Judging Canned Tomatoes and Tomato Products

Headspace allowances for tomato products vary. Headspace for canned tomatoes, tomato juice and chile salsa is ½ inch. For tomato sauce and paste, headspace is ¼ inch. Headspace for ketchups is ⅛ inch.

Canned tomatoes and tomato products should meet all of the general characteristics for container, pack, appearance of contents and attractiveness.

### Desirable General Characteristics for Tomatoes and Tomato Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size and Shape</strong></td>
<td>Uniform pieces of same to similar size and shape.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pack – Tomatoes</strong></td>
<td>Attractive; neat; space well used. Good proportion of solids to liquid. Liquid covers all product with ½ inch headspace. No floating pieces. No skins. No sprouting seeds (a sign of over-mature tomatoes). Raw pack tomatoes without added liquid should be packed so that enough juice is extracted from the fruit to produce adequate covering liquid. This pack will not have tomatoes or pieces that retain uniform shapes; the tomatoes are squeezed as they are pushed into the jar to fill all the spaces and create juice.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pack – Juices and Sauces</strong></td>
<td>No seeds, peel or other foreign particles. No wasted space in jar.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Texture – Tomatoes</strong></td>
<td>Firm but ripened fruit used. Free from cores and green spots. If whole or halved hot packs, pieces retain shapes yet jars are filled as completely as possible with pieces.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Color</strong></td>
<td>Uniform bright color characteristic of variety throughout the pack. Free from brown or black spots, signs of mold, or discoloration. Color of tomato-vegetable juice blends may be lighter (less red) than pure tomato juice.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Liquid – Tomatoes</strong></td>
<td>Clear, bright if water; however, some tissue from the tomatoes will break off and be in the liquid. May be slightly tinted from color of tomatoes. Alternatively, strained tomato juice may be used as the covering liquid. Any liquid completely covers solids. No sediment, cloudiness, or bubbles. No foreign matter.</td>
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Desirable General Characteristics for Tomatoes and Tomato Products

Liquid – Juice
No separation.
Separation of tomato juice into a yellowish clear layer and red layer happens from enzymes found naturally in the tomatoes. A higher quality product will not have this problem; it is prevented or minimized by (1) heating the tomatoes immediately after peeling and cutting and (2) by squeezing rather than blending the tomatoes into juice.

Container
Properly labeled. Appropriate size for available recommended canning processes. Clean, clear standard canning jar. No cracks, chips, or rust on jar. Recommended lid with good vacuum seal. Band free of rust and dents or other damage; clean and easily removed.

Acidification
To ensure safe acidity in whole, crushed, or juiced tomatoes, the following should have been added: 2 tablespoons of bottled lemon juice or 1/2 teaspoon of citric acid per quart of tomatoes. (Use one tablespoon bottled lemon juice or 1/4 teaspoon citric acid per pint jar.) Vinegar is a less desirable choice because of undesirable flavor changes, but can be used: 4 tablespoons of a 5 percent acidity bottled vinegar per quart jar of tomatoes.

Judging Criteria for Additional Tomato Products

Standard Tomato Sauce
Only hot pack canning is recommended. Can vary in thickness, but should be thicker than drinking juice and more fluid than paste.

No pieces of tomato, seeds, skin, cores or stems. If juice is blended instead of being pressed or strained, discoloration from trapped air may have occurred during cooking and canning.


Judging Criteria for Additional Tomato Products

Spaghetti Sauce

Only hot pack canning is recommended. Consistency should be that of ready-to-serve thickness and uniform throughout jar. Pleasant, even color throughout jar. Added pieces of vegetables or meat should be uniform in size and of appropriate bite-size. No skins, cores or stems of tomatoes. No black flecks from burning (scorching).

Spaghetti sauce with vegetables, unlike plain standard tomato sauce, requires pressure processing.

Spaghetti sauce with meat requires pressure processing.

Tomato Salsas

Salsas are mixtures of acid and low-acid ingredients. The actual recipe will determine whether boiling water or pressure canning is appropriate. Salsa should have ingredients evenly distributed throughout jar. Pieces of vegetables should be uniform in size and of appropriate bite-size. No skins, cores or stems of tomatoes. Attractive coloring.

Tomatoes with Okra or Zucchini

Only hot pack canning is recommended. Products must be pressure canned. No stems of any vegetable. No skins or cores of tomatoes. Zucchini should be sliced or cubed; skin may be left on. Okra should be cut into uniform, easily eaten size pieces. Small pods may be left whole.

Catsups and Chili Sauces

No separation. Tomatoes should be heated immediately after peeling and cutting. Tomatoes should be cooked down, not blended, as this will incorporate air. Attractive, appetizing color. Thick, but movable consistency, uniform throughout jar. No peels, cores or stems.