



## ***Food Safety & Preservation:***

### **Canning Salsa**

*SP 50-661, Revised May 2009*

Most salsa recipes are a mixture of low-acid foods, such as onions and peppers, with acid foods, such as tomatoes. These salsa recipes have been tested to assure that they contain enough acid to be processed safely in a boiling water canner.

#### **Ingredients**

##### **Tomatoes**



The type of tomato you use often affects the quality of salsas. Paste tomatoes, such as Roma, have firmer flesh and produce thicker salsas than large slicing tomatoes.

Although both types make good salsas, slicing tomatoes usually yield a thinner, more watery salsa than paste tomatoes. Canning is not a good way to use overripe or spoiling tomatoes. Use only high quality tomatoes for canning salsa or any other tomato product. Do not use tomatoes from dead or frost-killed vines. Poor quality or overripe tomatoes will yield a very poor product and may spoil. Where recipes call for peeled or skinned tomatoes, remove the skin by dipping tomatoes into boiling water for 30-60 seconds or until skins split. Dip in cold water, then slip off skins and remove cores and seeds. You may substitute green tomatoes or tomatillos for tomatoes in any of these recipes.

##### **Peppers**



Peppers range from mild to fiery in taste. Very hot peppers are usually small (1 to 3 inches long); mild peppers are usually bigger (4 to 10 inches long). Anaheim, Ancho, College, Colorado and Hungarian Yellow Wax are mild pepper varieties. Choose a mild pepper such as the Anaheim when the recipe calls for long green chilies. The small, very hot peppers are used to provide a distinct taste to the salsas. Jalapeno is the most popular hot pepper. Other varieties include Serrano, Cayenne, Habañero and Tabasco. **Use rubber gloves when you cut or dice these peppers because they cause extreme irritation to the skin.** Be very careful that you do not touch your face. Particularly the areas around your eyes, when you are working with hot chilies.

Use only high quality peppers. Do not increase the total amount of peppers in any recipe. However, you may substitute one type of pepper for another.

The skin of long green chilies is rather tough and can be removed by heating the peppers. Hot peppers such as the jalapeno do not need to be peeled, but seeds are often removed.

To peel chilies, slit each pepper along the side to allow steam to escape. Peel using one of these two methods:

1. Oven or broiler method—Place peppers in a hot oven (400° F.) or broiler for 6-8 minutes until skins blister.

2. Range-top method—Cover hot burner, either gas or electric, with heavy wire mesh. Place peppers on burner for several minutes until skins blister.

After heating, place peppers in a pan and cover with a damp cloth. (This will make peeling the peppers easier). Cool several minutes; slip off skins. Discard seeds and chop.

**CAUTION: WEAR PLASTIC GLOVES WHILE HANDLING HOT CHILIES**

### Tomatillos



Tomatillos are also known as Mexican husk tomatoes. Tomatillos do not need to be peeled or seeded, but the dry outer husk must be removed.

### Acids

The acid ingredients used in salsa help preserve it. You must add acid to canned salsas, because the natural acidity may not be high enough. The commonly used acids in home canning are vinegar, lemon and lime juice. Lemon and lime juices are more acidic than vinegar, but has less effect on flavor. Use only vinegar, which is at least 5% acid and use only bottled lemon and lime juices.

If you wish, you may safely substitute an equal amount of lemon juice for vinegar in recipes using vinegar. **Do Not** substitute vinegar for lemon juice. This substitution will result in a less acid and potentially unsafe salsa.

### Spices

Spices and herbs add flavoring to salsas. The amount of spices and herbs may be altered in these recipes. Cilantro and cumin are often used in spicy salsas. You may leave them out if you prefer a salsa with a milder taste. For a stronger cilantro flavor, add fresh cilantro just before serving the salsa.

**IMPORTANT:** Follow the directions carefully for each recipe. Use the amounts of each vegetable listed in the recipe. Add the amount of vinegar, lemon or lime juice listed. You may change the amount of spices, if desired. Salsas, which do not follow these or other research-tested recipes, should not be canned. They may be frozen or stored in the refrigerator. Do not thicken these salsas with flour or cornstarch before canning. After you open a jar to use, you may pour off some of the liquid or thicken with cornstarch.

**Filling the Jars** - Follow manufacturer's directions for pretreating lids. Fill hot jars with the hot salsa, being careful not to leave any salsa on the rims. Wipe jar rims with a clean, damp paper towel. Put on lids and screw on metal bands.

### Processing

#### Processing in a Water-Bath Canner

1. Use a rack to keep jars from touching canner bottom and to allow heat to reach all sides of the filled jars.
2. Put jars into canner, which contains simmering water.

