

Chef's Technique: Tomatoes Concassée

Tomatoes concassée (pronounced CON-cah-see) is a fancy French term for peeled and seeded tomatoes. You end up with just the outer flesh of the tomato. This is important for texture and uniform cooking in various dishes. When making a delicate pan sauce, you don't want little flakes of skin or seeds floating around after they have separated from the tomato flesh. Whole tomatoes contain a lot of water in the middle, which could upset the critical liquid ratio in a sauté. Concassée sounds complicated, but it's not hard, and the results are more than worth the effort. One Roma tomato yields about 1/4 cup of concassée.



Removing the Skin

Fill a 3-quart sauce pan with about six inches of water and bring it to a rolling boil. With a paring knife, slice the tomato skin lengthwise, from top to bottom. Be careful to just cut through the skin and no deeper. Repeat on the other side of the tomato. Repeat in the middle of each uncut side, so that you end up with the skin in four pieces. Put some ice in a small bowl and add water, leaving enough room for the tomatoes. Using a stainless steel spider skimmer or slotted spoon, drop one tomato in the boiling water. Turn the tomato around to look at all sides while it is boiling and floating. This only takes about 20 seconds or so, depending on the ripeness of the tomato. As soon as you see any corner of skin pull away from the tomato and the cuts just barely begin to spread apart, pull the tomato out and drop it in the ice water. Peel the skin off the tomato and discard the skin.



Removing the Seeds and Water

Cut the tomato lengthwise into quarters. On each wedge, scoop out and discard the middle part with the water, seeds, and pulp. Notice that I cut in the direction away from me. You should end up with four flat oval pieces of seedless tomato flesh. Slice a flat piece lengthwise into 1/4-inch wide slices. Line them up together and cut across to make 1/4-inch cubes ("small dice").

