

8/12/2020

Summertime Salsa
Summer Brasuel
UCCE Master Food Preserver Of El Dorado County
For Mountain Democrat Publication Date: 9/2/2020

Garden fresh tomatoes and peppers demand to be made into salsa. Many of us are tempted to preserve our favorite salsa recipe. We need to think again. Salsa is one of the most dangerous products for home preservers to can. Always use a tested recipe from a safe source such as the National Center For Home Food Preservation <https://nchfp.uga.edu/>.

Contrary to popular belief, tomatoes are a borderline high acid food. Only high acid foods can be safely canned using a boiling water or steam method. Peppers and onions, ingredients in tomato-based salsas, are low acid foods. Low acid foods must be pressure canned. Once these low acid ingredients are added to tomatoes it may raise the pH to an unsafe level for boiling water or steam canning. Therefore, all tested salsa recipes are acidified with vinegar or commercial lemon/lime juice. There is only one way to make sure a salsa is acidified to a level that is safe for home canning and that is to test it.

An interesting fact is that most judges who judge home preserved foods at fairs normally will not taste salsas for fear of getting botulism. There is no way for a judge to know if the recipe used is tested and from a safe source or someone's family recipe. pH strips have a wide range of results and are not recommended to check a product's acidity. These salsas may only be judged on their appearance.

One of my favorite salsas to can at home is the one below. It is a big, bold, spicy salsa. For those who cannot take much heat, it is still good to have on hand. It is so flavorful that one or two tablespoons mixed into a favorite salsa will give it a smoky home-made taste. Give it a try!

Roasted Tomato Chipotle Salsa

Makes about 6 (16 oz.) pint jars

Source: Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving

12 dried chipotle chili peppers, stemmed
12 dried cascabel chili peppers, stemmed
2 lbs. husked tomatillos
2 lbs. Italian plum tomatoes
2 small onions
1 head garlic, broken into cloves
1/2 cup vinegar and 1/2 cup bottled lime juice
2 tsp sugar
1 tsp salt

No, they aren't that hot and they start out dried.

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Toast chipotle and cascabel chilies in a large dry skillet, over medium heat, working in batches, about 30 seconds per side, until they release their aroma and are pliable. Transfer to a large glass or stainless steel bowl. When all chiles have been toasted, add 2 cups hot water. Weigh chilies down with a bowl or a weight to ensure they remain submerged, and soak until softened, about 15 minutes. Working in batches, transfer chiles and soaking liquid to a blender or a food processor fitted with a metal blade and purée until smooth. Set aside.

Roast tomatillos, tomatoes, onions and garlic, under a broiler, in the meantime, turning to roast all sides, until tomatillos and tomatoes are blistered, blackened and softened, and onions and garlic are blackened in spots, about 15 minutes. Set onions and garlic aside until cool. Place tomatillos and tomatoes in paper bags. Secure openings and set aside until cool enough to handle, about 15 minutes. Peel tomatoes, onions and garlic. Finely chop onion and garlic. Set aside.

Puree roasted tomatillos and tomatoes and reserved puréed chilies until smooth in a blender or food processor. Set aside.

Combine tomatillo purée, roasted onion and garlic, vinegar, lime juice, sugar and salt in a large stainless steel saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat and boil gently, stirring frequently, until slightly thickened, about 15 minutes.

Ladle hot salsa into hot jars leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Remove air bubbles and re-measure headspace. If needed, add more salsa to meet recommended headspace. Wipe rim. Center lid on jar. Apply band and adjust until fit is fingertip tight.

Process filled jars in a boiling water or atmospheric steam canner for 15 minutes at 0-1000 ft, 20 minutes at 1001-6000 ft, 25 minutes above 6000 ft. For boiling water canner, turn off the heat, remove canner lid and wait 5 minutes. For atmospheric steam canning, turn off the heat, leave canner lid on and wait 2-3 minutes. Remove jars and cool. Check lids for seal after 24 hours. Lid should not flex up and down when center is pressed.

In response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) and recent California Department of Public Health and El Dorado County Health & Human Services guidelines, UCCE Central Sierra canceled all Master Food Preserver and Master Gardener public events and classes in El Dorado and Amador County. This cancellation remains in effect through August, and will be updated as public health guidelines change.

Stay safe and follow recommended health and sanitation practices in the coming weeks.

UCCE Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message on our helpline at (530) 621-5506. For more information about our public education classes and activities or to make a donation, go to the UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmfpc>. Sign up to receive our E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mfpcsenews>.

You can also find us on [Facebook](#) and Twitter!