

FOOD PRESERVATION

Let's Preserve Salsa

Make Salsa Safely With These Tips

- Follow the formulation exactly and measure/weigh ingredients carefully. Use bottled lemon or lime juice or vinegar as indicated.
- Handle hot peppers carefully: Wear plastic gloves and wash your hands before touching your face.
- In canning recipes calling for spices, you may decrease the amount of spice (cumin, oregano, pepper, etc.) safely, but do not increase the spice amounts.
- To alter the "heat" in salsa, you can substitute one type of pepper for another safely, but keep the total amount of pepper the same.
- Do not thicken salsas with cornstarch before canning. If the salsa appears thin, it can be heated and thickened with cornstarch or some of the excess juice may be strained away *after opening the jars*.
- Before beginning to prepare salsa for canning, fill the water-bath canner about half full of clean water. For hot-packed food (such as the example salsa recipes), preheat the water in the canner to about 180 F. Use a rack in the canner.
- Start with clean jars, and heat them in a pan of hot water. Heat lids as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Fill jars, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of head space. After filling the jars with food, remove trapped air bubbles with a nonmetallic spatula, adjusting head space if needed.
- Wipe the rim of each jar carefully with a cloth or paper towel and apply the lid and screw ring. Do not overtighten the screw ring. It should be only "finger tight" or the lids may not seal properly.
- Place the jars in the canner using a jar lifter positioned below the screw band of the lid. Keep the jars upright at all times.
- Add boiling water, as needed, to bring the water level at least 1 inch over the jar tops.
- Begin timing when the water boils. Keep the canner covered during processing. The water should remain boiling at all times.
- When the processing time is complete, carefully remove the jars from the canner, using a jar lifter. Place the jars at least 1 inch apart on cooling racks or towels to cool at least 12 hours. Do not retighten the screw rings. Do not expose the jars to a cold surface or cold drafts, which could lead to cracking or breaking.
- Test seals the next day. A concave lid that does not move when pressed indicates you have a good seal. Remove the screw rings. Label sealed jars with the contents and canning date.
- Unsealed jars may be reprocessed safely **within 24 hours**, or the jars of salsa may be refrigerated for fresh consumption. To reprocess, empty the salsa into a pan, heat to boiling and ladle the mixture into clean, hot jars. Use new lids and process for the full recommended time. The quality and nutrient content of twice-processed food may be lower, but the product will be safe to consume.

Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., L.R.D.
Food and Nutrition Specialist

How about some chips and salsa? While many excellent types of salsa are available in supermarkets, you can tailor homemade fresh salsa with fresh vegetables or fruits to suit your own taste buds. By following research-tested recipes, you can process salsa safely in a water-bath canner for later enjoyment. If your recipe has not been tested to determine its acidity and safety for canning, you can freeze the salsa.

PEACH-APPLE SALSA

Yield: About 7 pint jars

- 6 c. (2¼ pounds) chopped Roma tomatoes
(about 3 pounds of tomatoes as purchased*)
- 2½ c. diced yellow onions (about 1 pound or 2 large onions as purchased*)
- 2 c. chopped green bell peppers (about 1½ large peppers as purchased*)
- 10 c. (3½ pounds) chopped hard, unripe peaches
(about 9 medium peaches or 4½ pounds of peaches as purchased*)
- 2 c. chopped Granny Smith apples (about 2 large apples as purchased*)
- 4 Tbsp. mixed pickling spice
- 1 Tbsp. canning salt
- 2 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- 3¾ c. (1¼ pound) packed light brown sugar
- 2¼ c. cider vinegar (5 percent)

**As purchased weight is the amount of what you buy or pick. The fruit or vegetable has not been trimmed or cooked.*

1. Wash and rinse pint canning jars; keep hot until ready to use.
2. Prepare lids according to manufacturer's directions.
3. Place pickling spice on a clean, double-layered, 6-inch-square piece of 100 percent cheesecloth. Bring corners together and tie with a clean string. (Or use a purchased muslin spice bag).
4. Wash and peel tomatoes (place washed tomatoes in boiling water for one minute, then immediately place in cold water and slip off skins). Chop into ½-inch pieces.
5. Peel, wash and dice onions into ¼-inch pieces.
6. Wash, core and seed bell peppers; chop into ¼-inch pieces. Combine chopped tomatoes, onions and peppers in an 8- or 10-quart Dutch oven or saucepot.
7. Wash, peel and pit peaches; cut into halves and soak for 10 minutes in an ascorbic acid solution (1,500 milligrams of ascorbic acid in ½ gallon of water).
8. Wash, peel and core apples; cut into halves and soak for 10 minutes in ascorbic acid solution.
9. Quickly chop peaches and apples into ½-inch cubes to prevent browning.
10. Add chopped peaches and apples to the saucepot with the vegetables. Add the pickling spice bag to the saucepot; stir in the salt, red pepper flakes, brown sugar and vinegar. Bring to a boil, stirring gently to mix ingredients. Reduce heat and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove spice bag from pan and discard.
11. With a slotted spoon, fill salsa solids into hot, clean pint jars, leaving 1¼ inches of head space (about ¾ pound of solids in each jar). Cover with cooking liquid, leaving ½ inch of head space.
12. Remove air bubbles and adjust head space if needed. Wipe rims of jars with a dampened, clean paper towel; apply two-piece metal canning lids.
13. Process in a boiling-water canner for 20 minutes (or 25 minutes in altitudes above 6,000 feet). Let cool, undisturbed, 12 to 24 hours and check for seals. Serving Suggestion: Serve as a side with or spooned on top of grilled pork chops or any grilled meat.

Recipe source: Developed at The University of Georgia, Athens, for the National Center for Home Food Preservation. Released by Elizabeth L. Andress, Ph.D., Department of Foods and Nutrition, College of Family and Consumer Sciences. August 2003.

Research-tested Salsa Recipes

TOMATO PASTE SALSA (FOR CANNING)

Yield: about 16 pints

- 3 qt. tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 4 c. green peppers, chopped
(about 2 large bell peppers)
- 12-oz. jar jalapeno peppers
(in vinegar, drained)
- 1 c. long green chilies, seeded
and chopped (about 3 chilies)
- 3 c. onions, chopped
(about 3 medium onions)
- 3 c. celery, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 12-oz. cans tomato paste
- 2 c. bottled lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 1 c. sugar
- 1 Tbsp. ground cumin

Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and continue boiling for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Ladle hot salsa into hot pint jars, leaving ½ inch of head space. Wipe jar rims. Cap with properly pretreated lids. Adjust lids and process in a boiling-water canner for 20 minutes.

Recipe source: "Salsa Recipes for Canning" - Pacific Northwest Publications (PNW395) by Val Hillers and Richard Dougherty, Washington State University

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