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How to Make Home and Can Tomato Soup and Tomato-Basil Soup at Home – Easily

Making and canning your own tomato soup is also quite easy. And imagine how much better it will taste in the winter, with the flavor of home grown tomatoes! Just scroll down this page to see how to do it, in easy steps and completely illustrated. I like it with the basil, but you can also make plain tomato soup, too. The only special equipment you need is a pressure canner and canning jars with new lids

Ingredients

Yield 4 pints of soup

- **Tomatoes (see step one)** - about 4.5 quarts of chopped peeled tomatoes
- 3 cups of chopped onions
- 2 cups of chopped celery
- 2 teaspoons of finely minced or crushed garlic
- 1/2 cup finely chopped fresh basil, or 1/4 cup dried basil
- 1/4 cup lemon juice (see step 9 for details)
- 1 cup brown sugar or honey (optional. Diabetics may want to use 1 cup of Splenda)
- 0 to 2 teaspoons salt (to suit your taste - optional)

Equipment

- **At least 1 large pot**; I prefer 16 to 20 quart Teflon lined pots for easy cleanup.

- **Large spoons and ladles**
- **Pressure Canner** - [see this page for more information](#)).
- **Canning jars** (Grocery stores, like Publix, Kroger, Safeway carry them, as do some big box stores - about \$7 per dozen 8 ounce jars including the lids and rings)
- **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 funnel** (\$2 at Target, other big box stores, and often grocery stores; and available online - see this page) or order it as part of the kit with the jar grabber.
- **Jar grabber** (to pick up the hot jars)- Big box stores and grocery stores sometimes carry them; and it is available online - see this page. It's a tremendously useful to put jars in the canner and take the hot jars out (without scalding yourself!). The kit sold below has everything you need, and at a pretty good price:



Optional stuff:

- **Lid lifter** (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sterilize them. (\$2 at big box stores or it comes in the kit at left)

Step 1 - Selecting the tomatoes

It's fun to go pick your own and you can obviously get better quality tomatoes!

Wash, remove stems, and trim off bruised or discolored portions of the tomatoes. Generally, you'll need about 2 quarts of raw tomatoes to make 1 quart of chopped, peeled tomatoes, and each quart of the prepared tomatoes makes about 1 pint of soup. A bushel of tomatoes weighs 53 pounds.

At right is a picture of tomatoes from my garden - they are so much better than anything from the grocery store. And if you don't have enough, a pick-you-own farm is the place to go! At right are 4 common varieties that will work:

Top left: Beefsteak

Top right: Lemon Boy, yellow

Bottom left: Roma, paste-type

Bottom right: Better Boy



The picture at right shows the best variety of tomato to use: Roma; also called paste tomatoes. They have fewer seeds, thicker, meatier walls, and less water. And that means thicker sauce in less cooking time!



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

Caution: Do not can tomatoes from dead or frost-killed vines. Green tomatoes are more acidic than ripened fruit and can be canned safely, also.

Step 2 - Dice the other ingredients

Finely chop, dice or use your food processor on the onions, celery, basil and garlic

Step 3 - Wash the jars and lids

Now's a good time to get the jars ready, so you won't be rushed later. The dishwasher is fine for the jars; especially if it has a "sterilize" cycle, the water bath processing



will sterilize them as well as the contents! If you don't have a dishwasher with a sterilize cycle, you can wash the containers in hot, soapy water and rinse, then sterilize the jars by boiling them 10 minutes, and keep the jars in hot water until they are used.

NOTE: If unsterilized jars are used, the product should be processed for 5 more minutes. However, since this additional processing can result in a poor set (runny jam), it's better to sterilize the jars.

Put the lids into a pan of hot, but not quite boiling water (that's what the manufacturer's recommend) for 5 minutes, and use the magnetic "lid lifter wand" to pull them out. Leave the jars in the dishwasher on "heated dry" until you are ready to use them. Keeping them hot will prevent the jars from breaking when you fill them with the hot jam.



Lids: put the lids into a pan of hot water for at least several minutes; to soften up the gummed surface and clean the lids.

Step 4 - Cut up the tomatoes and quickly put into the pot

To prevent the juice from separating, quickly cut about 1 pound of tomatoes at a time into quarters and put directly into a saucepan on the stove. (If you are not concerned about juice separation, simply slice or quarter all of the tomatoes at once into a large saucepan.)



Step 5 - Heat to boiling and keep adding tomatoes

Heat immediately to boiling while crushing (I use a potato masher). Continue to slowly add and crush freshly cut tomato quarters to the boiling mixture; repeating steps 4 and 5. Make sure the mixture boils constantly and vigorously while you add the remaining tomatoes.



Step 6 - Add the other ingredients and continue cooking

Add the onions, celery, basil and garlic. Simmer for 15 minutes

Step 7 - Sieve

Press the heated tomato soup through a sieve or food mill to remove skins and seeds. I use the Foley food mill, shown at right. You could also use a blender or food processor instead.



