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Division

United States Standards for Grades of Tomato Ketchup

Effective June 12, 2026

This issue of the United States Standards for Grades of Tomato Ketchup (91 FR 26985) supersedes the previous issue which has been in effect since February 26, 1992.

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

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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Identity and Grades
§52.2101 Identity.

Tomato ketchup means the product as defined in the standard of identity for catsup, ketchup, catchup (21 CFR §155.194) issued pursuant to the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

§52.2102 Grades of tomato ketchup.

- (a) **U.S. Grade A** is the quality of tomato ketchup that possesses a good color; that possesses a good consistency; that is practically free from defects; that possesses a good flavor; that possesses a good finish; that has a total solids content of not less than 33 percent, by weight; and that scores not less than 85 points when scored in accordance with the scoring system outlined in this subpart.
- (b) **U.S. Grade B** is the quality of tomato ketchup that possesses a good color; that possesses a good consistency; that is practically free from defects; that possesses a good flavor; that possesses a good finish; that has a total solids content of not less than 29 percent, by weight; and that scores not less than 85 points when scored in accordance with the scoring system outlined in this subpart.
- (c) **U.S. Grade C** is the quality of tomato ketchup that possesses a fairly good color; that possesses a fairly good consistency; that is fairly free from defects; that possesses a good finish; that possesses a fairly good flavor; that has a total solids content of not less than 25 percent, by weight; and that scores not less than 70 points when scored in accordance with the scoring system outlined in this subpart.
- (d) **Substandard** is the quality of tomato ketchup that fails to meet the requirements of U.S. Grade C.

Fill of Container

§52.2103 Recommended fill of container for tomato ketchup.

The recommended fill of container is not incorporated in the grades of the finished product since fill of container, as such, is not a factor of quality for the purposes of these grades. It is recommended that each container of tomato ketchup be filled as full as practicable without impairment of quality and that the product occupy not less than 90 percent of the capacity of the container.

Ascertaining the Grade and Rating
§52.2104 Ascertaining the grade.

The grade of tomato ketchup is ascertained by considering in conjunction with the requirements of the respective grade, the respective ratings for the factors of color, consistency, absence of defects, and flavor. The relative importance of each factor which is scored is expressed numerically on the scale of 100. The maximum number of points that may be given such factors are:

Factors:	Points
Color	25
Consistency	25
Absence of defects	25
Flavor	25
Total Score	100

§52.2105 Ascertaining 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 ascertained for each factor and expressed numerically. The numerical range within each factor which is scored is inclusive (for example, 17 to 20 points means 17, 18, 19, or 20 points).

Factors of Quality
§52.2106 Color.

The amount of red in the tomato ketchup is determined by comparing the color of the product with the USDA Color Standards for Tomato Products. The availability and procedure for using the color standards may be obtained by contacting the USDA.

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

- (a) **“A” and “B” classification.** Tomato ketchup that possesses a good color may be given a score of 21 to 25 points.

Good color means that the color is typical of tomato ketchup made from well-ripened red tomatoes and which has been properly prepared and properly processed. Such color contains as much red as, or more red than the USDA Color Standard A2 for Tomato Products. To receive a score in this classification, tomato ketchup, when packed in glass, shall show no discoloration in the “neck” of the bottle.

- (b) **“C” classification.** If the tomato ketchup possesses a fairly good color, a score of 17 to 20 points may be given. Tomato ketchup 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 that the color is typical of tomato ketchup and contains as much or more red than that produced by comparing a sample to the USDA Color Standard C2 for Tomato Products.

- (c) **“SStd” classification.** Tomato ketchup that fails to meet the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section may be given a score of 0 to 16 points and shall not be graded above Substandard, regardless of the total score for the product (this is a limiting rule).

§52.2107 Consistency.

The factor of consistency refers to the viscosity of the product and the tendency to hold its liquid portion in suspension.

- (a) **“A” and “B” classification.** Tomato ketchup that possesses a good consistency may be given a score of 22 to 25 points.

Good consistency means tomato ketchup shows not more than slight separation of free liquid when poured on a flat grading tray, is not excessively stiff, and flows not less than 3.0 centimeters nor more than 7.0 centimeters in 30 seconds at 20 degrees Celsius in the Bostwick consistometer. Within this range, the higher consistency ketchup will receive the higher score points.

- (b) **“C” classification.** Tomato ketchup that possesses a fairly good consistency may be given a score of 18 to 21 points. Tomato ketchup that falls into this classification shall not be graded above U.S. Grade C regardless of the total score for the product.

Fairly good consistency means tomato ketchup may show a noticeable, but not excessive, separation of free liquid when poured on a flat grading tray, is not excessively stiff, and is outside the limits of flow for good consistency but flows not less than 2.0 centimeters nor more than 10.0 centimeters in 30 seconds at 20 degrees Celsius in the Bostwick consistometer. Within this range, ketchup approaching good consistency would receive higher score points.

- (c) **“SStd” classification.** Tomato ketchup that fails to meet the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section may be given a score of 0 to 17 points and shall not be graded above Substandard, regardless of the total score for the product.

§52.2108 Absence of defects.

The factor of absence of defects refers to the degree of freedom from defects such as: dark specks or scale-like particles, seeds, particles of seed, tomato peel, core material, or other similar substances. This factor is evaluated by observing a layer of the product on a smooth white, flat surface. Such layer is prepared by drawing a scraper with a clearance of 3/32-inches high by 7-inches long rapidly through the product in two horizontal planes to form an approximate square.

- (a) **“A” and “B” classification.** Tomato ketchup that is practically free from defects may be given a score of 21 to 25 points.

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

- (b) **“C” classification.** If the tomato ketchup is fairly free from defects, a score of 18 to 20 points may be given. Tomato ketchup that falls into this classification shall not be scored 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 defects present may be noticeable but are not so large, so numerous, or of such contrasting color as to seriously affect the appearance or eating quality of the product.

- (c) **“Sstd” classification.** Tomato ketchup that fails to meet the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section may be given a score of 0 to 17 points and shall not be graded above Substandard, regardless of the total score for the product (this is a limiting rule).

§52.2109 Flavor.

- (a) **“A” and “B” classification.** Tomato ketchup that possesses a good flavor may be given a score of 21 to 25 points.

Good flavor means a good, distinct flavor characteristic of good quality ingredients. Such flavor is free from scorching or any objectionable flavor of any kind.

- (b) **“C” classification.** If the tomato ketchup possesses only a fairly good flavor, a score of 17 to 20 points may be given. Tomato ketchup 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 flavor means a flavor characteristic of the ingredients in which there may be slight traces of undesirable flavor such as scorched, bitter, or astringent, but is free from objectionable or off flavor of any kind.

- (c) **“SStd” classification.** Tomato ketchup that fails to meet the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section may be given a score of 0 to 16 points and shall not be graded above Substandard, regardless of the total score for the product (this is a limiting rule).

Definitions

§52.2110 Definitions of terms used in these standards.

- (a) **Total solids** in tomato ketchup for the purposes of these standards is the refractometric sucrose value of the filtrate determined in accordance with the Methods of Analyses for Tomato Products Solids Content Determinations to which value is added one percent.
- (b) **Good finish** means that the product has a uniform, smooth texture.

Lot Inspection and Certification

§52.2111 Ascertaining the grade of a lot.

The grade of a lot of the processed product 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).