

SALSA

What is Salsa?

Salsa is a mixture of low-acid foods, such as onions and peppers, and high acid foods, such as tomatoes. In order to home can salsa, you must use a recipe that has been tested by an accredited laboratory to insure safety.

Only USDA approved recipes should be used for home canned salsa. They have been tested and certified safe. All recipes must be followed exactly in regards to acidity and processing times. **Never home can "original" salsa recipes! Freeze them instead.**

Home canned salsa can result in Botulism poisoning, a rare but serious illness caused by clostridium botulinum bacteria. Salsa contains both high acid and low acid ingredients. **Low acid food must be pressure canned.** The water bath method of canning salsa is acceptable provided the recipe meets the approved level of acidity.

Processing

- ✂ Prepare salsa according to directions and keep hot.
- ✂ Wash jars, rings, and lids.
- ✂ Follow manufacturer's instructions for pre-treating lids.
- ✂ Fill canner halfway with water and heat to boiling.
- ✂ Ladle salsa into jars leaving ½ inch headspace.
- ✂ Wipe jar rims with damp cloth and place hot lids on top. Tighten rings until snug.
- ✂ Lower jars into water, adding additional boiling water until it covers the jar by 1 to 2 inches. Bring water to boiling.
- ✂ Begin timing when water starts to boil.
- ✂ When processing time has elapsed, turn off stove. Remove jars from canner.
- ✂ Place jars on towel away from drafts. Leave a one inch space between jars. Do not re-tighten lids! Leave jars unmoved for 12 to 24 hours. Before storing, remove rings (they are likely to rust if left on jars).

Chile Salsa

(about 6 to 8 pint jars)

- 10 cups peeled, cored, chopped tomatoes
- 6 cups seeded, chopped chili peppers
(use mixture of mild and hot peppers but do not exceed 6 cups total peppers)
- 4 cups chopped onions
- 1 cup vinegar (5%), or bottled lemon juice or lime juice
- 3 teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Hot pack—Prepare chili peppers as directed above. Peel, wash and dice onions. Wash tomatoes and dip in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds or until skins split. Dip in cold water, slip off skins and remove cores. Coarsely chop tomatoes and combine them with chopped peppers, onions, and remaining ingredients in a large saucepan. Heat to boiling; then reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes. Fill hot salsa into hot jars, leaving



½-inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and adjust headspace if needed. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened clean paper towel.

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 altitude
- 25 minutes above 6,000 feet altitude

Caution: When cutting or seeding hot peppers, wear rubber gloves to prevent hands from being burned. Do not touch face or eyes.

CUSTOMIZING YOUR SALSA

Tomatoes

The type of tomato will affect the consistency of salsa. Paste tomatoes, such as Roma, have more and usually firmer flesh than slicing tomatoes. Slicing tomatoes yield a thinner, more watery salsa. Do not drain or squeeze tomatoes to remove the liquid and juices or you will remove some of the needed acids. When preparing salsa for canning, use only ripe or under-ripe tomatoes. Never use overripe tomatoes or tomatoes from dead or frost-killed vines. Green tomatoes or tomatillos may be used for ripe tomatoes, but the flavor of the recipe will change.

Acids

The acid ingredients help preserve canned salsa and must be added to the salsa because the natural acidity of the mixture without them will not be safe enough. Use only vinegar that is labeled 5% acidity. Store bought lemon and lime juice can be substituted for vinegar in equal amounts. Do not use homemade vinegar or fresh squeezed lemon or lime juice.

Peppers

Use only high quality peppers. One type of pepper can be substituted for another, including bell peppers (mild) for some or all of the chilies. However, **do not increase the total amount or peppers in any recipe.**

Spices

The amount of dry spices may be altered or left out. Cilantro, cumin, and oregano are often used in spicy salsa. Leave these out for a milder flavor. For a stronger cilantro flavor, it is best to add fresh cilantro just before serving.

Other ingredients

Red, yellow or white onions may be substituted for each other. **Do not increase the total amount of onions in any recipe.**

Do not thicken salsas with flour, cornstarch, or other starches before canning. If a thicker salsa is desired, you can pour off some of the liquid or add thickening ingredients after opening.

Warning: **Improperly home canned salsa can be hazardous to your health!** Use only USDA approved recipes.

USDA approved publications:

USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning
PNW 395 "Salsa Recipes for Canning"
Ball "Blue Book of Preserving"
"So Easy to Preserve"

Contact your local Extension office for more information.

Or check the USDA recommendations online at

http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/publications/publications_usda.html
<http://www.homefoodpreservation.com>

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Adapted from Extension publication number PNW 395 "Salsa Recipes for Canning" and "So Easy to Preserve"

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