

# Food & Drink

## It's tomato sauce season

Though there are hundreds of barbecue and tomato sauces on the market, home canners consistently rate their own sauces superior to any store-bought sauce in terms of quality and fresh taste.

That's because they start with ripe, red tomatoes plucked fresh from the vine and lovingly add fresh herbs, chunks of green pepper, fresh chilies and other choice vegetables.

What many home canners don't realize, however, is that such recipe alterations can lower the acidity of a recipe, creating a low-acid product which must be processed at a temperature of at least 116 degrees C (240 degrees F) to eliminate the risk of botulism.

The only way for home canners to achieve this temperature is in a pressure canner.

The natural acidity of tomatoes falls close to the 4.6 pH dividing line between a low and a high acid food. Therefore, precautions must be taken to can tomatoes safely — even plain tomatoes! Adding acid — lemon juice or vinegar — ensures that tomatoes are a high acid food which can be processed safely in a boiling water canner.

Home economists at Bernardin Ltd., Canada's leading source of home canning essentials, recommend adding 2 tsp (10 mL) bottled lemon juice for each 500 mL jar of tomatoes, or 1 tbsp (15 mL) per 1 L jar. Bottled lemon juice is preferred because its acidity is known and consistent.

As to those delicious homemade tomato sauces, offers recipes for a spicy barbecue sauce and a basic pizza sauce which delicately balance the recipe's pH level.

Follow them to a 'T' and you'll have a fantastic supply of summer-fresh sauce to last you through the winter.

### TOMATO

#### BARBECUE SAUCE

Instead of peeling and chopping the tomatoes by hand, you could

put them through a food mill. Using this method, you will need about 16 cups (4000 mL) of tomato puree.

- 20 cups (5000 mL) prepared tomatoes, about 9.5 lbs (4.3 kg)
- 2 cups (500 mL) chopped celery
- 2 cups (500 mL) chopped onions
- 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) chopped green pepper
- 2 jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped
- 1 tsp (5 mL) peppercorns
- 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) packed brown sugar
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) each: dry mustard and paprika
- 1 1/2 tsp (7 mL) salt
- 2 tsp (10 mL) hot pepper sauce
- 2 1/2 cups (625 mL) vinegar

• Blanch, peel, seed and chop tomatoes; measure 20 cups (5000 mL). Place in a large, stainless steel or enamel saucepan with celery, onions and peppers.

Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally; cover and boil gently about 30 minutes or until vegetables are softened. Puree in a blender or food processor.

Return mixture to saucepan and cook uncovered until volume is reduced by half, about 45 minutes.

• Fill boiling water canner with water. Place five clean pint (500 mL) mason jars in canner over high heat. Boil Snap Lids 5 minutes to soften sealing compound.

• Tie peppercorns in a spice bag. Add spice bag and remaining ingredients to tomato mixture. Continue boiling gently until mixture is the consistency of ketchup, about 1 hour. As mixture thickens, stir frequently to prevent sticking. Discard spice bag.

• Ladle tomato sauce into a hot jar to within 1/2 inch (1 cm) of top rim (head space).

Remove air bubbles by sliding a rubber spatula between glass and food; re-adjust head space to 1/2 inch (1 cm). Wipe jar rim removing any stickiness. Center Snap

Lid on jar; apply screw band just until fingertip tight. Place jar in canner. Repeat for remaining sauce.

• Cover canner; return water to a boil; process 35 minutes at altitudes up to 1,000 ft (305 m). Remove jars. Cool 24 hours. Check jar seals. Sealed lids curve downward. Remove screw bands; store separately. Wipe jars, label and store in a cool, dark place.

• Makes 5 pint (500 mL) jars.

#### PIZZA SAUCE

Why order out for pizza when you've got this terrific basic sauce on hand?

