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# **United States Standards for Grades of Canned Tomato Paste**

**Effective June 12, 2026**

This issue of the United States Standards for Grades of Canned Tomato Paste (91 FR 26985) supersedes the previous issue which has been in effect since September 19, 1977.

Voluntary U.S. grade standards are issued under the authority of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, which provides for the development of official U.S. grades to designate different levels of quality. These grade standards are available for use by producers, suppliers, buyers, and consumers. As in the case of other standards for grades of fresh and processed fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops these standards are designed to facilitate orderly marketing by providing a convenient basis for buying and selling, for establishing quality control programs, and for determining loan values.

The U.S. grade standards and inspection instructions for all fresh and processed fruits, vegetables, and specialty crops are available on the internet and upon request at the address below. These documents provide detailed interpretations of the grade standards and provide step-by-step procedures for grading the product.

Grade standards are issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) after careful consideration of all data and views submitted during rulemaking. The Department welcomes suggestions for improving the standards in future revisions. Comments may be submitted to, and copies of standards and inspection instructions obtained from:

Director, Specialty Crops Inspection Division  
Specialty Crops Program,  
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, STOP 0240  
Washington, D.C. 20250

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**Authority:** 7 U.S.C. 1621-1627.

**Note:** Compliance with the provisions of these standards shall not excuse failure to comply with the provisions of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, or with applicable State laws and regulations.

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## United States Standards for Grades of Canned Tomato Paste

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## **Product Description, Concentration, Texture, Grades**

### **§52.5041 Product description.**

- (a) **Tomato Paste** is the clean sound, wholesome product as defined in the Standard of Identity for Tomato Paste (21 CFR §155.191) issued pursuant to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act and contains not less than 24.0 percent of natural tomato soluble solids.
- (b) The standards in this subpart cover canned tomato paste processed by heat to assure preservation in hermetically sealed containers as well as tomato paste which may be preserved by other means.

### **§52.5042 Concentration.**

The degree of concentration is not considered a factor of quality for the purposes of these standards, but the following designations of concentration may be used in connection with these standards for the applicable natural tomato soluble solids group:

| <b>Tomato Soluble Solids</b> |                                                |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Extra heavy concentration    | 39.3 percent or more                           |
| Heavy concentration          | 32 percent or more, but less than 39.3 percent |
| Medium concentration         | 28 percent or more, but less than 32 percent   |
| Light concentration          | 24 percent or more, but less than 28 percent   |

### **§52.5043 Texture.**

- (a) **Texture** is the degree of fineness or coarseness of the product. Texture is classified when the product is diluted with water to between 8 percent and 9 percent, inclusive, of natural tomato soluble solids.
- (b) **Kinds of texture.**
  - (1) **Fine** texture means smooth, uniform finish.
  - (2) **Coarse** texture means a coarse, slightly granular finish.

### **§52.5044 Grades.**

- (a) **U.S. Grade A** is the quality of tomato paste that:
  - (1) Has a good flavor and odor,
  - (2) Has a good color,

- (3) Is practically free from defects, and
  - (4) Scores not less than 90 points when scored in accordance with the scoring system outlined in this subpart.
- (b) **U.S. Grade C** is the quality of tomato paste that:
- (1) Has at least a fairly good flavor and odor,
  - (2) Has at least a fairly good color,
  - (3) Is at least fairly free from defects, and
  - (4) Scores not less than 80 points when scores in accordance with the scoring system outlined in this subpart.
- (c) **Substandard (SStd)** is the grade of tomato paste that fails to meet the requirements of U.S. Grade C.

#### **Fill of Container**

##### **§52.5045 Recommended fill of container.**

It is recommended that containers of tomato paste be filled as full as practicable without impairment of quality.

#### **Factors of Quality**

##### **§52.5046 Determining the grade of a sample unit.**

The grade of a sample unit of tomato paste is determined by considering the factor of flavor and odor which is not scored, the ratings for the factors of color and defects which are scored, the total score, and the limiting rules which apply.

- (a) **Factors not rated by score points.**
- (1) **Flavor and odor.**
    - (i) The flavor and odor of the product is determined on undiluted samples and also after dilution with water to between 8 percent and 9 percent, inclusive, of natural tomato soluble solids.
    - (ii) **Good flavor and odor** means a distinct tomato paste flavor characteristics of ripe, good quality tomatoes and inclusive of any optional ingredient which may have been added. Such flavor and odor may be no more than slightly affected by any one or combination of the following: stems, sepals, leaves, crushed seeds, cores; by immature, soured, or overripe tomatoes; from the

effects of unsatisfactory preparation, processing, or storage; or from any other factor not specifically mentioned.

(iii) **Fairly good flavor and odor** means a characteristic tomato paste flavor and inclusive of any optional ingredient which may have been added. Such flavor and odor may be affected, but not to a serious degree, by any one or combination of the following: stems, sepals, leaves, or crushed seeds, cores; by immature, soured or overripe tomatoes; from the effects of unsatisfactory preparation, processing, or storage; or from any other factor not specifically mentioned.

(iv) **Off flavor and odor** means tomato paste flavor that fails to meet the requirements of fairly good flavor and odor or which has a flavor and/or odor which is seriously objectionable.

