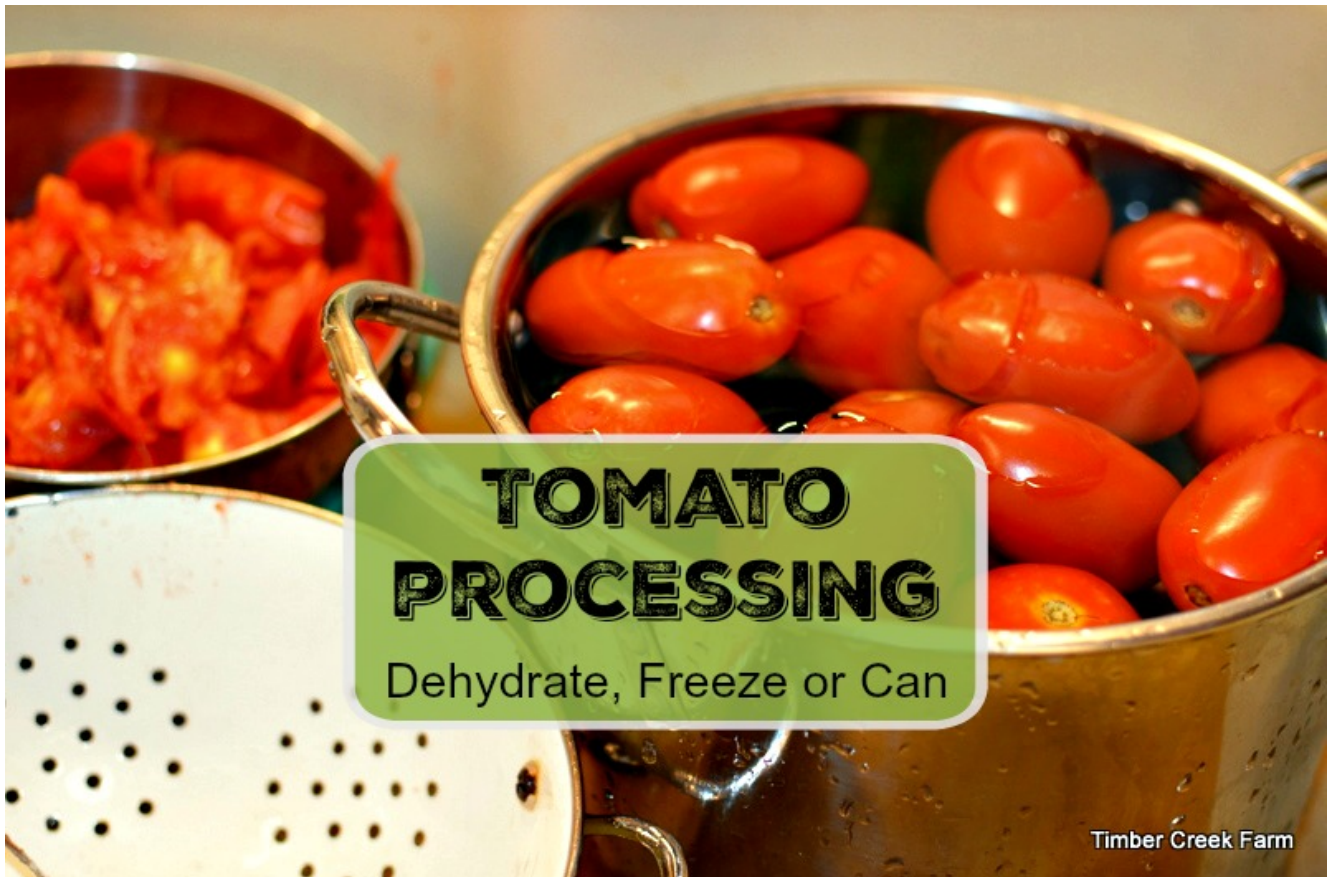


# Tomato Processing – Canning Freezing Dehydrating



Tomato processing is arguably one of the more common tasks that we do to prepare for storage. You can't beat the taste and texture of a fresh tomato. Preserving summer tomatoes is the best way to enjoy the flavor all year long. It's also nice that tomatoes, by themselves, are very simple to preserve by canning, dehydrating or freezing. Canning just tomatoes or an acidic salsa recipe is done simply by using the hot water bath method. Note that when other less acidic vegetables and meat are added, the safe canning method uses a pressure canner.

