

Family Living Focus

by **Alletta Schadler**
Lebanon Co. Extension



um of the sealed jar, it is recommended that you acidulate the tomatoes with either citric acid or bottled lemon juice. For the same reason, the recommended length of processing time in the canner has been lengthened over what was common practice years ago. If you are interested in canning tomatoes products you can get a set of recommendations and recipes from the extension office.

A word about quality. If you are buying tomatoes to can and your source sells "canning tomatoes" be very fussy about the condition of the tomatoes. Do not can tomatoes that have deep cracks or spoiled bruises. These will introduce high levels of bacteria which can cause spoilage. If "canning quality" means irregular shapes and sizes, that's ok. Otherwise, sort them very carefully and wash the tomatoes with lots of running clean water to remove spoilage bacteria.

One bothersome feature of making tomato juices and sauces in the separation of the pulp in the juice Tomatoes contain pectin that is destroyed when the tomatoes are cut and exposed to the air, as when you are cutting them up ahead of time. It is not a good idea to cut

up a pot full of tomatoes and then bring to a boil. The better way is to crush a few tomatoes and bring them to a boil, then cut quartered or sliced tomatoes into the boiling juice. The tomatoes can then be mashed or put through a good mill or separator. This technique will make a huge difference in your sauce or juice.

Tomatoes can be dehydrated in slices or in halves using a food dehydrator. Forget about sun drying here in central Pennsylvania! We have humidity that is too high and insufficient dependable sunshine to do the job. If you live in Arizona it would work, but not here.

If you are interested in dehydrating food, I recommend that you purchase a dehydrator that has a thermostat and a fan to move the air in the appliance. Folks who have tried drying wet food like peaches or apricots or tomatoes without a fan-driven heat often the food gets moldy before it dries. A dehydrator will work faster in your air conditioned house than in another place that has humidity of 80 percent or higher. Italian Roma-type tomatoes will give better results in the dehydrator because they have significantly more solids than regular slicing tomatoes.

Huge numbers of folks are making salsa with their toma-

atoes. They are making it to freeze and can, to use themselves and to give as gifts, and to sell at bazaars. Because salsa has lots of onion and peppers added, the acidity of the mixture is reduced. This means the recipe must have sufficient added vinegar or bottled lemon juice if it is to be safely canned. It must be processed in a water bath canner to be safe. It is not safe to improvise a salsa recipe what will be kept in a sealed jar at room temperature (If you are freezing the salsa or eating it fresh, it is ok to improvise.) We have a booklet with safe salsa recipes you may can. Send a SASE to me at 2120 Cornwall Rd, Lebanon, PA 17042 for your copy.

Finally, you can make tomato preserves with yellow or red tomatoes. You can make it the old-fashioned, long-boil method or you can use commercial pectin such as Certo or SureJell. The recipes are not in the box insert because they are not very popular. You can get odd recipes by calling the company. Last week I called the 800 telephone number on the Certo box to get a recipe for tomato preserves. They call it tomato relish. I wrote it down and have a copy I would share with you. Good Luck with your tomato preservation efforts!

Tomatoes
It's tomato time! Judging from several recent phone calls and my own observation of supplies, I'd say tomato harvest time is here.

There are a number of ways you can capture today's tomatoes for future reference.

You can freeze tomatoes simply by cooking them alone or with seasoning such as onions, celery, peppers and herbs. I always blanch the tomatoes and remove the skins or cook the tomatoes and then put them through a food mill because I find the skins to be unpleasant. You can cook up a batch of sauce or spaghetti sauce and freeze in freezer weight zipper bags or plastic boxes. In a pinch, you could even freeze tomatoes with-

out cooking them first, only to thaw and cook them later in the fall. I'd only recommend this if you are going on vacation and can't deal with the tomatoes now or some similar scenario.

Tomatoes that are frozen whole will become limp and watery when thawed because the cell wall of the tomatoes are very tender and when the liquid in the tomato freezes it forms sharp-edged crystals that puncture the cell walls. When the tomato thaws, the liquids leak out.

You can also preserve tomato products in jars by using a water bath canner or pressure canner. Tomatoes these days have less acid than they used to and so to prevent the possibility of dangerous food spoilage in the vacu-

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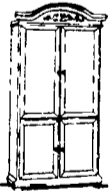


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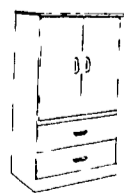
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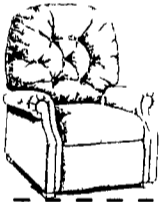


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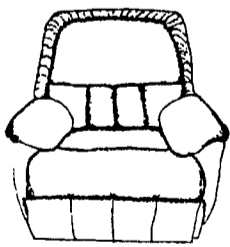
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