

IN THE BAG
Potomac Vegetable Farms
Week 12: August 22, 2011

This is what we anticipate will be in your bag. It could be slightly different.

Mini: potatoes, peppers, beans, tomatoes, garlic, garlic chives, watermelon or Sun Jewel melon, blackberries

Regular: onions, peppers, Sun Jewel melon, beans, tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, garlic, eggplant, garlic chives

Robust: potatoes, onions, beets, peppers, Sun Jewel melon, beans, tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, garlic, eggplant, chard, garlic chives, parsley, watermelon, blackberries

We will continue to distribute salsa kits when tomatillos are on hand. If you find a clear plastic bag filled with assorted vegetables (tomatoes, garlic, onion, pepper, tomatillos, basil) that's a salsa kit! Prepare the vegetables, put them in a food processor, whiz them up, add lime juice and salt.

Everything should be stored in the refrigerator except basil, tomatoes and potatoes. Basil goes on the counter. Tomatoes should go on the counter; the fridge will make them mealy. Potatoes and garlic should go in a cool, dry, dark place. Onions can go either on the counter or in the fridge.

Fun with Chive Flowers and Buds

That flowery grass-like stuff in your bag is garlic chives. Pull the tight buds heads off the chive stock and lightly sauté in olive oil with chopped walnuts salt and pepper. Toss in your favorite pasta. YUM. Or, pull flowers apart and toss over salad or add to salad dressing to add a little kick and crunch to your meal. You can also toss flower buds in with potatoes, olive oil and sea salt. I'm personally looking forward to trying that one. Enjoy!

Canning 101

From [Tigress in a Jam](#)

Ok so here's the post i am going to refer you back to again and again. These are the basic steps in hot water bath canning which means boiling the filled jars until they are hermetically sealed. This vacuum packed seal, along with the acidic contents keeps the food safe from bacteria and, in particular, clostridium botulism.

Whenever we 'can' or preserve jams and pickles in this way they can be stored in a cool, dark place for a year or more, and do not have to be put in the fridge until they are opened. The hot water bath canning method only works safely with high-acid foods, i.e. fruit preserves & pickles, and will apply to everything that we can here and at tigress in a pickle. So please, for safety reasons, follow the recipes and these directions completely and accurately (or you can put your preserves directly in the fridge and skip this part).

Steps in hot water bath canning

1. Clean jars with hot soapy water or in dishwasher.
2. Pre-heat jars by placing open, empty jars on rack in canning pot and lower down. Or, if you do not have a rack, you can place some screw tops down first, the object being to keep the jars from touching the bottom of the pan. Fill canning pot with hot water until the jars are full. Place lid on canning pot and heat on cook top until hot but not boiling.

Note on sterilizing jars: if the recipe states to boil the filled jars for 10 minutes or longer then the jars do not have to be sterilized at this step. if the recipe states to boil the filled jars less than 10 minutes then you will want to sterilize them here - just boil the empty jars for 10 minutes at a full rolling boil.

3. Prepare recipe while jars are heating, keeping jars hot until ready to be filled.
4. Heat jar tops 5 minutes before jars are to be filled. Place flat lids of mason jars, or the rubber gaskets for Weck jars in a bowl with hot water (this water should not be boiling). Do not place metal screw caps in heated water, but you should place the Weck glass tops in the heated water also if using.
5. Remove each jar as needed when food is ready to be processed. My rack hangs on the side of pot so i lift the entire thing up for easy access to the jars. This is where either a jar lifter or a silicone glove comes in handy. Place a folded kitchen towel on counter and place hot jar on towel. (A hot jar placed directly on a cold countertop could break). No need to dry jar before filling. I turn it upside down and give it a couple of pats on the towel to shake out any excess water.
6. Fill jars one by one. Food can either be ladled or sometimes poured into jar. Here is where i use my trusty funnel. Headspace is very important: too much space between food and top of jar and it may not seal correctly, too little and the food may be forced out of jar during boiling. As a general rule 1/2 inch headspace is perfect. Unless otherwise stated in the recipe food should always be processed immediately following the cooking stage, i.e. still hot.

