



## Canning tomatoes not like it used to be

**I have an old family recipe for homemade ketchup made from tomato juice. If I buy a bushel of tomatoes from the local farmers' market, how many gallons of juice can I expect to get from it?**

The general rule is that you can expect to average a quart of juice for every 3.25 pounds of tomatoes. A bushel of tomatoes weighs about 53 pounds, so you can expect 15 to 18 quarts of juice, or about four gallons, from a bushel of tomatoes.

If you're planning to can your homemade ketchup — or your tomato juice, for that matter — you might want to review recipes and guidance from the National Center for Home Food Preservation ([www.homefoodpreservation.com](http://www.homefoodpreservation.com)). The center, established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, offers an online version of the USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning as well as numerous tips related to home food preservation.

Even if you have a time-tested recipe used in your family for generations, it won't hurt to check out the latest information. For example, for many years tomatoes were treated as a high-acid food, and guidelines for canning often

recommended processing at lower temperatures than low-acid foods require. However, new varieties, over-mature tomatoes, and tomatoes harvested from dead vines might have a pH value higher than 4.6, putting them in the riskier low-acid food category. So, today's guidelines recommend increasing the acidity of tomatoes to be canned by adding 2 tablespoons of bottled lemon juice or a half-teaspoon of citric acid per quart. This can affect the taste, so you might want to add sugar, as well.

The center particularly warns about recipes passed down through the years or found in older cookbooks. Sometimes those foods are canned by the "open kettle" method — that is, cooked in an ordinary pot, then packed into hot jars and sealed without processing. Scientists warn that foods, especially low-acid foods, canned this way present a serious health risk. All low-acid foods should be processed in a pressure canner. High-acid foods can be processed either in a water bath canner or pressure canner.

With that important advice in mind, happy juicing!

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*

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### **Editor:**

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