

Basic Tomato Sauce

<http://userealbutter.com/2012/09/15/tomato-sauce-recipe/>
from [Food in Jars](#) by [Marisa McClellan](#)

8 lbs. (3.6 kg) Roma or paste tomatoes (I used organic slicing tomatoes from a local farm stand)
1/4 cup (60 ml) bottled lemon juice, divided
4 basil leaves (optional)

Notes: I have made this recipe using only Weck jars. The Weck site has some nice canning instructions if you are using their jars, which differ slightly from the standard instructions for canning with Ball-style jars. I canned 4 1-pint Weck jars from this recipe. Also, use bottled lemon juice rather than fresh lemon juice, because the acidity varies from lemon to lemon, but bottled juice has a more consistent acidity which is necessary for safety reasons in this recipe.

Prepare the tomato sauce: Remove the stems from your tomatoes and give the tomatoes a wash. Cut away any rotten sections. Cut the tomatoes into a large dice (it's all going to get mashed, so make them large enough to save yourself some time, but small enough that they won't hurt your wrist when you try to mash them). You can either chop as you cook or chop them all and just add them when needed – I prefer to chop them all at once. Place a quarter or a fifth of the tomatoes in a large stock pot over high heat. When the tomatoes begin to boil, start crushing them with a large spoon or a potato masher (this works nicely). The point of this is to keep your sauce from separating in the jars. Add another quarter or fifth and continue to crush the tomatoes over high heat. When you're done crushing everything, let the tomatoes come to a boil for a good five minutes. Set a food mill (or sieve, but that's just a world of hate right there) over a large bowl and ladle the hot crushed tomatoes into the mill and press it through. Do this in batches according to the capacity of your food mill (or sieve, you poor thing). I like to press the hell out of the tomatoes to get every last drop. Discard the peels and seeds. Return the sauce to the stock pot and bring it to a boil, then reduce to a simmer for 40-50 minutes or until the volume has reduced by a third.

Canning the tomato sauce: Ready the boiling water bath and the clean (washed with soap and water) jars you plan to use for canning. Check your jars and lids for nicks or cracks – don't use them if they have any because it could jeopardize creating a good seal. **If using standard Ball or similar style jars**, it helps to put them in the pot you plan to use for canning and fill them (and the pot) with water, then bring to a boil. Keep the jars at a simmer (180°F) until they are ready to use. Place the lids in a small saucepan with enough water to cover them and set to a simmer over low heat (high heat can compromise the gummy seal material). **If using Weck jars**, you only need to sterilize your jars and glass lids if they will be processed for less than 10 minutes. Place the rubber rings in a small saucepan of water and bring to a boil for 2-3 minutes then leave them in the hot water until you are ready to use them.

Place 1 tablespoon of lemon juice in each pint jar. Fill each jar with hot tomato sauce, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. If you want to add a basil leaf to each jar, do so now.

Use a cloth to wipe the rims clean and apply the lids and rings of the Ball-style jars to fingertip tight (just tightened with fingertips – not super tight). If using Weck jars, place the rubber rings on the glass lids and set them on the jars. Secure the lids with two canning clamps for each jar – 180° from each other (across from each other). Set the jars in your canning bath (either on a jar rack or a makeshift cooling rack – just be sure they are not set directly on the bottom of the pot) and check that there is at least 1-2 inches of water above the lids of the jars – if not, add more water. Once the pot has returned to a boil, process for 35 minutes if you are at an altitude of sea-level to 1,000 feet above sea level (asl). For 1,001 to 3,000 feet asl, add another 5 minutes to the 35 minute processing time. For 3,001 to 6,000 feet asl, add 10 minutes to the 35 minute processing time. For 6,001 to 8,000 feet asl, add another 15 minutes to the 35 minute processing time. And finally, for 8,001 to 10,000 feet asl (that's me!) add an additional 20 minutes to the 35 minute processing time for a total of 55 minutes.

When the sauce is done processing, remove the jars from the canning bath and place them on a towel-lined countertop to let them cool. Don't mess with them! For the metal lids, you may hear the "ping" of the seals forming as the center of the lid gets sucked down. There will be no pinging of the Weck lids, but you may notice the tongue of the rubber band pointing down (this is good). Let the jars cool for 24 hours. Remove the bands or clamps and lift the jar an inch or so off your work surface (carefully – in case the seal is bad and breaks) by the lid. If the seal is good, it should hold. If a seal fails, you can always reprocess the tomatoes in a clean jar with new lid (Ball) or new gasket (Weck)! Also, any jar with a bad seal can be stored in the refrigerator. Store the jars in a cool, dark location for up to a year (take the clamps and rings off).