

Skill Level: BEGINNER These how-to's are suitable for people who are new to DIY and who have a basic knowledge of tools. If you've painted a room or re-potted a plant, you can probably complete one of these projects by yourself in a few hours or less.

✓ MATERIALS

- Tomatoes or Other Ingredients
- Lemon Juice and Salt
- Canning Recipe
- Boiling Water Canner or Deep Saucepan with Lid and Rack—for jams, jellies, salsa, pickles and fruits
- Steam Pressure Canner—for meats and vegetables
- Glass Preserving Jars (with new lids and bands)
- Large and Small Saucepans
- Basket Rack
- Wooden Spoon
- Cloth Towel
- Cooking Thermometer
- Non-Metallic Spatula
- Ladle
- Funnel
- Labels
- Marker

Many people are taking up gardening, and an excellent way to preserve the harvest is by canning. Canning is easier than you may think, and can be a fun project for the entire family.



PREPARATION

When food is exposed to air, it's also exposed to bacteria that can cause the food to spoil. Boiling food in a glass canning jar kills bacteria that may have come in contact with the food, and also creates an air tight seal to prevent new bacteria from getting into the jar, allowing food to stay fresh and edible longer. Following are instructions for canning tomatoes, one of the most popular of home-canned foods, but many other fruits, vegetables and meats can be preserved following similar steps. To prepare for canning foods at home:

- 01 Read the canner manufacturer's instructions carefully and follow the guidelines for recipe preparation, jar size, canning method and processing time.
- 02 Assemble the required foods, materials and tools. You can find canning kits at Lowe's.
 - **TIP:** For low-acid foods, like meats and vegetables, use a steam pressure canner and a similar canning process.



PACKING TOMATOES

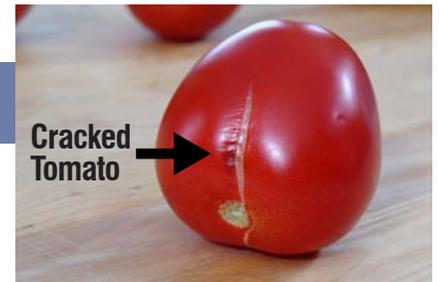
- 01 Inspect the jars for nicks, cracks, uneven rims or sharp edges that may prevent sealing or cause breakage. Also inspect the new canning lids to make sure they are free of dents. The seal should be even and complete, and the bands should fit tightly.
- 02 Wash the jars, lids and bands in hot, soapy water. Rinse well, dry the bands and set aside.

IMPORTANT

Before you begin canning tomatoes or other foods, read and follow the tested preserving recipe. Also, read and follow manufacturer's instructions for the canner, preserving jars and lids you select.

PACKING TOMATOES (cont.)

- 03** Heat the jars and lids in a saucepot of simmering water at 180° F. Do not boil the lids. Allow the jars and lids to remain in hot water until they're ready for use, removing them one at a time as needed.
- 04** Fill the boiling water canner half-full with hot water, elevate the rack in the canner, and put the canner lid in place.
- 05** Heat the water in the canner to about 180° F and maintain the temperature at a simmer until ready for processing.
- 06** Select fresh tomatoes at their peak of quality and flavor, free of cracks and spots. Prepare only enough foods for one canner load.
- 07** Wash the tomatoes and drain them.
- 08** Blanch the tomatoes to remove the skin.
- Blanching is the process of boiling food then placing in ice water to remove the skin.
 1. Place the tomatoes in the basket rack and lower into a large saucepot of boiling water.
 2. Boil the tomatoes 30 to 60 seconds or until skins start to crack.
 3. Remove the tomatoes from the boiling water and immediately dunk them into ice water.
 - Allow the tomatoes to cool in the ice water.
- 09** Remove the tomatoes from the ice water, then remove the skins, and trim away any green areas and cut out the cores. Leave the tomatoes whole or cut them into halves or quarters.
- 10** Place the prepared tomatoes in a large saucepan, adding just enough water to cover them, and boil the tomatoes gently for 5 minutes.
- 11** Use a jar lifter to remove a canning jar and set it on a towel.
- 12** Add lemon juice and salt to each jar:
- 1 tablespoon of bottled lemon juice and ½ teaspoon of salt to each pint jar.
 - 2 tablespoons of bottled lemon juice and 1 teaspoon of salt to each quart jar.
- 13** Carefully pack tomatoes into the hot jar, leaving about ½" space below the top rim.
- 14** Ladle boiling water or cooking liquid over the tomatoes in the jars, again leaving about ½" space below the top rim.



PACKING TOMATOES (cont.)

- 17 Once the jar is filled, slide a nonmetallic spatula between the tomatoes and jar, gently pressing back on the tomatoes to release trapped air bubbles. Repeat this procedure two or three times around the inside of the jar.
 - **CAUTION:** The jars may be hot.
- 18 Wipe the rim and threads of the jar with a clean, damp cloth.
- 19 Remove the lid from the hot water and center on the jar. Screw the band down evenly and firmly until it is fingertip tight.
- 20 As you fill each jar, set it onto the elevated rack in the boiling water canner.
 - Remember to maintain water in the canner at a simmer temperature of 180° F.

CANNING TOMATOES

- 01 Once all the jars are filled and placed onto the rack, lower the rack into the canner. The water level should be about 1-2" above the jars.
 - Add boiling water to the canner as needed to ensure that the water level covers the two-piece jar caps on the jars by 1-2".



- 02 Place the lid on the canner and bring the water to a boil. Recommended processing time begins after the water comes to a rolling boil:
 - Pints: 40 minutes
 - Quarts: 45 minutes
 - Processing time for steam pressure canners is different from boiling water canners. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for recommended times.



- 03 When processing time is complete, turn off the heat and carefully remove the canner lid.

- 04 Allow the canner to cool 5 minutes before removing the jars and setting them upright, 1-2" apart, on a dry towel to cool.

- 05 Allow the jars to cool for 12 to 24 hours.

- 06 Once jars have cooled, check the lids for a tight seal by pressing on the center of each lid. If the center is pulled down and does not flex up and down, remove the band and gently try to lift the lid off with your fingertips. If the lid does not flex and you cannot easily lift it off, the lid has a good vacuum seal.
 - Jars *without* a secure seal can safely be reprocessed within 24 hours. Remove the lid and make sure there is no damage to the jar. If there is any damage, replace the jar and always start with a new lid. Then reprocess using the previous instructions.



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CANNING TOMATOES (cont.)

- 07 Wipe the lid and jar surface with a clean damp cloth to remove any food particles or residue.
- 08 Label the jars with the product and date, then store in a cool, dry, dark place. Home-canned tomatoes typically are good for about a year.



ENJOYING CANNED TOMATOES

- 01 Before opening canned tomatoes or other preserved foods for eating, examine the jar's lid for tightness and vacuum seal. If the lid's center is lower than the rim and pulled inward, it has a good seal.
- 02 Hold the jar at eye level and examine the outside of the jar, looking for moist or dried food seeping from the seal.
- 03 When opening the jar, listen for the sound of a pop, indicating that the seal held securely.
- 04 Once the lid is removed, look for any signs of discoloration on the food or under the lid. If found, don't eat the spoiled food.
- 05 If the food passes these tests, enjoy the flavors of your home-canned foods.



Canning is an easy way to preserve vegetables, fruits and other foods. It can also make a great gift for friends and family. If you'd like to learn how to can strawberry jam or learn about other household projects, visit Lowe.com/Videos.

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