

How To Bottle Tomatoes and Make Passata

Tomato harvest time is here and many Puglian residents will have a bumper crop. Lyn, the Puglian Pen, left us with a number of unpublished articles. One of which is this one - bottling tomatoes and making passata. Enjoy!

HOW TO BOTTLE

The first step is to sterilise the jars. The best jars to use are those with the dimple lids as these will reseal. Wash them thoroughly with warm soapy water, rinse really well then dry them thoroughly. Place them in a moderate oven (about 180 C/Gas mark 5) for at least 5 minutes. Always fill the jars while they are hot.

TO BOTTLE TOMATOES

Peel the tomatoes (see Passata recipe below) and pack into the jars adding any herbs like basil. Boil enough water to cover the tomatoes in the jars and add 2 dessertspoons of salt per half litre of water. Pour the boiled, salted water into jars making sure the tomatoes are covered. Tap sides of jars to get rid of any air bubbles. Bottle as above.

TO BOTTLE SAUCES/PASSATA

Transfer your cooked sauce into the jars and put the lids on but do not seal. Place the jars in a large pan of cold water (I allowed the jars containing the sauce to cool first as I was afraid they may crack on contact with the cold water). Make sure the jars do not touch one another. A typical old Italian method is to wrap each jar in newspaper and secure with string so that if they do touch they won't crack. The water in the pan should come about halfway up the jars. Bring the water to the boil and allow to bubble for 30 minutes.

Remove jars from the water and secure the lids as tightly as you can. Leave to cool. As the jars cool, you may here a pop which is a good sign that the jars are sealing. If you are using the dimple lids, before they are sealed you will feel a noticeable bump and to test that they have sealed properly, gently run your finger over the lid and they will be flat. If any jars do not seal, you can still freeze the sauce or use immediately.

PASSATA

Peel the tomatoes by scoring from top to bottom with a sharp knife and plunge them into boiling water for about 1 minute to loosen the skins. Drain the tomatoes and peel. Whizz the tomatoes in a food processor until pulped or push through a mincer. Pass the pulp through a sieve to remove the pips. Transfer to a pan on the hob, add salt to taste and bring to the boil. Simmer rapidly for 30 minutes until reduced to the required consistency. The longer you simmer, the thicker the passata.. Transfer the passata to the hot, sterilised jars and allow to cool, then follow instructions above. If you want to include other ingredients like herbs, onions, chilli or garlic, add at the cooking stage.

The above methods were taken from: NO GOING BACK-TUSCAN LIVING - by Sarah Fraser Check out her books for other great tips and recipes.