

Prep Time: 45 minutes

Cook Time: 90 minutes

Canning Time: 35-40 minutes (adjust for altitude)

Total Time: Approx. 3 hours

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Ingredients

- 5 kg (11 lbs) ripe tomatoes (Roma or San Marzano varieties are best for their low water content and meaty texture)
- 2 large onions, finely chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 large carrots, peeled and finely grated (for natural sweetness)

- 1 large red bell pepper, seeded and finely chopped (optional, for depth of flavor)
 - 2 tbsp olive oil
 - 1 tbsp salt (pickling or sea salt, non-iodized)
 - 1 tsp black pepper
 - 1 tbsp dried oregano
 - 1 tbsp dried basil
 - 1 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)
 - 2 tbsp bottled lemon juice (per pint jar) or 4 tbsp (per quart jar) – Crucial for acidity
 - Fresh basil leaves (optional, for garnish in the jar)
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Equipment

- Large stockpot or Dutch oven
- Water-bath canner with a rack

- Pint or quart canning jars, lids, and bands
 - Jar lifter, funnel, and bubble remover
 - Food mill or blender (optional, for a smoother sauce)
 - Clean kitchen towels
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Instructions

Part 1: Preparation (Time: 45 minutes | Intensity: Moderate)

1. **Sterilize Your Jars:** Wash jars, lids, and bands in hot, soapy water. Rinse well. Place jars in your water-bath canner, fill with water, and bring to a simmer (not a boil) to keep them hot. Place lids in a small saucepan of hot water (not boiling) to soften the rubber seals. Keep everything hot until ready to use.
2. **Prepare the Tomatoes:** Wash tomatoes thoroughly. Core them and cut a small “X” on the bottom. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Working in batches, blanch the tomatoes for 60 seconds, then transfer them to an ice bath. The skins will slip off easily. Peel the tomatoes and chop them roughly. (Alternatively, you can quarter them and skip the peeling if you plan to use a food mill later).
3. **Sauté the Aromatics:** In your large stockpot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onions and cook until soft and translucent (about 5-7 minutes). Add the

minced garlic and cook for another minute until fragrant.

Part 2: Cooking the Sauce (Time: 90 minutes | Intensity: Medium)

1. **Combine Ingredients:** Add the chopped tomatoes, grated carrots, and red bell pepper (if using) to the pot. Stir in the salt, black pepper, oregano, dried basil, and red pepper flakes.
2. **Simmer and Reduce:** Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce the heat to low. Simmer uncovered for 60-90 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. The sauce is ready when it has thickened to your desired consistency. A good test is to run a spoon through the sauce; if it leaves a clear trail that holds for a moment, it's done.
3. **Blend for Smoothness (Optional):** For a smoother sauce, use an immersion blender directly in the pot, or carefully transfer the sauce in batches to a blender. If you want a rustic texture, you can skip this step or use a potato masher for a chunkier sauce.
4. **Add Acidity:** This is the most critical step for safety. Before filling jars, add 2 tablespoons of bottled lemon juice to each pint jar or 4 tablespoons to each quart jar. Do not use fresh lemon juice, as its acidity can vary. The bottled lemon juice ensures the pH is low enough for safe water-bath canning.

Part 3: Canning the Sauce (Time: 40 minutes | Intensity: High)

1. **Fill the Jars:** Using your jar lifter, remove a hot jar from the canner and place it on a clean towel. Place your funnel on the jar. Ladle the hot sauce into the jar, leaving ½ inch (1 cm) of headspace. If using, press a fresh basil leaf against the inside of the jar.

2. **Remove Air Bubbles:** Run your bubble remover (or a plastic knife) around the inside of the jar to release trapped air. Wipe the rim of the jar with a clean, damp cloth to ensure a good seal.
3. **Seal and Process:** Place the lid on the jar and screw on the band until it is fingertip-tight. Using the jar lifter, lower the filled jar into the canner. Repeat with remaining jars.
4. **Water-Bath Processing:** Ensure the jars are covered by at least 1 inch (2.5 cm) of water. Bring the water to a rolling boil. Once boiling, start your timer. Process pint jars for 35 minutes and quart jars for 40 minutes. (Note: If you live above 1,000 feet/300 meters in altitude, you will need to add time. Add 5 minutes for 1,001-3,000 ft, 10 minutes for 3,001-6,000 ft, and 15 minutes for above 6,000 ft).
5. **Cool and Check Seals:** After processing, turn off the heat and let the jars sit in the canner for 5 minutes. Then, carefully remove the jars using the jar lifter and place them on a towel to cool completely, undisturbed, for 12-24 hours. You may hear a “ping” sound as the jars seal. After cooling, press the center of each lid; it should be firm and not pop up. Remove the bands and store in a cool, dark place.

Recipe Notes & Tips

- **Tomato Variety Matters:** Roma and San Marzano tomatoes are ideal because they are meatier and have less water, resulting in a thicker sauce with less reduction time.
- **Acidity is Non-Negotiable:** Never skip the bottled lemon juice. Tomatoes are borderline in acidity, and adding lemon juice ensures the sauce is safe for water-bath canning.

- **Thickening the Sauce:** If your sauce is too thin after 90 minutes, continue to simmer until it reaches your desired consistency. Do not add cornstarch or flour, as these are not safe for home canning.
 - **Altitude Adjustment:** Always account for your altitude when calculating processing time.
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Nutrition Information

Serving Size: 1/2 cup (125ml)

Calories: 50

Total Fat: 1.5g

Saturated Fat: 0g

Cholesterol: 0mg

Sodium: 380mg

Total Carbohydrates: 9g

Dietary Fiber: 2g

Total Sugars: 5g

Protein: 2g