

8

TOP  
Ketchups  
TESTED

# Tomato triumph

Roz Crowley

**K**ETCHUP originated in the East as a type of spicy sauce often made with soya, but today it usually means any kind of vinegar-based accompaniment for food. I have made a mushroom ketchup without vinegar — handy for gluts of the vegetable and good with beef (see the recipe on my blog at rozcrowley.com) but it is tomato ketchup that is most popular today and what we have focused on for our survey.

It can rescue the dullest hamburger and for many is an essential condiment for sausages. In hard times a tomato sauce sandwich is not bad at all, and has the advantage of having quite a few health benefits. While fresh tomatoes have more vitamin C, ketchup may still contain antioxidants and beta carotene and lycopene are suggested have

anti-cancer properties (breast and prostate in particular) and could be useful against heart disease. However, those suffering from rheumatoid arthritis should watch tomatoes for pain aggravation. As with most manufactured products, we have to watch the amount of salt and sugar.

Tomatoes contain natural sugars, so the total number listed may not be worth worrying about. Ketchup delivers about 120 calories per 100g. A squirt of it is usually about 40g so about 50 calories need to be factored in to a weight-watching programme.

Overall, tasters liked all the samples, at least those which made the final eight. We used gram quantities in our calculations. If ketchup has no thickener, it may be suitable for coeliacs.



**Hellmann's tomato ketchup, 477g, €2.39 (€5/100g)**  
Nice, rich tomatoey flavour with 169g of tomatoes used to make 100g of ketchup — the highest amount of tomatoes reduced to make the pulp. Mellow flavour with smoothened out vinegar and spices. Good, even texture, with no thickener.  
**Score: 9**



**Heinz tomato ketchup, 460g, €2.49 (€5.40/kg)**  
The 148g of tomatoes per 100g of ketchup is high and there is also spirit vinegar, sugar, and reasonable salt at 1.8%. Nice, fresh flavour with some spice and herb extract. No thickeners, which is good, but it needs a good shake before squirting.  
**Score 8.5**



**Meridian organic tomato ketchup 285g, €2.52 (€8.80/kg)**  
In a glass bottle and made from 69% partially reconstituted organic concentrated tomato purée, the flavour is not as strong as other samples, and has a strong hint of cloves. Maize starch is used to thicken it and it is labeled free from gluten. All ingredients are certified organic, but not sure the price is justified. From organic and wholefood shops.  
**Score: 7**



**Lidl Fresh Meadow organic ketchup, 500g, €1.29 (€2.60/kg)**  
Made from 70% organic concentrated tomato purée, the flavour is not zinging with fresh tomato flavours. It's quite a dense taste, nicely rich, and a very good price for organic.  
**Score: 7.75**



**Chef tomato ketchup, 735g, €2.69 (€3.70/100g)**  
What we expect in a ketchup, with plenty of tomato flavour from 140g tomatoes for 100g ketchup and a nice hit of vinegar. A little over-sweet for burgers and, at 2.5%, high enough in salt. Thickened with maize starch, but not too much.  
**Score: 7**



**TKC tomato ketchup, 485g, €2.09 (€4.30/kg)**  
Made in Co Wicklow by the Tomato Ketchup Company, the relatively low 150g tomatoes per 100g ketchup has no thickeners and some onion and garlic powder, resulting in quite a different, more vinegary, less sweet taste compared to other samples. Interesting.  
**Score: 8**



**Aldi Bramwells tomato ketchup, 560g, 75c (€1.30/kg)**  
The cheapest of our samples, 132g tomatoes has been used per 100g ketchup, with modified maize starch to thicken. The salt at 1.6% is average and there are quite a lot of spices. For those who want a kick of flavour and a good price.  
**Score: 7.5**



**Reggae Reggae tomato ketchup, 490g, €2 (€4.10/kg)**  
Hot, but with 16% tomato purée very low on tomato flavour. No depth of flavour at all, just spices from red scotch bonnet chilli. A ketchup, but not a tomatoey one. The thickener is modified maize starch and with water top of the list of ingredients there may be a lot of it used. The ingredients list notes that the barley malt vinegar contains gluten. Price varies. This one was on offer.  
**Score: 6**