

# Preserving Traditions Instructor's Guide: Tomato Canning Workshop

Canning can kill people if not done properly. If you've not canned before, or only canned once or twice, I suggest getting an expert to lead this workshop.

## Goals

At the end of the workshop, participants will

- Know what foods can be safely water-bath canned
- Know the risks of home-canned foods and how to avoid them
- Process their own raw tomatoes into one quart of hot-packed, water-bath-canned tomatoes



## Logistics

<b>Demo or workshop?</b>	Workshop
<b>Duration</b>	3 hours
<b>Maximum participants</b>	7
<b>Participants bring</b>	Each person brings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two quart-size Mason jar (canning jar) with lids and bands (the second jar is to take home extra tomatoes)</li> <li>• ~4 pounds of raw tomatoes (~2 dry quarts)</li> </ul>
<b>Presenter brings</b>	For 7 people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few spare canning jars, lids, and bands</li> <li>• 1 cup of bottled lemon juice</li> </ul>
<b>Equipment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knife, cutting board, and large bowl for each participant (participants might also bring their own)</li> <li>• Water bath canner and rack that will hold at least 7 quart jars</li> <li>• Canning accessories: Jar lifter, funnel, lid lifter</li> <li>• Small saucepan to warm lids</li> <li>• Large saucepan to heat tomatoes</li> <li>• Large spoons and ladles (including a slotted spoon or tongs)</li> <li>• Hot pads</li> <li>• Timer or clock</li> </ul>
<b>Take-home</b>	One quart of home-canned tomatoes

## Running the workshop

<p><b>Setup – before people arrive</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fill the canner to the proper level with water and start bringing it to a boil.</li> <li>• Start a small pan of water (2 cups) heating to medium heat for warming the lids.</li> <li>• Get a pot of water (2 quarts) boiling on the stove for peeling tomatoes.</li> <li>• Have all other canning equipment out: jar lifter, hot pads, spoons, etc.</li> <li>• Have a basin of hot, soapy water ready for washing jars.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wash and heat jars - as people arrive</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When people arrive, have them wash and rinse their jars.</li> <li>• Place the jars into the canner to heat.</li> <li>• Place the lids into the small saucepan to heat (don't boil lids).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Introduction (5 minutes)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce yourself</li> <li>• Any group business: next meeting date/topic, how to get on the mailing list, paying for class, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overview</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-sentence overview of what we're doing today: <i>Today we're going to learn about safe canning, then can our own tomatoes. You'll be prepping your tomatoes while I talk, to save a little time.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Start dicing tomatoes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the participants start washing, peeling, and dicing their tomatoes as they come in. They can work while you talk, and this will save some time.</li> <li>• Peel tomatoes by cutting an X on the bottom, then plunging them into boiling water for about 1 minute.</li> <li>• Dice the tomatoes to preferred size and place in a bowl.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intro to canning (20-30 minutes)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See the talking points below for key things to mention during your intro.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Heat and bottle tomatoes (one hour or so)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This works fairly well in assembly-line fashion. You can have 2 lines going if you have 2 stoves.</li> <li>• The first person puts her tomatoes in the large saucepan and heats them to the boiling point.</li> <li>• When the tomatoes just boil, she takes a jar out of the canner, dumps the hot water back into the canner (or the sink, if the canner is getting too full), and places the jar next to the stove.</li> <li>• IMPORTANT: add 2 Tbl of bottled lemon juice to the empty jar. This ensures enough acidity for safe water-bath canning.</li> <li>• Fill the jar with her hot tomatoes to ½" below the rim of the jar.</li> <li>• Wipe the rim with a damp cloth and place the lid and band on the jar.</li> <li>• Use the jar tongs to place the jar into the canner.</li> <li>• If she has too many tomatoes, she can take home the extras in her second jar or give them to someone who needs to "top up" a jar. If you have space in the canner, extras can be canned so long as the jar is full with ½" headspace.</li> <li>• Repeat for each participant.</li> </ul>

<b>Process the tomatoes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the canner is full (and hopefully you can get everyone's tomatoes in in one batch), process for 50 minutes.</li> <li>• After 50 minutes, take the jars out of the canner, allow to cool on a towel, and listen for the PING!</li> </ul>
<b>Clean up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask everyone who can stay to pitch in, and you'll be cleaned up in no time.</li> </ul>

## Talking points

*You may use this as the basis for your introduction or to fill in while nothing interesting is happening on the stove.*

**I strongly recommend everyone own the Ball Blue Book.** It's about \$6 and worth its weight in home-canned tomatoes! It has great illustrated directions for safe canning, and I refer to it every season to make sure I don't forget any steps. I also like to show the chart of safe canning temperatures, the temps at which yeast, mold, and bacteria are killed, etc. during workshops. As a facilitator, I often bring copies to workshops and sell them with no markup, just so people can have copies.

Two types of canning: Water bath and pressure canning. Water-bath canning is what we're doing today. It requires less expensive equipment and is good for jam, fruit, pie filling, pickles, and can be safe for tomatoes and salsa. Pressure canning is the only safe method for canning non-acidic foods like vegetables, meat, and soup stock. Don't try pressure canning until you are comfortable water-bath canning.

How canned food can go bad: yeast, mold, and bacteria. Yeast causes food to ferment. Mold causes food to get fuzzy. You will see and/or smell both of these and not want to eat the food – just throw it out. The worst that can happen if you do a bad job canning jam, fruit, or pickles is that the food will spoil and you'll throw it out before you eat it.

Bacteria – specifically botulism – is invisible and odorless and causes paralysis or death, so that's the one you really need to worry about. Note that if canned goods have botulism, you can't "fix" it just by heating it to boiling after opening the jar – the only way to be safe is to be very certain about your canning processes.

Preventing botulism: The heat of boiling water will kill yeast and mold, but not botulism. The two things that kill botulism are pressure canning (i.e., temperatures above 220°) and acid. Luckily, all fruits and jams are acidic enough to kill botulism – so you never have to worry about killing people with homemade jam!

Regarding tomatoes: The acid in tomatoes varies greatly among varieties and even depending on the ripeness of the tomato. They are close enough to the borderline of "safe acidity" that it is standard practice to either add lemon juice to each jar of tomatoes, or to pressure can them as you would non-acid vegetables. Use bottled lemon juice, which is standardized to 5% acidity. Add 2 Tbl per quart or 1 Tbl per pint of tomatoes.

Sterilizing equipment: You don't need to sterilize jars, lids, or rings, but they do all need to be clean. Jars need to be heated before you put boiling-hot tomatoes in them, or the jars may crack. The easiest way to heat the jars is to put them in the canner as the water in the canner is heating.

Lids (the flat metal disk with the gasket) should be warmed, but not boiled, to make the best seal. Rings can be left cold until you place them on the jar.

Don't fill jars right to the brim, or they might not seal. Each food needs different "headspace"; this will be listed in the recipe. Tomatoes get 1/2" headspace.

Jars must be covered by 1-2" of water in the canner. Don't let jars touch the bottom of the canner; use a rack or a bunch of canning rings to keep them off the bottom. Any pot that meets these conditions can be used as a canner – though most soup pots don't cover jars (especially quarts) by over an inch.

## **Tips**

- If you open a jar of tomatoes and it's too acidic to eat, add a pinch or two of baking soda. This will neutralize (not just mask) the acidity. **DO NOT** do this before canning – you want the tomatoes to be very acidic when you can them to kill any botulism.
- Recipe handout for participants is on the next page