7. Remove air pockets by running a small rubber spatula or chopstick around the side of the jar. For most jams you will not have to do this, but if there are large pieces of fruit, or with most pickles you will notice air pockets and will want to get rid of them to ensure a proper seal.

8. Place lids on jars after wiping rim with a damp paper towel to remove any misplaced food. Place the flat lid on if using mason jars, or the rubber gasket and glass lid if using Weck jars. For the masons put the screw caps on and tighten with fingertips. This means that you want the screw cap secure but not overly tight. For the Weck's once you have the rubber gasket encircled around the inside of the glass top and placed on top of jar, put two metal clips on, directly across from each other.

9. Adjust water to cover by 1 inch once jars are full and lowered back down into pot. if you have different size jars in the canner, cover the tallest one by 1 inch. Note: jar size should not vary too much within a recipe.

10. Process jars according to individual recipe as processing times vary and are based on size of jars, density and composition of food. Processing is the amount of time the jars must be immersed in a full rolling boil, so timing does not start until the boiling becomes steady & vigorous. The water must remain at a full rolling boil throughout. A kitchen timer is helpful here for accuracy. For safety reasons and to ensure that the food does not overcook, do not alter the processing time.

Note: on high altitude canning: the higher your elevation, the lower the temperature at which water boils. if you are over 1000ft adjust as follows: *

1001-3000 ft: increase processing time by 5 minutes

3001-6000 ft: increase processing time by 10 minutes

6001-8000 ft: increase processing time by 15 minutes

8001-10,000 ft: increase processing time by 20 minutes

11. Leave jars in pot for 5 minutes at end of processing time. Once heat is off and lid is lifted, a few minutes here will allow for adjustment to temperature change. i lift the rack up and hang over sides so that the jars are not in water, but they can be left down below also.

12. Lift jars out of canning pot with either a jar lifter, or using a silicone glove and place on kitchen towels. Try not to tilt jars excessively. Do not adjust the screw caps or metal clips; do not worry about any water gathered on top of jars. Let jars rest for 12 to 24 hours to cool completely. You may hear popping noises from the masons, this is the sound of the jar sealing. :)

13. Check the seals after the 12 to 24 hour cooling period. For the masons push down in the center of lid, you should not hear a metal popping noise, and it should concave slightly. For the Wecks, the tab on the rubber gasket should be pointing down. Take off the screw caps or the metal clips and here is the real test: use your fingertips to pick up the jars by the lid only. if it is properly sealed you will be able to do this, if it isn't the lid will come off and the contents of the jar will spill everywhere, so do it slowly and with your other hand under the jar.

Note on unsealed jars: if any jars failed to seal, you can wipe the rim and try again using a new flat top or rubber gasket. If it is only one or two jars the easiest solution might be

to put them directly in the fridge and enjoy immediately, as in some cases reprocessing overcooks the food and affects quality.

14. Store the jars in a cool, dark place without the screw caps or metal clips. This means out of direct light and in a temperature range of 55 to 78 for best keeping quality.

Labeling the jars with date and contents is important because, no matter how much you think you will remember what is what, you won't. Trust me.

15. Examine each jar before opening by checking for bulging or leakage and rechecking the seal as described above. If the seal has come undone or you notice anything funny, do not eat contents. Discard the food and sterilize the jar. Screw caps or metal clips should be refastened after opening for fridge storage.

HOW TO BOTTLE TOMATO PUREE

From [Laundry, Etc](#)

Prepare the water bath, jars and seals ready for bottling (canning).

Put the pureed tomatoes in a pan and simmer for a short time to reach a consistency that suits you so excess juice has evaporated. If the puree is already thick enough simply bring to boiling point. I added 1 tsp sea salt (a non essential, so add salt to own taste or leave out all together) plus an additional acidic booster. As a general guide you need to add one of the following to every 500ml (1 pt) tomato puree: 1Tbsp lemon juice or 1/4 tsp citric acid. I used balsamic vinegar instead, adding 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar per 500ml (1pt) puree.

