

Roasting Tomatoes for Fast Winter Meals

In our house we eat a lot of tomatoes, particularly in pasta sauce, chilli, soups, and home-made salsa. A few years ago I was complaining to my aunt about not having enough time to can the abundance of ripe tomatoes in my garden. Getting set up, blanching tomatoes, sterilizing jars, and processing...nope, not enough time! She suggested roasting them in the oven...genius! Easier, way tastier, my life was changed! Now each September I roast and freeze a whole lot of tomatoes for use throughout the winter and spring. The flavour from roasted tomatoes is so rich and delicious it totally trumps the canned version in my opinion.

Admittedly preserving food in general is more time consuming than buying it from the store. But for me the flavour and quality of preserving fresh tomatoes from the garden or farmers market makes it totally worth it. Plus the investment of extra time in the fall means saving time throughout the winter by having ready-made pasta sauce or the base for chilli, soup, Mexican dishes, etc. ready to go in the freezer.

The other benefit to roasting tomatoes is certain nutrients, such as the antioxidant lycopene, become easier to absorb. Tomatoes are a great source of lycopene, which is thought to help prevent prostate cancer.

Roasting tomatoes is so easy that a specific recipe is not required just a few directions are all you need. Here is what I do. I like to use Roma tomatoes because they are not watery and the flavour becomes very concentrated. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Slice tomatoes in half and place on a large cookie sheet or baking dish. Add chopped onion and garlic (and any other garden vegetables you have on hand such as zucchini or peppers). Drizzle with olive oil and mix tomatoes so everything is coated. Arrange tomatoes cut side up and then bake for approximately one hour or until tomatoes look a bit shrivelled and caramelized.

Allow tomatoes to cool then puree in food processor or leave whole depending on how you plan to use them. Tomatoes that are not pureed can be peeled if desired (too finicky for me, I don't mind the skins). Transfer to medium sized freezer bags and lay flat to freeze as this creates more space efficient storage. Give it a try! Enjoy!

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