

Tomatoes, Basic and Fancy
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UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers

Look out into the garden and what can be seen? Tomatoes gone wild! Every summer, just about now, those innocent looking tomato plants become “TomatoZilla” and begin producing more tomatoes than ever imagined. Neighbors wake up to find bags full of tomatoes propped against the front door. The family begins to turn a peculiar shade of red/orange from eating Tomato Lasagna, Tomato Salad, Tomato Bread, and, for dessert, Tomato Cobbler. What can be done to stop the insanity?

Have no fear; the Master Food Preservers are here! Those intrepid volunteers tackle the task of the tenacious tomatoes with a free public education class titled “Tomatoes, Basic and Fancy,” being offered on August 4th at the UCCE office and again on August 7th at the Marshall Grange. Both classes will be held from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

Learn how to safely preserve tomatoes from experts in home food preservation. These volunteers demonstrate safe canning techniques and also prepare several recipes from the MFP files. Class attendees will learn how to correct the acidity of a variety of tomato products following tested recipes that ensure a proper balance for home food preservation.

Raw pack or hot pack; which is best? MFP volunteers answer questions like this about preserving tomatoes while demonstrating recipes included in the class hand-outs. In addition to canning plain tomatoes, learn how to spice it up a bit by including Italian, Mexican or Cajun spice blends to the basic tomato recipe. Want to get even wilder? The Chunky Tomato Salsa recipe remains a favorite year after year. What a wonderful way to taste the homegrown goodness of tomatoes any time of year. For those who want to really experience the delights of home canned tomato products, the MFPs offer (for a very modest fee) a publication, Tomato Basics, which gives detailed instructions for canning tomato paste, tomato sauce and stewed tomatoes, and advice on dehydrating and freezing tomatoes. This publication will be referred to often during tomato season!

Tame that “TomatoZilla” and enjoy the homegrown tomato flavor anytime with the confidence that proper, safe home preservation methods have been used to package and preserve the delicious bounty from the garden. As for the raw pack versus hot pack question, well, it depends. Check out August’s MFP newsletter to learn the difference, and come to the free public education class to ask the volunteers.

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/. Sign up to receive our new Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpenews/>.