

Tomato Sauce Tutorial

You will need:

- 25 pounds of plum tomatoes
- 2-3 large onions and 2 green peppers if you'd like, 4-6 cups combined (I prefer more onion than pepper)
- several glugs of extra virgin olive oil
- 1-2 heads of garlic (yep, whole heads - garlic is good)
- 3-4 teaspoons garlic powder (more garlic!)
- 1-3 tablespoons [Italian Seasoning](#) blend
- sea salt and black pepper to taste (for that amount of tomatoes, it may take a tablespoon or so of salt, don't be alarmed, it's a large batch)
- honey or sugar to cut acidity if needed - a few tablespoons or more
- 4 ounces [tomato paste](#) - go ahead, it's not cheating and will really pull your sauce together nicely.
- 1 cup of freshly chopped basil to finish it off
- any other seasoning you'd like, such as chili flakes
- heavy-bottomed pot large enough to hold the tomatoes
- blender (high powered, even better)
- [food mill](#)
- plenty of pint or quart sized jars - the number will depend on how reduced you like your sauce, my 25 pounds of tomatoes yielded 16 pints of sauce.

Directions:

1. Gather and wash 25 pounds of plum tomatoes. Cut off stem ends and slice them into chunks.
2. Place all the tomatoes in a heavy-bottomed pot, large enough to hold the whole batch. (I just add in batches as I chop.) Bring to a gentle boil over medium heat (or slightly higher).
3. Stir and mash tomatoes with the back of your spoon.
4. Once the tomatoes are tender and the skins begin to slip away from the fruit, puree the potful in the blender, a few cups at a time. Be mindful to not fill a blender too much with hot liquid, and always hold the lid on with one hand. I fill mine about 1/3 of the way each time.
5. After you blend each batch, press it through a food mill to remove skins and seeds (have a bowl underneath to catch the goods). Take your time doing this, you don't want to leave precious tomato flesh behind, only skins and seeds. (You can sort of see my set up in the photo above.)

Tomato Sauce Tutorial

6. From here transfer the skin and seed free tomato sauce to a huge bowl.

7. Now it's time to saute the vegetables if you're using them. I prefer to dice them very fine, some people like their veggies chunky. Cook slowly over medium low heat. Just give the big pot a quick rinse first to remove any remaining skin and seeds clinging to the sides. Add olive oil, peppers and onions to the pot and saute gently for 5-7 minutes, until tender. Add the minced garlic, garlic powder, Italian Seasoning, some of the sea salt, and black pepper. Saute for another minute or two.

8. Add the strained tomato pulp back to the pot and bring to a low simmer, uncovered. Continue simmering for several hours, I've been known to simmer sauce for twelve hours. Once you are close to being satisfied with the sauce thickness, you can add the tomato paste, if using. Stir to dissolve.

9. Now begin to check the sauce for flavor. This may take time. Sweeten with honey or a bit of sugar if it's too acidic. Does it need salt? More garlic powder? Perhaps a glug or two of olive oil? Once you are close to the end, add the fresh basil. Ahh... turn off the heat and let it sit for about 30 minutes.

10. Fill clean canning jars, leaving an inch of space for expansion as it freezes. Leave the jars uncovered so they can cool for a little while. If you can, leave the jars in the refrigerator overnight to cool completely before freezing.

Freezing in jars

Freezing in glass is wonderful and feels much healthier than plastic. But a failed (broken) jar is such a bummer. A few tips to minimize breakage:

- Allow food to cool completely before freezing. I stick the jars in the refrigerator overnight.
- Food containing liquid will expand about 10% once frozen. Leave an inch at the top of your jars to allow for this.
- Use good quality canning jars. This glass is thick and tempered, able to withstand more pressure and temperature changes.
- If possible, use straight sided jars [such as these](#). As the liquid expands when freezing, it is often the pressure against the "shoulder" (the part that curves in toward the neck) of the jar that is the point of breakage. A straight sided jar eliminates this stress point.
- Do not screw lids firmly on the jars until after the food inside is completely frozen. This helps to reduce pressure and create subtle space needed for the food to expand.

Using this method I have very little breakage when freezing in jars, at least 95% of the time there is zero breakage. All of the jars from this lovely batch remained nicely in tact, leaving us lots of sauce to look forward to over the winter.