

PickYourOwn.org

Where you can find a pick-your-own farm near you!

Click on the printer icon that looks like this:  (at the top left, to the right of "save a copy") to print!
See www.pickyourown.org/allaboutcanning.htm for many other canning directions and recipes

How to Make and Can Homemade Catsup from Fresh Tomatoes!

We take catsup (or [ketchup](#), if you prefer) for granted - it is everywhere and Americans use it in almost everything. Some even put it on scrambled eggs. So maybe you wondered if homemade catsup taste any different or better? And if you have a mountain of homegrown tomatoes that are going to waste, here's your chance to make your own catsup and customize to your own taste! Need a low-salt diet? Skip the salt! Want a spicy catsup? Add some Tabasco or chilies. Making and canning your own catsup is something families remember years later. No store bought catsup compares with the taste of that made from your own tomatoes from your garden or fresh-picked from a local farm! In the middle of the winter, you can pour the catsup on your food and taste the summer flavor of fresh tomatoes.

Here's how to do it, in easy steps and completely illustrated. This method is easy, ANYONE can do this; but it IS time consuming - I will warn you of that! And it is more complicated than spaghetti sauce, so I'd recommend trying that first. Using a crockpot to cook the tomatoes down really helps save time, though!! It's a great thing to do with your kids!

Note: for 2006, I've modified this recipe to tone down the spice, so it gives it a more tomato-ey flavor. If you want the [spicier recipe, click here!](#) You may also be interested in [How to make cucumber pickle relish!](#) This is the classic hamburger relish!

Ingredients and Equipment

- Tomatoes - about 25 lbs (yes, you need a big basketful - you remove the skins, seeds and a lot of the water, and then cook it down, so it takes a lot to start.)
- Your own seasonings. I haven't seen any catsup mixes in the stores, but the seasonings are common, anyway. See below for seasonings.
- 1 Water bath canner (a huge pot to sterilize the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 - \$30 at mall kitchen stores, Wal-Mart. Note: we sell many sizes and types of canners for all types of stoves and needs - see [canning supplies](#) Tomatoes are on the border between the high-acid fruits that can be preserved in a boiling-water bath and the low-acid fruits, vegetables and meats that need pressure canning. I have a pressure canner, so I use that just to make sure there's less spoilage, but a water bath canner will work.
- Food mill or sieve - I highly recommend the Foley Food Mill - it's only about \$25. You can use an ordinary sieve, but it will take much longer
- Pint or half-pint canning jars (Ball or Kerr jars can be found at Publix and Wal-Mart - about \$8 per dozen jars including the lids and rings).
- Lids - thin, flat, round metal lids with a gum binder that seals them against the top of the jar. They may only be used once.
- Rings - metal bands that secure the lids to the jars. They may be reused many times.
- Jar grabber (to pick up the hot jars)
- Lid lifter (has a magnet to pick the lids out of the boiling water where you sterilize them. (\$2 at Wal-Mart)
- 1 large pot.
- 1 saucepan
- Large spoons and ladles
- Jar funnel (\$3-\$4 at Wal-Mart)

Process - How to Make Catsup (or Catsup) from Fresh Tomatoes

Step 1 - Selecting the tomatoes

It's fun to go pick your own and you can obviously get better quality tomatoes!

At right is a picture of tomatoes from my garden - they are so much better than anything from the grocery store. And if you don't have enough, a pick-you-own farm is the place to go! Below are 4 common varieties that will work:



Top left: Beefsteak
Bottom left: Roma, paste-type

Top right: Lemon Boy, yellow
Bottom right: Better Boy

The picture at right shows the best variety of tomato to use: Roma; also called paste tomatoes. They have fewer sides, thicker, meatier walls, and less water.

Also, you don't want mushy, bruised or rotten tomatoes!



Step 2 - Removing the tomato skins

Here's a trick you may not know: put the tomatoes, a few at a time in a large pot of boiling water for no more than 1 minute (30 - 45 seconds is usually enough)

then....



Plunge them into a waiting bowl of ice water.

This makes the skins slide right off of the tomatoes! If you leave the skins in, they become

tough and chewy in the sauce, not very pleasant.

Step 3 - Removing seeds and water

After you have peeled the skins off the tomatoes, cut the tomatoes in half. Now we need to remove the seeds and excess water.



Step 4 - Squeeze of the seeds and water



Just like it sounds: wash your hands then squeeze each tomato and use your finger or a spoon to scoop and shake out most of the seeds. You don't need to get fanatical about it; removing just most will do.

Step 5 - Drain the tomatoes

Toss the squeezed (Squozen? :) tomatoes into a colander or drainer, while you work on others. This helps more of the water to drain off. You may want to save the liquid: if you then pass it through a sieve, screen or cheesecloth, you have fresh tomato juice; great to drink cold or use in cooking!



