

News Release From:
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For More Information Contact:
Janet M. Hackert,
Regional Nutrition and Health Education Specialist

Under Pressure to Can Tomatoes? – Learn How

By Janet Hackert, Regional Nutrition and Health Education Specialist
University of Missouri Extension

Did you plant a tomato garden hoping to have enough for eating but ended up feeling the pressure to find a way to preserve them? Canning tomatoes is one way to do this and pressure canning is an option for some forms of tomatoes. For others, boiling water canning is recommended. And for some, either canning method can be safely used. Learn how to can using the correct pressures and/or temperatures before you start.

The University of Missouri Extension publication, *Tantalizing Tomatoes GH1456*, gives step by step directions and recipes for a variety of tomato products. These products include tomatoes themselves whole, halved or crushed, packed in water, tomato juice and without added liquid. There are also directions for canning tomato sauce, juice and a tomato/vegetable juice blend. All of these can be canned in a pressure canner or boiling water canner. Tomato ketchup, salsas and tomato taco sauce should be canned in a boiling water canner. And Mexican tomato sauce and spaghetti sauce with or without meat must be pressure canned.

Although USDA recommendations must be followed precisely, there are some options within the recommended procedures. For example, whole or halved tomatoes packed in juice can be processed in a boiling water canner in either pints or quarts for 85 minutes at altitudes of 1000 feet or less. For altitudes of 1001 to 3000 feet, an extra 5 minutes for a total of 90 minutes is needed. That same product can also be pressure canned in pints or quarts. For either, if a dial gauge pressure canner is used and the elevation is 2000 feet or less, process for 40 minutes at 6 pounds of pressure OR 25 minutes at 11 pounds of pressure. On the other hand, if a weighted gauge canner will be used, and the elevation is 1000 feet or less, process the whole or halved tomatoes in juice for 40 minutes at 5 pounds OR 25 minutes at 10 pounds OR 15 minutes at 15 pounds. At elevations above 1000 feet, pressure can them for 40 minutes at 10 pounds OR 25 minutes at 15 pounds with a weighted gauge. Since pressures higher than 15 pounds are not recommended for use in home canning, only the weighted gauge canner at lower elevations has the third option.

Elevation does affect what pressure is needed for canning. At higher elevations, longer times are needed to reach the safe temperature needed to destroy disease-causing microorganisms. To find the elevation of a location, look at the last page of MU Extension guide [Before You Begin to Can Learn the Basics, GH1451](#). Or for other locations, go to the US Geological Society's search engine at <http://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=136:1:0:::> and type in your location. For recommended canning pressures at elevations higher than those mentioned above, visit <http://homefoodpreservation.org>.

Following the guidelines can be confusing, but are needed for safety's sake. Use the tables in the online pdf guide that can be found at <http://extension.missouri.edu> and search for Tantalizing Tomatoes. Or go to <http://homefoodpreservation.org> and search for the specific product you want to can.

For more information on canning tomatoes or any other topic, contact me, Janet Hackert, at 660-425-6434 or HackertJ@missouri.edu or your local University of Missouri Extension office.

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