

Preserving tomatoes

By Deb Botzek-Linn, University of Minnesota Extension

ST CLOUD, Minn. (8/10/2015) — *“What’d life be without homegrown tomatoes, Only two things that money can’t buy, That’s true love & homegrown tomatoes”* (G.Clark 1983)

These song lyrics may reflect a Minnesotan’s anticipation of the first “homegrown” tomato of the season! Preserved as juice, salsa, stewed, dried, jam or even pickled, tomatoes are the most popular home preserved food.

We think of tomatoes as “high acid”, but research tells us that the acid varies by the variety, heat, moisture, soil, and ripeness. Current canning recommendations require that acid be added to canned tomato products whether water bath processed or pressure canned.

So, when canning ‘plain’ tomatoes:

- **Quarts:** add 2 Tablespoons bottled lemon juice or 1/2 teaspoon citric acid
- **Pints:** add 1 Tablespoon bottled lemon juice or 1/4 teaspoon citric acid

Tomato products like salsa may use vinegar, lemon juice, or lime juice to acidify and add flavor. Acid can be added directly to jars before filling or after filling, prior to applying the lid.

Can you freeze tomatoes? Freezing tomatoes can be a great option when you are short of time and energy. To freeze tomatoes, dip them in boiling water for 30 seconds to 1 minute to easily remove the skins. Core and peel. You can quarter, chop, or puree the tomatoes in a food processor. Put into a freezer bag or container, leave 1 inch headspace, seal and freeze. Tomatoes from the freezer are a flavorful addition to winter soups, stews, chili, and can be cooked down to make sauce at a later time—a real time saver.

See University of Minnesota Extension for preserving tomatoes and salsa information <http://z.umn.edu/g38>.

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