Place a basil leaf inside each jar against the glass and fill jars with tomato, leaving headspace required for your type of jar. Remove bubbles from sides of jars using a small spatula, wipe rims clean and seal. Process 500ml (1 pt) jars for 35 mins and 1ltr (quart) jars for 45 mins. Remove jars from water bath and leave till cold before testing the seals. Any jars with loose seals will require reprocessing or you can keep them in the fridge for using up within a few days.

Remember to label all your jars before storing them.

My tomatoes made 2 x 350g (12oz) jars of sauce plus a bit more that I had with pasta for my dinner that evening.

Canned Whole Tomatoes in Water

From [The Kitchenette](#)

Yields 4 quarts

8 pounds plum tomatoes
8 tablespoons lemon juice
kosher salt

How to Peel Whole Tomatoes

Bring a large pot of water to boil. Rinse tomatoes under warm water to remove any pesticides or wax and rub gently to dry. Prepare an ice water bath by adding 4 cups ice to a large bowl of cold water.

Score each tomato on the bottom with an X. Do not make deep cuts, just barely cut the skin. Once the water boils, drop tomatoes, one by one every 10 seconds, into boiling water. When the water stops boiling, stop adding tomatoes. Boil tomatoes for approximately 1-3 minutes, until the skin starts to separate from the flesh. As each tomato looks ready, remove one by one and submerge in ice water bath. Peel skin off and core each tomato. Submerge peeled tomato back into boiling water.

Repeat with all tomatoes. Keep peeled tomatoes in boiling water until ready to can.

Can Tomatoes

Bring water bath canner to boil. Sterilize jars by boiling in water bath canner (with lids off) for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, bring a small saucepan of water to boil. Turn heat to low and add flat canning lids to saucepan. Simmer lids for 5 minutes until seal is softened.

Remove sterilized jars from water bath canner and set on a towel on countertop. (You don't want the hot jars to be set directly on a cold surface, or they might shatter from the sudden temperature change.) Add 2 tablespoons of lemon juice to each quart jar. Add a pinch of salt to each jar if desired. Carefully spoon hot tomatoes out of the boiling water into jars, using the back of a spoon to carefully press the tomatoes into the bottom of the jar. Once the jar is full of whole tomatoes, ladle extra tomato-boiling water into each jar until the tomatoes are covered, leaving 3/4 inch of headspace (space between the liquid and top of the jar).

Run a knife around the inside edge of the jar to remove any air bubbles (which can harbor bacteria if sealed in the jar.) Place a softened lid on each jar, then screw on a canning ring to "fingertight" (meaning, screw the ring on but don't kill yourself trying to make it tight – if the lid is on too tight, the air can't be pushed out during canning, and your canned tomatoes will spoil.)

Submerge full jars in water bath canner. Water should cover tomato jars by at least 1 inch above the lid. Boil for 45 minutes, adjusting for altitude if necessary. Remove jars from water bath canner, and place on kitchen towel. Listen for the delightful ping! of a successful canning project. Check the seals after 24 hours.

If you can still press down on the middle of the canning lid, then the jars did not seal properly. Re-process jars by repeating the canning process with a new flat lid.

Crushed Tomatoes

From [Bigger Than A Breadbox](#)

- 1) Prepare canner, jars and lids.
- 2) Working in small batches, immerse tomatoes in boiling water for 30-60 or until the skins start to loosen or crack. Immediately plunge into a bowl of cold water and slip the skins off. Remove cores and any bruised or discolored portions.
- 3) Working in batches, quarter enough tomatoes to measure about 2 cups. Transfer to a large stainless steel saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Using a potato masher, crush tomatoes to release juices. While maintaining a gentle boil and stirring to prevent scorching (how many hands do they think I have?), quarter additional tomatoes and add to the saucepan as you work. The remaining tomatoes do not be to crushed, as they will soften with heating and stirring. Continue until all tomatoes are added, then boil gently for five minutes.
- 4) Before packing each jar of tomatoes, add 1 tsp lemon juice per pint and 2 tsp lemon juice per quart (you can use $\frac{1}{4}$ per pint and $\frac{1}{2}$ per quart of citric acid instead) After packing each jar, place in canner until all jars are filled, or your canner is full.
- 5) Add salt, if using (I didn't) as follows: $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp per pint, 1 tsp per jar.
- 6) Pack hot tomatoes into prepared jars to within a generous $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of top of jar. Press tomatoes in the jar until spaces between them fill with juice, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if necessary. Wipe rim. Center lid on jar. Screw band down until resistance is met, then increase to finger tight.
- 7) Place jars in canner, ensuring they are completely covered with water. Bring to a boil. Process pints 35 minutes, quarts 45 in boiling water bath canner.

