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How to make 1 quart of homemade spaghetti sauce from fresh tomatoes - easy and illustrated!

Making and canning your own spaghetti sauce is something families remember years later. No store bought spaghetti sauce 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 make a meal with your spaghetti sauce and taste the summer flavor of fresh tomatoes.

This recipe is to make a very small batch; 1 quart at a time. Why? Perhaps you only get a few tomatoes at a time (you could also follow steps 1 to 5 and freeze the tomatoes until you have enough). Or perhaps you want to make it to eat right away, or within a week, stored in the refrigerator. Then this recipe is for you! If you want [to make several jars or more to store to use later, see this page.](#)

This recipe is for spaghetti sauce WITHOUT meat, so you can use a water bath canner or a pressure canner. You can add meats, but that requires a pressure canner and a different set of directions ([see this page for directions for spaghetti sauce with meat](#))

Here's how to do it, in easy steps and completely illustrated. This method is so easy, ANYONE can do this! It's a great thing to do with your kids!

I've added [free labels for your jars here](#), in a Word format! Just download, edit, and print in label paper.

Ingredients and Equipment

Yield: 1 quart

- **Tomatoes** - about 6 lbs
- See below for seasonings.

If you plan to store the spaghetti sauce in the refrigerator and/or eat it promptly, then you don't need to can it. If you do want to can a single quart, here's what you'll need:

- 1 Water bath Canner (a huge pot to sanitize the jars after filling (about \$30 to \$35 - \$30 at mall kitchen stores and local "big box" stores. 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.
- Pint canning jars (Ball or Kerr jars can be found at Publix, Kroger, Safeway and local "big box" stores - about \$8 per dozen jars including the lids and rings). Be sure to get wide mouth jars to fit the pickles in! Pint size works best!
- 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 sanitize them. (\$2 at mall kitchen stores and local "big box" stores, but it's usually cheaper online from our affiliates)
- 1 large pot.
- Large spoons and ladles
- Jar funnel (\$3-Grocery stores, like Publix, Kroger and Safeway and local "big box" stores; sometimes even hardware stores)

Process - How to Make Spaghetti Sauce 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! At right 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. And that means thicker sauce in less cooking time!

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



Step 2 - Removing the tomato skins

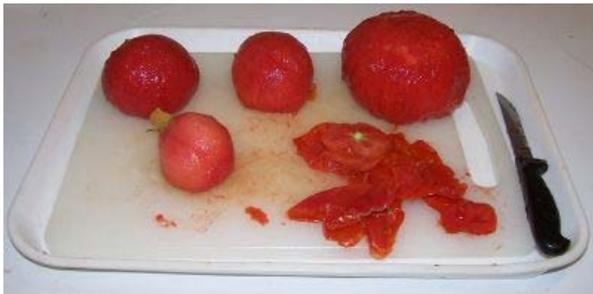
Here's a trick you may not know: put the tomatoes, a few at a time in a large pot of boiling water for no more than 1 minute (30 - 45 seconds is usually enough)

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.



Note: some people prefer to skip this step and just blend the whole tomato after removing the seeds, stems and excess water.

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. Another way to do it is to cut each tomato in half, across it, instead of lengthwise. Then just shake the seeds and juice out.



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! By draining the water off now, you'll end up with a thicker spaghetti sauce in less cooking time! And that preserves vitamins (and your sanity).



FYI, the 20 pounds of raw, fresh, whole tomatoes you started with should produce about 7 - 9 pints of "squeezed" tomatoes

Step 6 - Get the jars and lids sanitizing

The dishwasher is fine for the jars; especially if it has a "sanitize" cycle. 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!

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



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

Step 7. Mix or your own seasoning?

