Heat to boil, and simmer 10 minutes. Fill jars and leave one-half inch headspace. Adjust lids and process. Process pints at this altitude (1,000 to 6,000 ft) for 20 minutes (above 6,000 feet for 25 minutes) in a boiling water bath canner.

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