## **Obtaining the Tomatoes**

Fresh tomatoes can be as close as your back patio or yard. Grown in containers, raised beds and larger vegetable gardens,

folks have been growing tomatoes for generations. If gardening doesn't suit your interests, you can still participate in tomato processing. Visit the local farm or farmer's market in your area and buy what ever suits your needs. While we haven't found a good way to preserve the delicious slice of heirloom tomatoes for winter sandwiches, you can still preserve the flavor for other dishes. Half bushel quantities are good for starters if you haven't done tomato processing before. Most people will opt for a bushel or two, to preserve for sauce, salsa, pasta sauce or canned whole.



Any type of tomato can be processed to save for later. In my opinion, the best tomatoes for sauce are the Roma varieties. But I have canned a good bit of other varieties over the years.

# Preparing the Tomatoes

Step 1 is to wash, remove stems from the tomatoes. Boil a large pan of water. Have a large colander ready, in the sink.

Using this easy boiling water peeling method, remove the skins from the tomatoes. When water is boiling, drop a few tomatoes at a time, into the water. Wait three to five minutes. Remove the tomatoes with tongs or slotted spoon to the colander.

Plunge the hot tomatoes into a basin of cold water. Add ice cubes to chill the water. The skins of the tomatoes will crack and will easily peel off once cooled.

At this point I remove the cores and place them and the skins in another bowl. Save these scraps for later tomato processing.



# Easiest Tomato Processing Methods

The two easiest tomato processing methods are freezing and dehydrating. (for dehydrating you don't even need to remove the skin and core)

Dehydrating tomatoes is simple. Wash the tomatoes. Slice each one and lay in a single layer on the dehydrator tray. Follow the instructions for your dehydrator concerning tomato processing. Make sure the tomatoes are crisply dry before storing in air tight containers.



Freezing tomatoes is another quick method to storing tomatoes for later. Chop, slice, dice, or crush tomatoes. I prefer to store in 2 cup portions in freezer containers or freezer storage bags. Mark the date on each bag to make it easy to rotate your stockpile.

# Tomato Processing with Hot Water Bath Canning Method

Canning is a method for tomato processing that can be used for sauce, diced, chopped, salsa, pasta sauce, ketchup, and juice. Since tomatoes are a fruit and acidic in nature a hot water bath canning method can be used for tomato processing. Here are the steps to follow. The steps are similar to other [acidic fruit canning](#) procedures.

1. Sterilize the jars. [Pint and quart size canning jars](#) are appropriate for most tomato processing. You can simply run the empty jars through a cycle in your dishwasher or hand wash in soapy water, then place in boiling water for a few minutes. Use [tongs](#) to remove the jars from the water and set upside down on a clean towel until ready to fill.
2. Prepare the tomatoes for processing. Using the steps outlined above in preparing the tomatoes section, get the tomatoes ready for processing.
3. Once the tomatoes are peeled and cored, choose which way you want to can them. Slices, crushed, diced are all possible, including whole if you prefer. In addition you can cook the tomatoes down to a sauce consistency, and use an immersion blender to smooth out the sauce.
4. Turn the jars over, add a teaspoon of salt, to each jar for pints, and a tablespoon of salt for quarts. Also, add a teaspoon or tablespoon of lemon juice to each jar to increase acidity. Begin ladling the tomatoes or sauce into the jars leaving a half inch of space called head space, at the top. Having a set of [canning tools](#) is helpful at this point.
5. Using a flat knife or a canning air bubble remover, insert down the inside of the jar to remove bubbles. Wipe the jar rims with a wet paper towel or cloth. Apply the flat lids and the band rings. Finger tighten the

bands .



## The Canning Procedure

While you are getting the tomatoes ready, begin to heat the water in the hot water bath canner. It can take a while for that much water to come to a boil.

Once the water is boiling, place each jar down into the rack inside [the canner](#) so that the water covers each jar. Return the water to a boil before beginning the timing on processing.

Process pints for 40 minutes.

Process quarts for 45 minutes.

Other recipes such as salsa, pasta sauce, ketchup and other recipes should be canned according to the recipe suggestions.

Remove the jars using tongs and set on a tray or towel to cool. It's best to leave the jars without further handling for the next 12 hours or so, to make sure they seal completely. The top of the flat lid should be flat and have no bubble that can be pushed on, if the seal is good. Often you will hear a ping sound as the jars seal after leaving the canner. Sweet music to a canner's ears!

Before storing the jars in the pantry, mark the lids with the date and contents. Remove the band rings and store the jars in a single level- do not stack jars.

For complete and accurate up to date instructions on safe canning, consult the [USDA guidelines](#).



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# Oh Wait! What About those Skins and Cores?

These scraps can still be processed into usable food! Two methods I like to use are [Making Sauce from the Scrap Bowl](#), and [Making Tomato Powder](#). Check out both of these posts and find out just how much of each tomato can be used for food.

Pin this for later