(b) **Factors rated by score points.** The relative importance of each scoring factor is expressed numerically on the scale of 100. The maximum number of points that may be given each factor is:

| <b>Factors:</b>    | <b>Points</b> |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Color              | 50            |
| Defects            | 50            |
| <b>Total Score</b> | <b>100</b>    |

**§52.5047 Determining the rating for the factors which are scored.**

The essential variations within each factor which is scored are so described that the value may be determined numerically. The numerical range within each factor is inclusive. (For example, 45 to 50 points means 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, or 50 points).

**§52.5048 Color.**

The amount of red in tomato paste is determined by comparing the color of the product, diluted with water to 8.5 percent ( $\pm 0.1$  percent) of tomato soluble solids (TSS) with the USDA Color Standards for Tomato Products.

The availability and procedure for using the color standards may be obtained by contacting USDA.

Any method or device approved by the USDA (including electronic color meters) which gives equivalent results may be used.

**(a) Use of electric color meters.**

- (1)** Values that may be used for conversion to a numerical score point color evaluation of the product, diluted to 8.5 percent ( $\pm 0.1$  percent) natural tomato soluble solids, may be determined by any electronic color meter system approved by the USDA.
- (2)** The values derived with the approved electronic color meter system shall be resolvable into a calculated numerical score point by use of any appropriate conversion formula that has been approved by the USDA.

**(b) Grade A classification.**

- (1)** Tomato paste that has a good color may be given a score of 45 to 50 points.

**Good color** means a bright, typical, red tomato paste color. Such color when the product is diluted and observed as specified in this section, is as red as, or more red than the USDA Color Standard A2 for Tomato Products.

- (2)** Any calculated numerical score of 45 points for a diluted product shall be equivalent to a visually evaluated color score of 45 points produced under the conditions specified in paragraph (b)(1) of this section. Proportionately higher calculated numerical scores or visually assigned to diluted products which show more redness.

**(c) Grade C classification.**

- (1)** Tomato paste that has at least a fairly good color may be given a score of 40 to 44 points. Tomato paste that falls into this classification shall not be graded above U.S. Grade C regardless of the total score for the product (this is a limiting rule).

**Fairly good color** means a typical red tomato paste color which may be slightly dull or may have a slightly brownish cast. Such color, when the product is diluted and observed as specified in this section, is as red as, or more red than the USDA Color Standard C2 for Tomato Products.

- (2)** Any calculated numerical score of 40 points for a diluted product shall be equivalent to a visually evaluated color score of 40 points produced under the conditions specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section. Proportionately higher calculated numerical scores or visually assigned points may be assigned to diluted products which show more redness.

- (d) **Substandard (SStd) classification.** Tomato paste that fails to meet the requirement of paragraph (c) of this section may be given a score of 0 to 39 points and shall not be graded above Substandard regardless of the total score for the product (this is a limiting rule).

**§52.5049 Defects.**

This factor is concerned with the degree of freedom from defects such as dark specks or scale-like particles, seeds or objectionable tomato particles of seeds, objectionable tomato peel, harmless extraneous material, or any other similar substances.

- (a) **Grade A classification.** Tomato paste that is practically free from defects may be given a score of 45 to 50 points.

**Practically free from defects** means that any defects present do not more than slightly affect the appearance or usability of the product.

- (b) **Grade C classification.** Tomato paste that is fairly free from defects may be given a score of 40 to 44 points. Tomato paste that fails into this classification shall not be graded above U.S. Grade C regardless of the total score for the product (this is a limiting rule).

**Fairly free from defects** means that any defect present may be noticeable but are not so large, so numerous, nor of such contrasting color or nature as to seriously affect the appearance or usability of the product.

- (c) **Substandard classification.** Tomato paste that fails to meet the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section may be given a score of 0 to 39 points and shall not be graded above Substandard regardless of the total score for the product (this is a limiting rule).

**Lot Compliance**

**§52.5050 Determining the grade of a lot.**

The grade of a lot of tomato paste covered by these standards is determined by the procedures set forth in the Regulations Governing Inspection and Certification of Processed Fruits and Vegetables, Processed Products Thereof, and Certain Other Processed Food Products (7 CFR §52.1 through §52.83).



**Score Sheet****§52.5051     Score sheet for canned tomato paste.**

|                                                      |     |       |                    |              |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------|--------------------|--------------|
| Number, size, and kind of container                  |     |       |                    |              |
| Label                                                |     |       |                    |              |
| Container marks or identification                    |     |       |                    |              |
| Net weight (ounces)                                  |     |       |                    |              |
| Vacuum (inches)                                      |     |       |                    |              |
| Texture (fine or coarse)                             |     |       |                    |              |
| Refractive Index                                     |     |       |                    |              |
| Temperature                                          |     |       |                    |              |
| Tomato soluble solids (percent)                      |     |       |                    |              |
| Concentration (Extra Heavy, Heavy, Medium, or Light) |     |       |                    |              |
| Factors                                              |     | Grade |                    | Score Points |
| Color                                                | 50  | A     | 45-50              |              |
|                                                      |     | C     | 40-44 <sup>1</sup> |              |
|                                                      |     | SStd  | 0-39 <sup>1</sup>  |              |
| Defects                                              | 50  | A     | 45-50              |              |
|                                                      |     | C     | 40-44 <sup>1</sup> |              |
|                                                      |     | SStd  | 0-39 <sup>1</sup>  |              |
| Total Score                                          | 100 |       |                    |              |
| Flavor and odor (Good, Fairly Good, or Off)          |     |       |                    |              |
| U.S. Grade                                           |     |       |                    |              |

<sup>1</sup> Limiting Rule