

Hotwater Bath Canning for Dummies

It is very simple to preserve all those tomatoes and fruit. Tomatoes are acidic and don't require an expensive pressure canner in order to stash away canned tomatoes for the winter.

Canning Tomatoes (Hot Water Bath Method)

Here's a photo-documentary of how I can tomatoes. You don't need a bushel of tomatoes for a canning batch. You can preserve one pint at a time, as they ripen. Hot water bath canning is the proper method for acidic foods, such as tomatoes, pickles, and fruit. Beans, beets, and non-acidic produce require pressure canning.

You will need some basic equipment that nearly everyone already has. You will need a pot with a lid that is deep enough to cover the jar size that you are using. You will need canning jars, or if you are using previously used jars, you can reuse the screw-on ring, but will need new lids (Never use old Lids). You will need tongs for handling the hot jars, a large spoon, a sauce pan, and a paring knife.

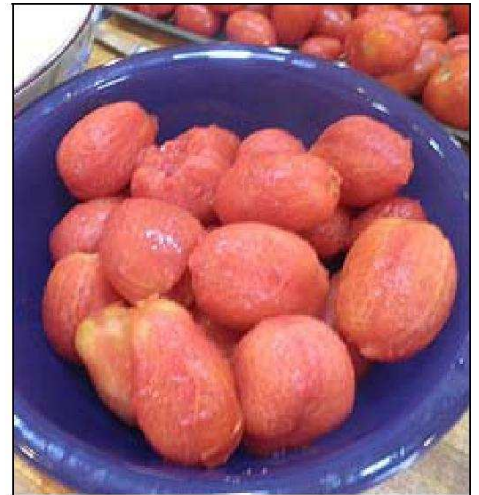


Step 1: Prepare the hot water bath: Fill the large pot with enough water to cover the number of canning jars you will be canning at one time. I usually fill the jars with water, place them in the pot, then add water to cover them by about 1/2". I then remove the jars with water inside, and whatever is left in the pot is the right amount. Bring the pot of water to a rolling boil, and lower the heat to a low simmer. If you are using a stock pot, put a dish towel into the pot and use a wooden spoon to spread it over the bottom. This is to prevent the jars from breaking from the hot spot where the flame contacts the pot. Canners have a disk in the bottom to keep the jars off the bottom of the pot. In a smaller pan, fill with water about 2" deep, or enough to submerge your tomatoes in boiling water.

Dip the jars into the boiling water to sterilize them using the tongs to hold the hot jars. (BBQ tongs will work if you don't have jar tongs). Rinse the lids in a saucepan of hot water UNDER 180 degrees F. Do Not Boil



Step 2: Removing the tomato skins: Pierce the skin of the tomatoes with a paring knife. Using a large Spoon or a ladle, dip the tomato into the boiling water for 10 to 15 seconds, rolling it around so all sides are exposed to the boiling water. As soon as you see the skin wrinkle or split, remove the tomato and the skin should easily pull off the tomato by gripping the skin with a paring knife and gently pulling it, like you were peeling a peach.



Step 3: Removing Seeds and Pulp: I like my canned tomatoes without seeds, but that is a choice, and not a requirement. I prefer Roma tomatoes for canning, but again that's a choice. Cut the stem end off the tomato and cut the tomato in half and for larger tomatoes in quarters. Then with your thumb, remove the seed and pulp, leaving only the meat.



Step 4: Filling the Canning Jar: After you have sterilized the jar (Step 1), cut the tomato in half (or quarters depending on the size), and carefully removed the seeds (Step 3), push the tomato into the jar. Continue until the jar is tightly packed within ½" from the top, making sure that there are no major air gaps, by pushing a plastic debubbler, or a kitchen knife inside the jar to remove air bubbles. Finally, clean off the top of the jar to insure a good seal for the lid.



Step 5: Hot-Water-Bath Canning: After the jars are filled, turn up the heat to medium under the large pot of water from Step 1, dip the lids in the boiling water to sterilize them, and place them on the jars of filled tomatoes. Hand tighten the rings on the jar over the sterilized lid.



I always place a dishtowel in the boiling water so the jars are not sitting directly on the pan surface. This avoids thermal shock. With the tongs, place the jars into the hot water bath. Cover the Pot, and bring to a boil. Once the water starts to boil, let the jars sit 30-35 minutes in the boiling water. Then remove them with the tongs, and let them cool on a cutting board or cooling rack.

Step 6: Cooling and insuring a proper seal: Within 5 to 10 minutes you will hear the lids pop. If you are concerned about a proper seal, simply press on the center of the lid. If it is sucked down, you have a proper seal. If the lid moves when you press on it then the jar is not properly sealed. If this is your first attempt at canning, you will find it is very easy and you will definitely know if you are successful by checking the lid for movement.

Good Luck and Happy Canning !

