

Sun Dried Tomatoes

Written by W.J.Pais

Sun-dried tomatoes, either in olive oil, seasoned, or plain, add a gourmet touch and great flavor to many dishes and salads. But the price in the stores is exorbitant! Did you know it is incredibly easy to make your own sun-dried tomatoes at home with no special equipment? The quality can be better than any you've bought and now you have an easy way to use your excess tomatoes, as well as have them for use in the winter. They make excellent gifts, too.

Here's how to do it, in easy steps and completely illustrated. This method is so easy, ANYONE can do this! It's a great thing to do with your kids! And yes, although they're called "sun-dried" tomatoes; almost no one lives in a climate that makes that the best method. According to the USDA, few, if any store-bought "sun dried" tomatoes are actually sun dried (but the regulations allow them to call them that!). Anyway, they will taste the same (or better, actually) using an oven or food dehydrator. For those of you ultra-crunchy granola types (not that there's anything wrong with that, as Seinfeld would say), you can use your car (hybrid, electric, gasoline or diesel) on a hot sunny day - I'll explain below. And see this page for a comparison of the cost of various oven heating methods and oven types.

If you'd rather can your tomatoes,

Tomatoes - any quantity, ripe, but not over ripe, still firm. The yield varies considerably depending upon the moisture content of the tomatoes, which depends upon the type of tomato and the weather. Paste tomatoes (Roma) work best and typically yield 2 cups of dried tomatoes for each 5 lbs of fresh.

Equipment

1 large pot and Large slotted spoon (if you want them peeled first)
Vacuum food sealer or plastic zipper (Ziploc) type bags

And one of the following:

An oven OR
a food dehydrator OR
an automobile on a hot sunny day!

Process - How to Make Sun Dried Tomatoes from Fresh Tomatoes

Step 1 - Selecting the tomatoes

It's fun to go pick your own and you can obviously get better quality tomatoes!

At right is a picture of tomatoes from my garden - they are so much better than anything from the grocery store. And if you don't have enough, a pick-your-own farm is the place to go! Below are 4 common varieties that will work, although any variety (even grape and cherry tomatoes) will work, but they might take longer to dry, due to their higher water content:

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Also, you don't want mushy, bruised or rotten tomatoes!

Step 2 - (Optional) Removing the tomato skins

If you do not want to remove the skins, skip to step 4. This is completely optional; some people prefer them with skins, some without. The type you buy in the stores usually has the skins intact.

Here's a trick you may not know: put the tomatoes, a few at a time in a large pot of boiling water for no more than 1 minute (30 - 45 seconds is usually enough)

then....

Plunge them into a waiting bowl of ice water.

This makes the skins slide right off of the tomatoes!

With a gentle tug, the skins should practically slide off the tomatoes.

Step 3 - Removing bruises and tough parts, and cut in half

Cut the tomatoes in half lengthwise.

Cut out the tough part around the stem and any bruised or soft parts.

I usually then cut the tomatoes in half again, so I get four lengthwise quarters from each tomatoes. It just depends how big or small you want the final dried pieces to be. Usually they shrink to 1/4 their original size.

Step 4 - (Optional) - Remove the seeds

Read full instructions at the website with pictures and diagrams:

[Information available at](#)