There is also a VERY nice, versatile strainer pictured at below! Click on the links there or see the bottom of this page for more information and to order! The VillaWare model can handle higher volumes than a Foley food mill (without giving you cramps!) And yes, you can use your juicer, if it can handle boiling hot liquids!

To see a greater variety of [strainers in other types, sizes, and prices, click here!](#)

Step 8 - Heat the strained tomato soup again

Heat the soup again to boiling. Now add the salt and sugar/honey and/or Splenda. At this point you may have a soup that resembles a thick juice. If that is fine, carry on to step 9. If you want it thicker, you can either simmer it, while frequently stirring to avoid burning it, until it is thick enough, or, better yet, use a crock pot to reduce the volume with less risk of burning. Which setting (low, medium or high) on your particular crockpot works best is something you will have to experiment with. I start on high until it is bubbling, then turn it down to medium or low, just to keep it gently simmering. It then takes a few hours to reduce it to the thickness I prefer!

Step 9 - Fill the jars and put the lid and rings on



Acidification: To ensure safe acidity in whole, crushed, or juiced tomatoes, add two tablespoons of bottled lemon juice or 1/2 teaspoon of citric acid per quart of tomatoes. For pints, use one tablespoon bottled lemon juice or 1/4 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 a 5 percent acidity vinegar per quart may be used instead of lemon juice or citric acid. However, vinegar may cause undesirable flavor changes.

Fill jars with hot tomato soup, leaving 1/2-inch headspace.

Step 10 - Put the jars in the canner and the lid on the canner (but still vented)

Using the jar tongs, put the jars on the rack inside the canner. By now the water level has probably boiled down to 3 inches. If it is lower than that, add more hot tap water to the canner. When all the jars that the canner will hold are in, put on the lid and twist it into place, but leave the weight off (or valve open, if you have that type of pressure canner).



Step 11 - Let the canner vent steam for 10 minutes

Put the heat on high and let the steam escape through the vent for 10 minutes to purge the airspace inside the canner.

Step 12 - Put the weight on and let the pressure build

After 10 minutes of venting, put the weight on and close any openings to allow the pressure to build to 11 to 13 pounds in a dial-type gauge canner - shown in the photos (or at 10 to 15 pounds pressure in a weighted gauge canner).



Step 13 - Process for the required time

Once the gauge hits 11 pounds (or 10 pounds in a weighted gauge type), start your timer going and process following to the instructions in your pressure canner's manual for vegetable soups, if there isn't instruction for tomato soup.

The Ball Blue Book recommends processing at 10 pounds of pressure for 20 minutes, for a similar recipe (Spicy tomato soup). The National Home Food Preservation Center does not have a recommended processing time or recipe for tomato soup, so I use the Ball Blue Book number: 20 minutes.

All agree that a pressure canner is required, because tomatoes are borderline as an acid food, anyway, and we add some non acid foods. It would be too risk to use a water bath canner, unless you simply made plain [tomato juice \(see this page\)](#), including acidifying it, and boiled it down more.

It is important to learn how to operate your pressure canner by reading the owner's manual that came with your particular canner. If you cannot find your owner's manual, you can obtain find one online: Here is where to find some common manufacturer's manuals:

- [Presto canner manuals](#)

or by contacting the company that made your canner. Give the model number to the manufacturer, and they will send you the right manual. [Click here for more information about pressure canners and a variety of models you can order.](#)

Step 14 - Remove the jars

Lift the jars out of the water and let them cool on a wooden cutting board or a towel, without touching or bumping them in a draft-free place (usually takes overnight), here they won't be bumped. You can then remove the rings if you like, but if you leave them on, at least loosen them quite a bit, so they don't rust in place due to trapped moisture. Once the jars are cool, you can check that they are sealed verifying that the lid has been sucked



down. Just press in the center, gently, with your finger. If it pops up and down (often making a popping sound), it is not sealed. If you put the jar in the refrigerator right away, you can still use it. Some people replace the lid and reprocess the jar, then that's a bit iffy. If you heat the contents back up, re-jar them (with a new lid) and the full time in the canner, it's usually ok. You're done!

Once cooled, they're ready to store. I find they last up to 12 months. But after about 6 to 8 months, they get darker in color and start to get runny. They still are safe to eat, but the flavor and texture aren't as good. So eat them in the first 6 months after you prepare them!

Other Equipment

From left to right:

1. Jar lifting tongs to pick up hot jars
2. Lid lifter - to remove lids from the pot of boiling water (sterilizing)
3. Lid - disposable - you may only use them once
4. Ring - holds the lids on the jar until after the jars cool - then you don't need them.
5. Canning jar funnel - to fill the jars and keep the rims clean.