Since I had so many additional tomatoes (the book said about 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds of tomatoes per quart,) I simmered the additional tomatoes until the canner was close to being done with the first batch, then filled the rest of the jars.

Enjoy!

Salsa

From [Yes, Another Cooking Blog](#)

Salsa Recipe

1 1/2 lbs of tomatoes (I used some from the garden and Roma's from the farm)
2 pints of tomato sauce (and yes it's what I canned)
2 onions, finely chopped
1 large sweet green pepper, chopped
4-10 jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped (I used 9 assorted peppers from the garden)
8-10 garlic, minced (I used 10!)
1 cup red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar
1 1/2 teaspoon pickling salt
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1/2 bunch Italian parsley, chopped
3/4 to 1 bunch of cilantro, chopped (taste and decide)

Get the jars ready for the salsa.

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat and reduce heat a simmer for 25 minutes or to desired consistency. If you like a smoother salsa then use the immersion blender....yes I used it. I like my salsa not so chunky. You decide!

Ladle hot salsa into jars (I used pint) to within 1/2 inch head space. Process for 20 minutes for both half pint and pint jars.

This salsa is so good. I'm hoping to make it again. Please remember taste and taste, if you don't like so much garlic then don't put it in. Same goes for hot peppers.

Enjoy!

Stewed Tomatoes

From [Well Preserved](#)

It's a simple recipe (from the [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#)):

- * Tomatoes (peeled after blanching)
- * Lemon juice (0.5 tablespoon per cup)
- * Boiling water

We did half-pint jars and water-bathed for 40 minutes.

I adored this evening – the yield was small but the work was super light (about 30 minutes of active work) and we'll have 7 dinners that will be raised to another level through the winter. Since we've had a lot of posts on tomatoes lately I thought I'd spin this a little different and share some tips for canning when you don't feel you have a lot of time:

- * Never do it if you don't want to. It is supposed to be fun and it's well worth it when you are in the moment.
- * Think ahead to the meals that you will benefit because of the work; easy to stay motivated this way.
- * Keep your recipe simple. I'm often surprised by just how well the simplest recipes turn out.
- * Boil your water early. We started 2 pots of water before eating dinner. This saved a lot of time.
- * Know your recipe inside-out – less checking equals less time.
- * Boil a lot of water and add only a few tomatoes at a time (the tomatoes cool the water and slow the process – the higher ratio of water to tomato, the hotter the water will stay)
- * When you remove the tomatoes from the blanching process put them in a container with a lid (they will sweat and peel easier)
- * Use gloves to peel and you won't have to wait for them to cool.
- * Have a clean working space – it just makes things far easier.
- * Clean as you go.
- * Always keep a stash of extra jars on hand. I had an empty box that I thought was full sitting on the shelf. I keep an extra case of jars (3 cases in different sizes) in the event that I'm ever in a pinch.
- * It's never as much work when you think it's going to be a lot (this rule can work the other way as well).

Tomato Soup

From Becky

1 half-bushel tomato seconds
1 cup mixed herbs (oregano, basil, whatever you like in your soup)
1 ½ heads celery
1 cup onion
bit of sugar to taste

Blanch and skin your tomatoes. Put everything in a stock pot and simmer together. Use an immersion blender to make the soup as smooth as you prefer. Process 20 minutes.

Makes about 8 quarts.