3. Add additional boiling water, if needed, to bring water 1 to 2 inches above jar tops. Don't pour water directly on the jars. Place a tight-fitting cover on canner. (If a pressure canner is used for water-bath canning, leave the cover unfastened and the petcock open to prevent buildup of pressure.)
4. Bring water back to a rolling boil. Set a timer for recommended processing time. Watch closely to keep water boiling gently and steadily. Add boiling water if necessary to keep jars covered.
5. Remove jars from canner immediately when timer sounds. Spoilage could occur if jars are left in hot water.

**Cooling Jars** - Put jars on a rack or cloth so air can circulate freely around them. There should not be a cold draft or fan blowing on the jars. Screw bands should not be retightened after processing.

**Testing for Seal** - Test each jar for a seal the day after canning. Jars with flat, metal lids are sealed if:

1. Lid has popped down in the center
2. Lid does not move when pressed down.
3. Tapping the center of the lid with a spoon gives a clear, ringing sound (this is the least reliable method).

If a jar is not sealed, refrigerate the contents and use soon, or reprocess. Reprocess within 24 hours. When reprocessing, the salsa must first be heated to a boil before packing in the hot jars. Wipe rims clean. Use a new lid and process for full time listed.

**Storing** - Wipe jars. Label with the date and contents of the jar. Remove the screw bands so lid under them will not cause rusting.

Store jars in a cool, dark place. For best eating quality and nutritive value, use within one year. Heat, freezing temperatures, light, or dampness will decrease quality and shelf life of canned food.

**Before Using** - Before opening each jar, look for bulging lids or rings, for leaks and for any unusual appearance of the food. After opening, check for off-odor, mold or foam. If there is any sign of spoilage, destroy the food.

**IMPORTANT: The only changes you can safely make in these salsa recipes are to substitute lemon juice for vinegar and to change the amount of spices and herbs. Do not alter the proportions of vegetables to acid and tomatoes, because it might make the salsa unsafe.**

### **Chili Salsa (Hot Tomato-Pepper Sauce)**

10 cups peeled, cored, chopped tomatoes	1 cup vinegar
6 cups seeded, chopped chili peppers*	3 teaspoons salt
4 cups chopped onions	½ teaspoon pepper

*Yield: 6 to 8 pints*

Combine ingredients in a large saucepan. Heat to a boil and simmer 10 minutes. Ladle hot into pint jars, leaving ½ inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner: 15 minutes at 0-1,000 feet altitude, 20 minutes at 1,001-6,000 feet; 25 minutes above 6,000 feet.

\* Use mixture of mild and hot peppers.

### Tomato-Tomato Paste Salsa

3 quarts peeled, chopped and cored slicing tomatoes	2 12-oz. cans tomato paste
4 long green chilies, peeled, seeded, and chopped	2 cups lemon juice
3 cups chopped onion	1 Tablespoon salt
6 jalapeno peppers, seeded and finely chopped	1 Tablespoon sugar
1 Tablespoon ground cumin	1 teaspoon black pepper
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped	2 Tablespoons oregano leaves

*Yield: 7 pints*

Combine all ingredients, bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Ladle hot into pint jars, leaving ½ inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner: 15 minutes at 0-1,000 feet altitude; 20 minutes at 1,000-6,000 feet.

### Tomatillos Green Salsa

5 cups chopped tomatillos*	1 cup lemon juice
1½ cups peeled, seeded and chopped long green chilies	1 Tablespoon ground cumin
4 cups chopped onion	3 Tablespoons oregano leaves
½ cup seeded, finely chopped jalapeno peppers	1 Tablespoon salt
6 cloves garlic, finely chopped	1 teaspoon black pepper

*Yield: 4 pints*

Mix all ingredients and stir frequently over high heat until mixture begins to boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Ladle hot into pint jars, leaving ½ inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner: 15 minutes at 0-1,000 feet altitude; 20 minutes at 1,001-6,000 feet; 25 minutes above 6,000 feet.

\*Green tomatoes may be used in this recipe instead of tomatillos.

### Tomato Taco Sauce

8 quarts peeled, cored, finely chopped tomatoes	2½ cups vinegar
2 cloves garlic, crushed	2 Tablespoons salt
5 cups chopped onion	1½ teaspoons black pepper
4 jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped	1 Tablespoon sugar
2 Tablespoons oregano leaves	1 teaspoon ground cumin (optional)
4 long green chilies, peeled, seeded and chopped	

*Yield: 11 pints*

Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, stirring frequently until thickened (about 1 hour). Pack hot mixture into pint jars, leaving ½ inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in boiling water canner: 15 minutes for 0-1,000 feet altitude; 20 minutes at 1,001-6,000 feet; 25 minutes above 6,000 feet.

This recipe works best with paste tomatoes. Slicing tomatoes will yield a thin, watery product. If you only have slicing tomatoes available, you can use the Tomato-Tomato Paste Salsa.

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