

Topic :
preparation of whole tomato concentrate.

Whole Tomato Concentrate

Ingredients:

- Fresh, ripe tomatoes (Roma or San Marzano varieties are ideal)
- Salt (optional, for flavor)
- Lemon juice or citric acid (for acidity and preservation)

Equipment Needed:

- Large pot
- Knife and cutting board
- Food mill or blender
- Fine mesh sieve (optional)
- Baking sheets or shallow trays
- Parchment paper (optional)
- Jars for storage (sterilized)

Preparation Steps:

1. Select and Prepare Tomatoes

- **Choose Tomatoes:** Use fresh, ripe tomatoes. Look for firm, undamaged ones. Roma and San Marzano tomatoes are best for concentrate due to their lower water content.
- **Wash:** Rinse the tomatoes under cool water to remove any dirt or debris.

2. Blanch and Peel Tomatoes

- **Blanching:** Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Prepare an ice bath in a bowl with cold water and ice cubes.
- **Process:**
 - Cut a small "X" on the bottom of each tomato.
 - Submerge them in boiling water for about 30-60 seconds until the skins start to peel away.
 - Transfer the tomatoes immediately to the ice bath to halt the cooking process.
- **Peel:** Once cooled, the skins should come off easily. Discard the skins.

3. Remove Seeds (Optional)

- **Seed Removal:** Cut the tomatoes in half and gently squeeze to remove seeds. This step is optional, as the seeds can be processed into the concentrate, but removing them yields a smoother product.

4. Cook Down Tomatoes

- **Cooking:**
 - Place the peeled and halved tomatoes in a large pot.
 - If desired, add a pinch of salt for flavor.
 - Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes are softened and release their juices (about 20-30 minutes).
- **Blend:** For a smoother consistency, you can use a blender or food mill to puree the tomatoes.

5. Strain the Mixture (Optional)

- **Straining:** If you prefer a smoother concentrate, pass the cooked mixture through a fine mesh sieve or a food mill to remove any remaining seeds and pulp.

6. Reduce the Concentrate

- **Simmer:** Return the strained mixture to the pot and simmer over low heat, stirring frequently to prevent sticking. This process can take 1-2 hours, depending on the amount of liquid. The goal is to reduce the mixture to a thick, concentrated paste.
- **Consistency Check:** The concentrate should be thick enough to hold its shape but still pourable.

7. Adjust Acidity

- **Acidity:** To ensure safe storage, add lemon juice (about 1 tablespoon per quart of concentrate) or citric acid (1/4 teaspoon per quart) to increase acidity, which helps prevent spoilage.

8. Jar and Store

- **Packing:** Pour the hot concentrate into sterilized jars, leaving about 1/2 inch of headspace at the top.
- **Sealing:** Wipe the rims of the jars with a clean cloth to remove any residue. Seal with sterilized lids.
- **Storage:** If processing for long-term storage, you can can the jars in a water bath for 35-40 minutes. Otherwise, let the jars cool and store in the refrigerator for short-term use (usually up to a week).

Tips for Making Whole Tomato Concentrate:

- **Flavor Enhancements:** You can add herbs (like basil or oregano) during the cooking process for additional flavor.
- **Batch Size:** This process can be scaled up or down based on how many tomatoes you have.
- **Freezing:** If you don't want to can the concentrate, you can freeze it in airtight containers or ice cube trays for future use.
- **Usage:** Use this concentrate in pasta sauces, soups, stews, or as a base for pizza sauce.

By following these steps, you'll create a rich and flavorful whole tomato concentrate that can enhance your cooking for months to come!