Canned Tomatoes

Tomatoes, native to South America, were once considered unfit to eat. Europeans used them hundreds of years before North Americans, but once people began to taste the rich, fresh flavor, they became a staple item in the American diet.

Canned tomatoes are an excellent way to provide your family with nutritious, inexpensive and flavorful meals. Growing tomatoes in our northern climate can be tricky, but there are several varieties that grow well in containers, and gardeners can expect them to produce before frost. Vegetable seeds can be purchased with your Quest Card, but check with the State of Alaska food stamp program before you order them: http://hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/fstamps/howto.html or 1-800-478-2850. Many farmers markets allow Quest cards to be used to buy vegetables.

Nutrition

One medium-sized tomato has only 24 calories, is low in sodium and fat (with no saturated fat or cholesterol) and high in potassium and vitamins A and C. Tomatoes are also rich in fiber and add valuable nutrients and antioxidants to the diet.

Selection

Canned tomatoes come in many ways: diced, chopped, stewed, whole, pureed and as paste. Some are seasoned with herbs and spices such as garlic, basil, peppers and onion. Many varieties are available with no salt added. Flavorful spaghetti sauces, pizza sauces, soups and stews can be created by adding different spices to a can of plain tomato sauce. Pick the kind that best fits your cooking needs, or keep a variety on hand. The most common size can is 15½ ounces, which provides approximately 3½ cups of tomatoes. Opened tomatoes should be stored in a tightly covered nonmetal container in the refrigerator.

When choosing fresh tomatoes, look for smooth skins with no black spots, cracks, splits or other major blemishes. Ripe tomatoes may be completely red to reddish orange or yellow, depending on the variety. They are firm, but give a little when you squeeze them gently. Avoid buying tomatoes that are too soft or overripe unless you plan to use them right away for cooking.

Tomato Basil Soup

Serving Size: 1 cup
Yield: 4 servings

1 medium chopped onion
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 crushed garlic cloves or ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
1 15½-ounce can tomatoes, drained and chopped
1 pinch ground red pepper
1 teaspoon dried basil
⅔ cup nonfat dry milk plus 2 cups water (or substitute 2 cups nonfat milk)
salt and pepper to taste

In a medium saucepan, cook onion in oil over medium heat, stirring frequently until golden brown, about 4 minutes. Add garlic and cook 1 minute longer. Add chopped tomatoes. Cook uncovered over medium heat for 10 minutes.

Spoon ¾ of mixture into food processor or blender container; puree until smooth. Return to saucepan.

Add red pepper, basil and reconstituted nonfat dry milk to the soup. Heat until hot, but do not boil. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

Look on the back for more delicious and nutritious ways to use canned tomatoes!
**One Pan Spaghetti**

**Serving size:** 1 cup  
**Yield:** 10 servings

1 pound lean ground beef, moose or caribou  
1 medium onion, chopped  
3½ cups water  
1 15½-ounce can tomato sauce  
2 teaspoons dried oregano  
½ teaspoon sugar  
½ teaspoon garlic powder  
½ teaspoon rosemary  
¼ teaspoon pepper  
2 cups spaghetti noodles, broken  
1 cup Parmesan cheese, shredded

Brown meat and onions in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Drain fat. Stir in water, tomato sauce and spices; bring to a boil. Add spaghetti, cover pan and simmer 10–15 minutes, stirring often to prevent sticking.

When spaghetti is tender, top with grated cheese.

**Vegetarian Spaghetti Sauce**

**Serving size:** ¾ cup  
**Yield:** 6 servings

2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 small onions, chopped  
3 garlic cloves, chopped  
1¼ cup zucchini, sliced  
1 tablespoon oregano, dried  
1 tablespoon basil, dried  
1 20-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained (or cook 1 to 1½ cups dry beans)  
1 28-ounce can low-sodium vegetable broth  
1 15-ounce can crushed tomatoes  
1½ teaspoons dried basil  
½ teaspoon dried oregano  
½ teaspoon cumin  
½ teaspoon chili powder  
½ teaspoon hot pepper sauce

Combine all ingredients in a slow cooker. Cover. Cook on low for 9–10 hours.

**Black Bean & Vegetable Soup**

**Yield:** 8 servings

3 carrots, thinly sliced  
2 celery ribs, sliced  
1 onion, chopped  
4 garlic cloves, diced  
1 20-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained (or cook 1 to 1½ cups dry beans)  
1 28-ounce can low-sodium vegetable broth  
1 15-ounce can crushed tomatoes  
1½ teaspoons dried basil  
½ teaspoon dried oregano  
½ teaspoon cumin  
½ teaspoon chili powder  
½ teaspoon hot pepper sauce

Combine all ingredients in a slow cooker. Cover. Cook on low for 9–10 hours.

**Black Beans with Corn and Tomatoes**

**Yield:** 4 servings

1 15-ounce can low-sodium, no-fat-added black beans  
1 cup cut tomatoes, fresh or canned  
1 teaspoon chopped fresh parsley (or dried)  
½ teaspoon chili powder  
1 cup frozen corn, thawed (or drained canned corn)  
1 clove garlic, pureed or roasted (or ⅛ teaspoon powdered garlic)  
⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper, or more to taste

Drain and rinse beans. In a bowl, combine beans, corn, tomatoes and garlic. Add parsley, pepper and chili powder. Combine and serve.

To find out if you are eligible for free nutrition education, call UAF Cooperative Extension Service at 907-474-7930 or visit www.uaf.edu/ces/hhfd/fnp.

**Call 1-877-520-5211 or visit www.uaf.edu/ces**

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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact 907-465-3347.

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