Ketchup

From [Yes, Another Cooking Blog](#)

- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 whole cloves
- 6 cardamon pods, crushed
- 10 black peppercorns
- 1 large onion
- 2 teaspoon for sea salt
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 2 pints tomato sauce (use what you have made)
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper flakes
- 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup vinegar (I used white wine vinegar)
- a pinch of nutmeg

Place cloves, cardamon, peppercorns, pepper flakes in cheesecloth.

In a food processor add the onion (rough chop to get inside) and puree until smooth. Add the onion puree to a sauce pan cook until soft but not brown. Add vinegar, brown sugar, tomato sauce, Cinnamon stick, bay leaf and cheesecloth. Cook until desired thickness, about 25 to 35 minutes. Remove spice bundle, cinnamon stick and bay leaf.

Taste before canning. You may want it a little sweeter or maybe a little more hot pepper.

Have canner and jars ready. Ladle hot ketchup into jars and fill jars, remove any bubbles. Leave 1/4 inch head space and process in a boiling water bath for 15 minutes.

*you can use basil and so on but then I think it's getting more like a spaghetti sauce.

Dilled Tomatoes
From [Simply Loving Home](#)

Green tomatoes (cherry or grape works best)
Grape leaves (1 per jar)
Head of Dill (1 per jar) **or 2 tsp. dill seeds**
garlic clove (OPTIONAL: 1 per jar)
1/2 tsp. of alum per pint (1 tsp. per quart)

Brine
(Enough for 7 Quarts)
10 Cups water
5 Cups cider vinegar (5% acidity)
1 Cup canning salt

Wash the tomatoes, dill & grape leaves then put 1 leaf & the dill head and/or feathery leaves in the bottom of your jars. Add the garlic if you want it... I've done some with and some without! Now, fill the jars with the tomatoes up to the neck and add the alum. Pour the HOT brine over the top covering the tomatoes but leaving head space in the jars. Remove air bubbles. Cover with jars with lids and water bath for 15 minutes.

I noticed that some of my garlic turned a funny, blue-green color. My first impression was that it is a similar color to a penny when it turns color. Kinda odd... so, I did a little bit of research and this is what I discovered: towards the bottom of the page in the comment section... "Garlic will react with a small amount of copper and turn colour, but still safe to eat. Trace amount of copper in your water supply or from utensils is sufficient to cause this colour change."

RECIPE for SLOW-ROASTED TOMATOES

From [A Veggie Venture](#)

Hands-on time: 10 minutes to start, 10 minutes to finish

Time to table: 8 - 24 hours

Makes about 2 1/2 - 3 cups

Choose Roma-type (that is, meaty vs juicy) tomatoes. I use Cascades recommended by the Tomato Man).

Do double batches to maximize oven time. Each batch consistently used about 20 tomatoes, about 4 pounds.

Set oven to 200F.

BECKY'S NOTE: I have roasted them at 300F and for less time with great success.

Spread 1 tablespoon olive oil (which I found plenty but important) directly on baking sheet (no need for parchment).

Sprinkle with dried herbs (dried turned out more flavorful than fresh) including 1 tablespoon fennel (though 2 tablespoons too much) and after that herbs that seem right, including Italian seasoning, basil, sage, oregano, thyme.

BECKY'S NOTE: I just do garlic, salt and pepper so I can use the tomatoes for any purpose and not just Italian food.

Sprinkle the oil/herbs with salt and pepper (salt is especially important!).

Halve the tomatoes (when cutting, leave stem bit on one side vs slicing down its middle, makes it easier to remove skins later; skin blemishes are okay since will come off, anything penetrating into flesh should be removed before roasting).

Place cut-side down in a single layer on baking sheet, rubbing in oil a little bit when arranging. If you like, tuck in unpeeled garlic cloves.

Sprinkle again with salt and pepper.

Roast 10 - 12 hours (9 too few, 13 too many). (9/06) The first time you roast tomatoes, check on them every hour or so. Otherwise you might end up with charred creatures.

Let cool. The tomatoes are slightly easier to peel when still slightly warm.

Slip tomato skins off, collecting tomato meat and juices. Transfer to freezer bags. Remove the air from the bags and seal. Freeze. To thaw, place in a bowl to collect the juices that seep from the bags.