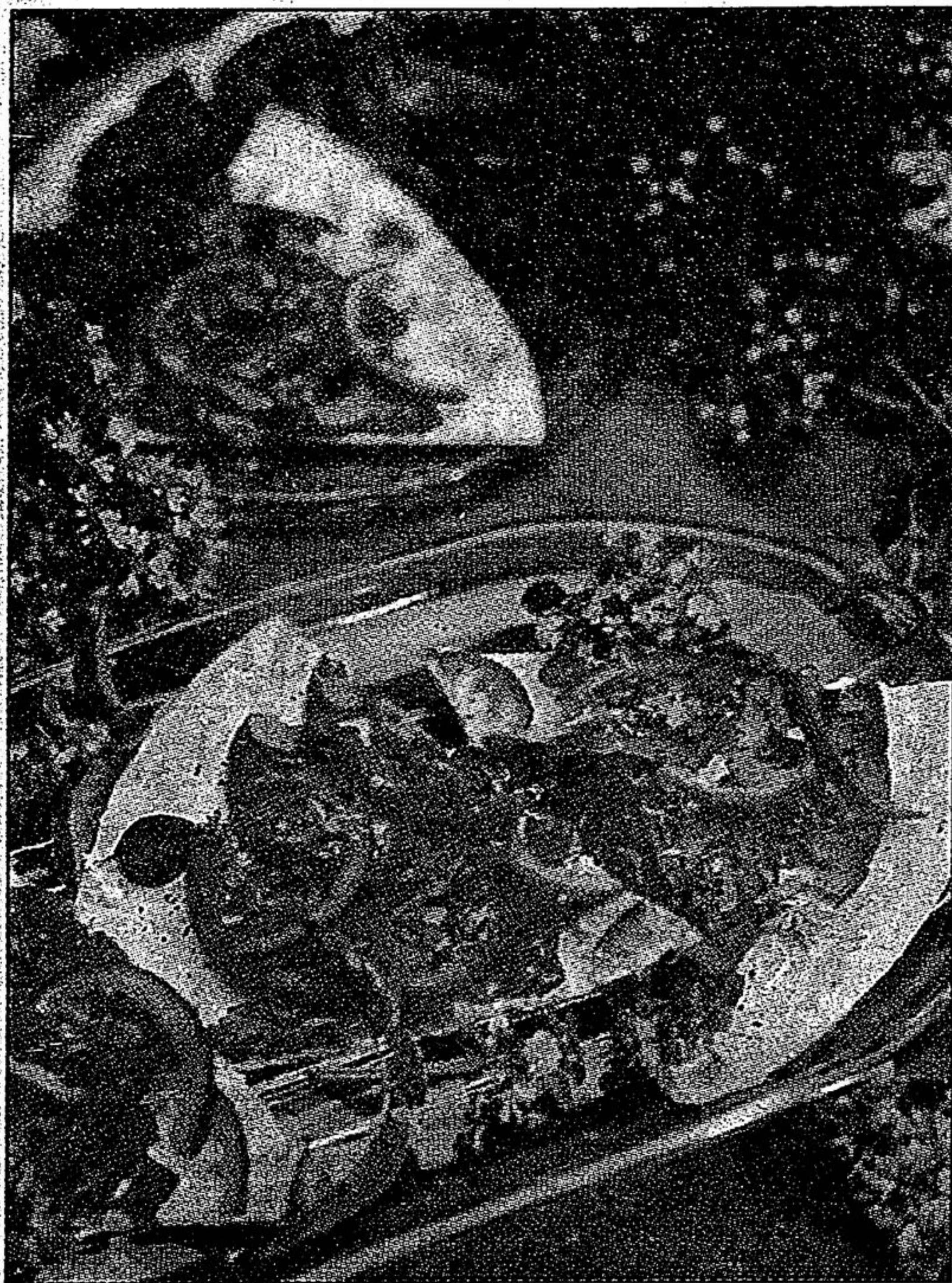
- 13 cups (3250 mL) prepared tomatoes, about 50 plum tomatoes (8 1/2 lbs/3.8 kg)
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) bottled lemon juice
- 2 1/4 tsp (11 mL) dried oregano leaves
- 1 tsp (5 mL) ground pepper
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt
- 3/4 tsp (4 mL) garlic powder

• Pass tomatoes through a food mill, measure 13 cups (3250 mL). (If you do not have a food mill, peel, core and chop tomatoes; place in a colander. Let stand 15 minutes; discard liquid and puree tomato pulp in a food processor).

• Fill boiling water canner with water. Place 4 clean pint (500 mL) mason jars in canner over high heat. Boil Snap Lids 5 minutes to soften sealing compound.

