

Freezing Raw Tomatoes

With and Without Their Skins

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It is possible to quickly freeze raw tomatoes without blanching them first. They may be frozen without their skins or frozen whole with their skins. Frozen tomatoes are best used in cooked foods such as soups, sauces and stews as they become mushy when they're thawed.



The University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources offers the following advice on freezing tomatoes in its publication, *Tomatoes: Safe Methods to Store, Preserve and Enjoy*, at <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8116.pdf> (3/2004).

Washing Tomatoes. Tomatoes should be washed before cutting. To wash, wet each tomato with water, rub its surface, rinse it with running water, and dry it with a paper towel. After washing, cut away the stem scar and surrounding area and discard it before slicing or chopping the tomato.

Washing tomatoes in a sink filled with water is not recommended since contaminated water can be absorbed through the fruit's stem scar. The use of soap or detergent is neither recommended nor approved for washing fruits and vegetables because they can absorb detergent residues.

Freezing Tomatoes. Tomatoes may be frozen whole, sliced, chopped, or puréed. Additionally, you can freeze them raw or cooked, as juice or sauce, or prepared in the recipe of your choice. Thawed raw tomatoes may be used in any cooked-tomato recipe. Do not try to substitute them for fresh tomatoes, however, since freezing causes their texture to become mushy. Tomatoes should be seasoned just before serving rather than before freezing; freezing may either strengthen or weaken seasonings such as garlic, onion, and herbs.

Preparation: Select firm, ripe tomatoes for freezing. Sort the tomatoes, discarding any that are spoiled. Wash them in clean water as recommended above. Dry them by blotting with a clean cloth or paper towels.

Freezing whole tomatoes with peels: Prepare tomatoes as described above. Cut away the stem scar. Place the tomatoes on cookie sheets and freeze. Tomatoes do not need to be blanched before freezing. Once frozen, transfer the tomatoes from the cookie sheets into freezer bags or other containers. Seal tightly. To use the frozen tomatoes, remove them from the freezer a few at a time or all at once. To peel, just run a frozen tomato under warm water in the kitchen sink. Its skin will slip off easily.

Freezing peeled tomatoes: If you prefer to freeze peeled tomatoes, you can wash the tomatoes and then dip them in boiling water for about 1 minute or until the skins split. Peel and then freeze as noted above.

For more information on freezing tomatoes: Check this link to the National Center for Home Food Preservation, hosted by the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service at <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/how/freeze/tomato.html>

Storage Time. To extend the time frozen foods maintain good quality, package foods in material intended for freezing and keep the temperature of the freezer at 0 degrees F or below. It is generally recommended frozen vegetables be eaten within about 8 months for best quality.