



Tomato Sauce

Here's a good, basic recipe for a farm kitchen basic -- tomato sauce.

Tomatoes should be red, firm and damage-free, taken from live, undamaged stalks, and cleaned well. Click here for a tip on choosing and growing tomatoes>>You will need a heavy, 8-quart pot, food mill, large bowl, plastic containers for freezing the sauce, and labels for contents and date.

Ingredients30 pounds of tomatoes (which will yield about 6 quarts of sauce) 3 to 4 cloves of garlic 1 tsp. salt 1/2 tsp. peppercorns fresh herbs as available to taste (parsley, thyme, oregano)

Preparation

Wash tomatoes well and cut out the remnants of the stem. Quarter tomatoes and place in a heavy 8-quart pot. Sprinkle with salt; add peppercorns and herbs. Note: With tomato sauce, creativity rules. Add whatever herbs and spices you like, in whatever portions suit your fancy. I like the flavor of parsley, so I tend to add more of that to my sauce. Oregano has a powerful flavor, so I only add a small amount of it unless I'm going for a real Italian-style sauce.

Add water until bottom of pot is covered by 1/4-inch. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer about one hour, stirring occasionally, until tomatoes are soft. Remove from heat.

Place food mill over large bowl. Working in batches, scoop tomato mixture into food mill and process. Discard skins and herbs retained by the mill screen.

Fill plastic containers to within one inch of the top and cover. Let containers sit until sauce cools to room temperature, then freeze. Sauce will be watery, but remember, this is just a base sauce. To use it in recipes such as spaghetti sauce, cook down to desired thickness.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes seem to present the biggest challenge. A dozen tomato plants seemed innocent enough in the spring, but by September they are turning out fruit faster than you can pick it.

My primary solution is tomato sauce, as it is so versatile, so forgiving and is the springboard for so many recipes. Tomato varieties such as Beefmaster or any of the plum tomatoes will yield a thicker sauce than other types.

But at the end of growing season, my main objective is to make sauce, no matter what kind of tomatoes I'm left with.

My weapons of choice are a food mill, a large sauce pot, plastic containers and my freezer.

A food mill, which separates the pulp from the skin and seeds during processing, allows you the option of cooking fruits and vegetables with the skin on, if appropriate, to add more flavor to the finished product. This works well with tomatoes and with fruits such as apples.

~ Lynda King