• Place half the tomato puree in a large stainless steel or enamel saucepan, bring to a boil. Maintaining a constant boil, add remaining tomato puree 1 cup (250 mL) at a time. Stir in lemon juice and spices. Boil hard, stirring frequently, about 15 minutes or until desired consistency is reached.

• Ladle tomato sauce into a hot jar to within 1/2 inch (1 cm) of top rim (head space). Remove air bub-



**BARBECUED TOMATO TORTILLAS:** If you can't bear to say goodbye to barbecue season yet, these Tomato Tortilla Appetizer Wedges (recipe below) are a perfect treat. Use fresh tomatoes and tasty cheddar cheese to make a delicious appetizer, which takes only minutes to prepare. And don't forget to make a few batches of tomato sauce.

bles by sliding a rubber spatula between glass and food; re-adjust head space to 1/2 inch (1 cm). Wipe jar rim removing any stickiness. Centre Snap Lid on jar; apply screw band just until fingertip tight. Place jar in canner. Repeat for remaining sauce.

• Cover canner; return water to a

boil; process 35 minutes at altitudes up to 1,000 ft (305 m). Remove jars. Cool 24 hours. Check jar seals. Sealed lids curve downward. Remove screw bands; store separately.

Wipe jars, label and store in a cool, dark place.

• Makes 4 pints (500 mL) jars.

### TOMATO TORTILLA APPETIZER WEDGES

Keep the heat out of the kitchen with these easy, tasty appetizers from Foodland Ontario. A wonderful combination of ripe field tomatoes, chevre cheese and garden-fresh herbs top a light, crisp base.

- Preparation time: 5 min
  - Cooking time: 7 min
  - Serves 4
  - 4 large flour tortillas
  - 5 oz (140 g) Ontario Chevre (goat cheese)
  - 3 ripe medium Ontario tomatoes
  - 1/4 cup (50 mL) pickled hot pepper rings (optional)
  - freshly-ground pepper
  - Snipped fresh herbs (basil, oregano, thyme or parsley)
- Pierce tortillas in several places with small sharp knife. Grill over

### RECIPES

medium heat on pre-heated barbecue until crisp and golden brown on both sides, 4 to 5 min.

Meanwhile, soften chevre, if necessary, in microwave for 30 seconds on medium-low (30 per cent) until it reaches spreading consistency. Halve, then thinly slice tomatoes.

Remove tortillas from heat. Spread evenly with chevre, arrange tomatoes and hot pepper rings (if using) over tortillas. Season to taste with pepper and herbs.

Return tortillas to grill, close lid and cook briefly until heated through, 1 to 2 min. To serve, cut into wedges with kitchen scissors.

## Are you a high-fat snacker?

I am one of the majority — I am a snacker.

According to a Quaker Oats poll, 84 per cent of Canadian households eat snacks.

To find out if you are part of the majority, take The Great Canadian Snacking Quiz.

#### TRUE OR FALSE

1. Wherever I am, there are snacks available.
2. I snack at least twice, if not three times a day.
3. For me, snacks are starting to replace meals.
4. When I snack, watching my fat intake is the farthest thing from my mind.
5. Life is too short to eat bad (tasting) snacks.
6. My ultimate snack, in three

descriptive words, would be...

7. I'd rather eat fewer regular snacks (i.e. higher-fat/calorie) than more low-fat/calorie snacks.

8. I snack more when I'm ... (circle as many as apply)

- Stressed out
- In the mood
- Feeling guilty
- At home and/or at work
- In a bad/blue mood
- At work
- Catching up on missed meals
- Going to miss a meal
- With other people, especially if they're snacking
- Pre-occupied with TV
- Needing to unwind
- Bored
- In a hurry
- In high spirits



### Food for Thought

Lisa Cartwright

- Alone  
- Too tired to cook  
- Really hungry

If you answered 'true' to the first five questions, consider yourself one of the majority.

But snacking isn't bad if you eat healthy snacks. Instead of grabbing a donut, double cheese and pepperoni pizza or french fries, pick up bagels, crackers, yogurt, dried fruits, cereal bars and rice cakes. (NC)