



# Food Safety & Nutrition

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## Canning Tomatoes and Salsas

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Salsas are a mixture of low-acid foods, such as onions and peppers, with acid foods such as tomatoes. Preserving salsas can be tricky because of the low acid and acid foods it contains. The acid foods will protect the low acid foods from spoiling the salsa and becoming unsafe to eat. For this reason it is wise to follow a tested and researched recipe with a processing procedure that will produce a safe product.

When following the tested recipes use the amounts of each vegetable listed and add the amount of vinegar or lemon juice listed. Do not thicken 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. If you plan to make a recipe that is different from the tested ones, then they need to be refrigerated and eaten fresh, or frozen.

Fresh and quality ingredients determine the flavor and success of a salsa.

### Tomatoes

The type of tomato used often affects the quality of salsas. Paste tomatoes, such as Roma, have firmer flesh and produce a thicker salsa than large slicing tomatoes. Although both types make good salsas, slicing tomatoes usually yields a thinner salsa than paste tomatoes. Salsa can be thickened by adding tomato paste.

When making salsas, be sure to use high quality tomatoes. Don't use overripe, spoiling tomatoes or those from dead or frost killed vines.

### Peppers

Peppers range from mild to fiery in taste. Anaheim, Ancho, Collette, Colorado, and Hungarian Yellow Wax are mild pepper varieties. Choose any of these varieties when a recipe calls for long green chilies.

Very hot peppers include the Jalapeño, Serrano, Cayenne, Habanera and Tabasco. Use rubber gloves when you cut or dice these peppers because they can cause extreme irritation to the skin. In addition, do not touch your face or eyes. Bell peppers can be substituted for long green chilies and canned chilies may be substituted for fresh chilies.

Do not increase the total amount of peppers in a recipe. You may however, substitute one type for another type of pepper.

### Acids

Acid ingredients must be added to preserved salsas, because there may not be enough natural acid to protect the low acid ingredients added to the salsa. Common acids used are vinegar and lemon juice. Lemon juice is more acidic than vinegar. Use vinegar that is at least 5% acid and use only bottled lemon juice.

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You may safely substitute an equal amount of lemon juice for vinegar in recipes using vinegar. You cannot substitute vinegar for lemon juice. This will result in a less acid and potentially unsafe salsa.

When tomatoes are a plenty, fresh salsas are great, but preserving them for the winter months can bring back the memories of the fresh product. Just remember to follow the tested recipes, process in a water bath canner. If you want to use your favorite recipe then be sure to freeze the product.

For more information or a publication on making Salsa contact the WSU Cooperative Extension Office at 397-6060. Ask for Salsa Recipes for Canning. There is a small fee for each publication.

## Tomatillo Green Salsa

Yield 5 pints

5 cups chopped tomatillos*	1 ½ cups seeded, chopped long green chilies
½ cup seeded, finely chopped jalapeno peppers	4 cups chopped onions
1 cup bottled lemon juice	6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 tablespoon ground cumin**	3 tablespoons oregano leaves**
1 tablespoon salt	1 teaspoon black pepper

\*You may use green tomatoes in this recipe instead of tomatillos.

\*\*optional

Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan and stir frequently over high heat until mixture begins to boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Ladle hot salsa into pint jars, leaving ½ inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water bath canner for 15 minutes.

## Chile Salsa (Hot Tomato-Pepper Sauce)

Yield 7-9 pints

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

\*Use mixture of mild and hot peppers

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 bath canner for 15 minutes.

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