Either works equally well. The spaghetti sauce mix (see the box above) for canning has the advantage of being tested and VERY easy to use. It's basically corn starch, onion powder, salt and seasoning. It doesn't have any preservative to improve the canning, so the advantage is just that it is easier. You'd have to use 1/3 of the packet to make 1 quart

Also, remember, this recipe is for NO meat! ([see this page for directions for spaghetti sauce with meat](#))

Otherwise, this slightly modified version of the Ball Blue Book recipes works well:

1/2 cup chopped fresh onions (then sauté or microwave them until they are soft)	1 Tablespoons of oregano
1 clove of garlic, minced	1 bay leaves
2 teaspoons diced, fresh OR dried basil	1/8 teaspoon black pepper
2 teaspoons chopped celery (optional, may be too strong for some folk's tastes)	2 teaspoons chopped red sweet peppers
1/2 teaspoon salt (optional - I don't put any in!)	1 Tablespoon lemon juice (helps to acidify it, not needed if you have a pressure canner)
	4 tablespoons red wine (optional) I think a little burgundy makes it!

And if you like your spaghetti sauce thick, add either tomato paste, - 1 or 2 small cans should do it, or simply boil it down a bit more, or add 4 Tablespoons of ClearJel® starch - here's where to get it: (called "corn flour" in the UK)

A note about spices: Less spice, especially garlic and onions in canned sauce is better. They tend to strengthen and sometimes become bitter in storage. So use less when you prepare the sauce and add more when you actually use it, if you want!



Step 8 - Combine and bring the sauce to a gentle simmer

Combine the tomatoes and spices together in a big pot. There's generally no need to add liquid, most types of tomatoes have so much water, we will need to boil it down to drive off much of the water to thicken the sauce. If your tomatoes are watery, boil it down *before* you add the spices, to avoid them becoming too strong.

You don't need to overcook it; just bring it to boiling to sanitize it, mix the seasonings and cook down the tomatoes.

As they cook, the tomatoes will fall apart into sauce with out much need of mushing!

Step 9 - Fill the jars with sauce and put the lid and rings on

Fill them to within $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch of the top, seat the lid and hand-tighten the ring around them.

NOTE: if you want to freeze the sauce instead, just fill your freezer containers (I like Ziploc freezer bags in the quart size), fill them completely, eliminate air pockets, seal them and pop them in the freezer. You're done!

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



If you plan to eat the spaghetti sauce right away, or store it in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks (or the freezer for 1 year), then you are done - stop here - Steps 10 on are if you intend to can the sauce to store on the shelf at room temperature.

Step 10 - Process (Boil) the jar 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.



If you have a pressure canner, use it and process the sauce for the time in the tables below, as appropriate for your altitude, jar size and type of canner.



Table 1. Recommended process time for **Spaghetti Sauce Without Meat** in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

			Canner Gauge Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of			
Style of Pack	Jar Size	Process Time	0 - 2,000 ft	2,001 - 4,000 ft	4,001 - 6,000 ft	6,001 - 8,000 ft
Hot	Pints	20 min	11 lb	12 lb	13 lb	14 lb
	Quarts	25	11	12	13	14

Table 2. Recommended process time for **Spaghetti Sauce Without Meat** in a weighted-gauge pressure canner.

			Canner Gauge Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of	
Style of Pack	Jar Size	Process Time	0 - 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Hot	Pints	20 min	10 lb	15 lb
	Quarts	25	10	15

This document was adapted from the "Complete Guide to Home Canning," Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, USDA, revised 1994.

Reviewed June 2006.

<http://pickyourown.org/spaghettsaucesmallbatch.htm>

Pressure canners work better for tomatoes and other low acid foods - you'll get less spoilage with a pressure canner.

I prefer a pressure canner (see photo below) or a larger 33 quarter water bath canner, shown at right - it is much deeper, so it is neater, 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 11 - 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. Once the jars are cool, you can check that they are sealed verifying that the lid has been sucked down. Just press in the center, gently, with your finger. If it pops up and down (often making a popping sound), it is not sealed. If you put the jar in the refrigerator right away, you can still use it. Some people replace the lid and reprocess the jar, then that's a bit iffy. If you heat the contents back up, re-jar them (with a new lid) and the full time in the canner, it's usually ok.

Frequently Asked Questions about making tomato sauce - [Click here](#)

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