Step 6 - Get the jars and lids sterilizing



The dishwasher is fine for the jars. I get that going while I'm preparing everything else, so it's done by the time I'm ready to fill the jars.

Be sure to let it go through the rinse cycle to get rid of any soap! It's also a good time to start heating up the water in the canner and the small pan of water to boil the lids.

Lids: Put the lids into a pan of boiling water for at least several minutes.

Note: everything gets sterilized in the water bath (step 7) anyway, so this just helps to ensure there is no spoilage later!)

Step 7. Seasonings

Some of the seasonings will straight into the pot with the tomatoes, the rest will go into a spice bag you make from a piece of cheesecloth. Put the tomatoes in a large pot to start simmering.

Into the pot of simmering tomatoes, put:



1 cup chopped onions	1 teaspoon salt (optional - I don't put any in!)
1 clove of garlic, minced	1 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper	1 cup sugar (white or brown)

Optional variations:

add 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard

and/or add 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon



Onto a piece of cheesecloth (about 12 inches square) put 3 tablespoons celery seed. Tie the corners of the cloth together to make a little bag (you can use a plastic twist tie - I use one from a oven browning bag) and put the bag into a small sauce pot with

- 3 cups of 5% apple cider vinegar.

Let it simmer for 30 minutes, while the tomatoes cook (you may need to add more vinegar, so you finish with 3 cups of liquid)

Step 8 - Bring the tomatoes to a gentle simmer

Cook the tomatoes for about 20 - 30 minutes over medium heat to make them mushy enough to go through your food mill or sieve.



Step 9 - Removing the seeds and skins



Run the cook tomato mixture through the food mill or sieve. Discard the seeds and skins that remain in the sieve..

Step 10 - Add the seasoned vinegar and cook down to thicken the mix

Now it's time to add the seasoned vinegar from step (minus the cheesecloth bag, which you may now discard), and cook down the mixture to thicken it. You can do it on the stove over low - medium heat, stirring frequently, as shown at right.. OR....



.. put it into a crockpot and let it cook down by itself. this method is much easier! I find it takes about 12 hours, but each crockpot may vary. You want it to get as thick as you like your catsup, remembering that it will also thicken a little bit after you cool it. The photo doesn't show it, but I cover with a splatter screen or the lid on loosely (so the steam can escape)



Step 11 - Fill the jars with the catsup and put the lid and rings on

Fill them to within 1/4 inch of the top, seat the lid and hand-tighten the ring around them.



Be sure the contact surfaces (top of the jar and underside of the ring) are clean to get a good seal!



Step 12 - Process (boil) the jars in the canner



Put them in the canner and keep them covered with at least 1 inch of water. Keep the water boiling. Process the jars in a boiling-water bath for 35 minutes for pints and 40 minutes for quarts. Remember to adjust the time if you are at a different altitude other than sea level!

If you have a pressure canner, be sure to follow their directions.



If you have a pressure canner, use it and process the sauce for 30 minutes for pint jars and 35 minutes for quarts, at a pressure of 10 to 11 pounds. I prefer a pressure canner or a larger 33 quarter water bath canner, shown at right - both are much deeper, so there is no mess, no boilovers, and allows you to cover the tallest jars with several inches of water to ensure safety! To order one, click on [Canning supplies](#) and select the canner that is right for your stove (regular or flat bottomed for glass or ceramic stoves)

Step 13 - Done

Lift the jars out of the water and let them cool without touching or bumping them in a draft-free place (usually takes overnight) You can then remove the rings if you like.



Other Equipment:

From left to right:

1. Jar lifting tongs
to pick up hot jars
2. Lid lifter
- to remove lids from the pot of boiling water (sterilizing)
3. Lid
- disposable - you may only use them once
4. Ring
- holds the lids on the jar until after the jars cool - then you don't need them
5. Canning jar funnel
- to fill the jars



Summary - Cost of Making Homemade Catsup - makes 7 - 8 oz jars*

Item	Quantity	Cost in 2006	Source	Subtotal
Tomatoes	25 lbs (to make about 16 cups of prepared tomato)	free from the garden, or \$0.50 cents at a PYO	Garden	\$0.00
Canning jars (8 oz size, wide mouth), includes lids and rings	7 jars	\$6.50/dozen	Wal-Mart, BigLots, Publix, Kroger	\$3.50
seasoning	See step 7	\$1.00? assuming you already have them. just the fraction you will use.	Wal-Mart, Publix, Kroger	\$1.00
Total				\$4.50 total or about \$0.65 per jar INCLUDING the jars - which you can reuse!

* - This assumes you already have the pots, pans, ladles, and reusable equipment. Note that you can reuse the jars!