

rustic tomato sauce

RECIPE COURTESY OF ELIZABETH POETT

INGREDIENTS:

- 20 large Roma tomatoes
(see Cook's Note)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 large garlic cloves,
chopped
- 1 medium yellow or sweet
onion, diced
- Kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves
- 3 tablespoons bottled
lemon juice (1
tablespoon per pint jar;
see Cook's Note)

ACTIVE TIME:

45 minutes

TOTAL TIME:

26 hours (includes resting
time)

EASE OF PREPARATION:

Intermediate

YIELD:

Three 16-ounce jars

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:

Three 16-ounce canning
jars with bands and new
lids, canning pot and rack,
pressure canner and rack,
jar lifter, canning funnel,
lid wand

I love to open a jar of this sauce to toss with pasta on a winter evening. The flavors and texture transport me straight to the summer garden, with its orderly rows of heirloom tomatoes, onions, garlic, and basil. It is such a joy to have this flavorful sauce in the pantry, ready and waiting to make a quick, comforting, and warming meal to eat together after a day out in the wind and cold.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prepare the jars: Wash three 16-ounce canning jars with bands and new lids in hot, soapy water, then rinse well. Place the rack in the canning pot and begin filling the pot with warm tap water; while doing so, fill each of the jars with water and place them in the pot. Add enough water to the pot so the jars are covered by 2 inches. Add the bands and lids to help ensure a good seal. Cover the pot and bring the water to a boil, then turn off the heat. Keep the pot covered until ready to fill the jars.
2. Prepare the canner: Place the rack inside the canner and fill the bottom with 2 to 3 inches of warm water and place the rack inside. Rub olive oil around the beveled edge of the rim to help ensure the pressure canner will be tightly sealed.
3. Prepare the tomato sauce: Wash the Romas. Fill a large bowl with cold water and ice. Fill a large pot with 6 inches of water and bring to a boil. Carefully lower the tomatoes into the water. After 30 seconds, use a slotted spoon to pull them out as their skins begin to crack. Some skins may not crack, so pull those tomatoes out after 2 to 3 minutes. Plunge the tomatoes into the ice-water bowl. Pull off the skins, then core the flesh, cut into quarters, and set aside in a bowl.
4. Put the olive oil, garlic, onion, and 1 tablespoon salt in a large, heavy duty cooking pot. Turn the heat to medium and cook, stirring frequently, until the onion is translucent and beginning to brown, about 4 minutes. Add the tomatoes and their juices to the pot and stir. Let simmer for 15 minutes to allow the flavors to develop. Use a wooden spoon to crush any overly large pieces of tomato against the side of the pot.
5. Add the sugar and mix to dissolve. Tear the basil leaves, dropping them right into the simmering sauce. Take a spoonful of the sauce and let it cool briefly before tasting. Salt to taste. Return the sauce to a simmer.
6. Fill the jars: It is important to handle the jars carefully and to work with one at a time, keeping the pot covered. Both the jar and the product should be hot. Lay a clean kitchen cloth down on the flat surface where you will be packing the jars. Use a jar lifter to pull the first jar and pour out the water into the pot. Insert a canning funnel into the jar mouth. Add 1 tablespoon of the bottled lemon juice. Ladle the sauce into the jar, leaving 1/4 inch of headspace. Run a wooden skewer around the inside of the jar to remove air bubbles. Wipe the rim of the jar with a clean, wet cloth to ensure that nothing will interfere with the seal. Using a lid wand, lift a hot lid and band out of the water bath. Place the lid on the jar. Screw the band over the lid and tighten it until you meet with some resistance. Do not overtighten. Lift the full, closed jar into the pressure canner using the jar lifter. Repeat to fill the remaining jars.
7. Process the jars: Pressure canners vary and it is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions specific to your equipment and specific to the altitude at which you are cooking. The directions here are for a manual pressure canner.

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8. Close and tighten the clamps around the lid to securely fasten. Turn the heat to high until you observe steam coming out consistently from the vent pipe for 10 minutes. Then set the pressure regulator weight for cooking at 10 PSI. Always take a moment to pay attention to the processing time and weight setting specific to the recipe you are following. Adjust the temperature until the weight only rattles between one and four times per minute. Set a timer to process the jars for 20 minutes. It is essential to process the jars for the full time.

9. At the end of the processing time, turn off the heat. Let the canner cool until the pressure gauge drops to zero, then remove the pressure regulator weight with an oven mitt. Wait 2 more minutes before carefully opening the clamps and removing the lid of the pressure cooker, tilting it away from yourself to avoid hot steam. Carefully use the jar lifter to remove the jars to a cooling rack or a flat surface lined with a cloth, leaving a little bit of space between the jars.

10. Let sit undisturbed for 24 hours. You'll know the lids are properly sealed by the popping noise they make; this may happen right away or much later. Also, the dimple on the top of the lid should be flat and the lid concave. Write the date on the jar lid and keep in a cool, dark place for up to 1 year. Any jars that are not properly sealed can be refrigerated and used within 1 month. Any jars that are not properly sealed should be refrigerated and used within 1 month.

COOK'S NOTE: *When the ingredients are combined and simmering, this is a good time to make the texture of the sauce the way you like it. If you like a smooth sauce, you could use an immersion blender or let the sauce cool and use a food processor.*

In canning tomatoes, bottled lemon juice must be added to ensure safe acidity. The rule of thumb is to add 1 tablespoon of bottled lemon juice for every pint of tomatoes. Bottled lemon juice is measured and poured into the jar before adding tomatoes or tomato sauce.

DISCLAIMER: SAFETY NOTES

Properly handled sterilized equipment will keep canned foods in good condition for 1 year. Making sure hands, equipment, and surfaces in your canning area are clean is the first step in canning.

TIPS: *Jars should be made from glass and free of any chips or cracks. Preserving or canning jars are topped with glass, plastic, or metal lids that have a rubber-like seal. Two-piece metal lids are most common.*

TO PREPARE JARS BEFORE FILLING: *Wash jars with hot, soapy water, rinse them well, and arrange them open-side up, without touching, on a tray. To sterilize jars, boil them in a large saucepan, covered with water, for 10 minutes. Jars have to be sterilized only if the food to be preserved will be processed for less than 10 minutes in a boiling-water bath or pressure canner. To sterilize jars, boil them in a large saucepan, covered with water, for 10 minutes. Follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and preparing lids and bands. Use tongs or jar lifters to remove hot, sterilized jars from the boiling water. Be sure the tongs are sterilized too: Dip the tong ends in boiling water for a few minutes before using them. All items used in the process of making jams, jellies, preserves, and pickles must be clean, including any towels and especially your hands. After the jars are prepared, you can preserve the food. It is important to follow any canning and processing instructions included in the recipe and refer to USDA guidelines about the sterilization of canned products. Find information on canning at the National Center for Home Food Preservation website: <http://nchfp.uga.edu>*