

# CUSTOMIZING YOUR SALSA

## TOMATOES

The type of tomato used affects the thickness of salsa. Paste tomatoes, such as Roma, have a firmer flesh and produce a thicker salsa. Slicing tomatoes yield a thinner, more watery salsa. 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 can be substituted for tomatoes in any of the salsa recipes.



## ACIDS

The acid ingredients used in salsa are necessary for safety. Use only vinegar that is labeled 5% acidity. Store-bought lemon and lime juice can be substituted for vinegar in equal amounts.

## PEPPERS

One type of pepper may be substituted for another. Vary the flavor and heat intensity of your salsa by using different combinations of peppers. Never increase the total amount of peppers in any recipe.



## SPICES

The amount of dry spices can be altered. Cilantro, cumin and oregano are often used in spicy salsa. Leave these out for a milder flavor. Fresh cilantro can be added just before serving.

# COMMON QUESTIONS

**Q.** *What are the white flakes floating in my home canned salsa?*

**A.** They are tiny mineral deposits of calcium. The salsa is safe to eat if prepared and processed properly.

**Q.** *Why is my salsa runny?*

**A.** Probably the tomatoes you used. The use of slicing tomatoes usually results in more liquid in the salsa. You can thicken the salsa after opening by adding cornstarch or tomato sauce.

**Q.** *What are the little black spots on the jar lid?*

**A.** An interaction between acid compounds and the metal lid sometime results in a black or brown discoloration. They will not harm the salsa or make it unsafe to eat.

**For questions about food preservation contact:**

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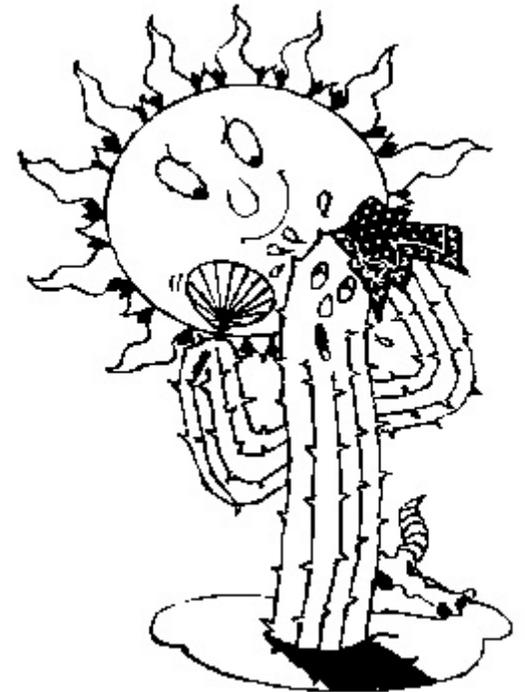
Adapted from the WSU Extension publication number:  
PNW395 -Salsa Recipes For Canning.  
This publication is available for purchase at your local extension office.

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SIZZLING  
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SALSA



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## 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.

## RISK FOR BOTULISM

Home canned salsa can result in Botulism poisoning, a rare but severe illness caused by the *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria. Low acid foods, such as vegetables, meats, poultry, and fish, can support the growth of bacteria that can cause botulism poisoning. **Low acid foods must be pressure canned.** Salsa contains both high acid and low acid ingredients. The water bath method of canning is acceptable provided the recipe meets the approved level of acidity.

## TESTED RECIPES

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.**



### CHILI SALSA (Hot Tomato-Pepper Sauce)

10 Cups peeled, cored, chopped tomatoes  
5 cups seeded, chopped long green peppers\*\*  
1 cup seeded, chopped hot peppers\*\*  
4 cups chopped onions  
1 cup vinegar, lemon or lime juice  
3 teaspoons salt  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
3 tablespoons cilantro, minced  
1 teaspoon hot pepper sauce

Combine ingredients in a large saucepan. Heat to a boil and simmer 10 minutes. Ladle hot sauce into pint jars, leaving ½ inch head-space. 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

Yield: 7-9 pints

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

\*\*IMPORTANT NOTE: \*\*Use any variety of mild and hot peppers, not to exceed 6 cups total.



## 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 head-space.
- ❖ 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. Maintain gentle boil for full processing time.
- ❖ 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.)

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