

CAUTION: Most salsa recipes contain a mixture of low-acid foods, such as onions and chiles. Acid, such as vinegar or lemon juice must be added to prevent the bacteria, *Clostridium botulinum*, from growing. This bacteria produces a deadly toxin that can cause serious damage to the central nervous system or death when eaten even in small amounts. These salsa recipes have been tested to ensure that they contain enough acid to be processed safely in a boiling water canner.

INGREDIENTS

Tomatoes

The type of tomato you use often affects the quality of salsas. Paste tomatoes, such as Roma, have firmer flesh and produce thicker salsas than large slicing tomatoes. Although both types make good salsas, slicing tomatoes usually yield a thinner, more watery salsa than paste tomatoes.

Do not use overripe or spoiling tomatoes. Use only high quality tomatoes for canning salsa or any other tomato product. Do not use tomatoes from dead or frost-killed vines. Poor quality or overripe tomatoes will yield a very poor salsa and may spoil.

Where recipes call for peeled or skinned tomatoes, remove the skin by dipping tomatoes into boiling water for 30–60 seconds or until skins split. Dip in cold water, then slip off skins and remove cores and seeds. You may substitute green tomatoes or tomatillos for tomatoes in any of these recipes.

Chiles

Chiles range from mild to fiery in taste. Very hot chiles are usually small (1 to 3 inches long); mild chiles are usually bigger (4 to 10 inches long). Anaheim, Ancho, New Mexico 6-4, Big Jim, Chimayo, and Hungarian Yellow Wax are mild chile varieties. Choose a mild chile when the recipe calls for long green chiles.

Small, very hot chiles provide a distinct taste to salsas. Jalapeño is the most popular hot chile. Other varieties include Serrano, Cayenne, Habanero, Chile Piquin, and Tabasco. Use rubber gloves when you cut or dice these chiles because they cause extreme irritation to the skin. Do not touch your face, particularly the area around your eyes, when you are working with hot chiles.

You may substitute bell peppers for some or all of the long green chiles. Also, different chile varieties will have different flavors. Canned chiles may be used in place of fresh.

Use only high quality chiles. Do not increase the total amount of chiles in any recipe. However, you may substitute one type of chile for another.

The skin of long green chiles may be tough and can be removed by heating the chiles. Usually when chiles are finely chopped, they do not need to be skinned.

Hot chiles, such as the jalapeño, do not need to be peeled, but seeds are often removed.

If you choose to peel chiles, slit each one along the side to allow steam to escape. Peel using one of these two methods:

Oven or broiler method—Place chiles in a hot oven (400 °F) or broiler for 6–8 minutes until skins blister.

Range-top method—Cover hot burner (either gas or electric) with heavy wire mesh. Place chiles on burner for several minutes until skins blister.

After heating, place chiles in a pan and cover with a damp cloth. (This will make peeling the chiles easier.) Cool several minutes; slip off skins. Discard seeds and chop.

CAUTION: Wear plastic or rubber gloves while handling hot chiles.

Tomatillos

Tomatillos are also known as Mexican husk tomatoes. They do not need to be peeled or seeded, but the dry outer husk must be removed.

Acids

The acid ingredients used in salsa help preserve it and prevent botulism poisoning. You must add acid to canned salsas because the natural acidity may not be high enough. Commonly used acids in home canning are vinegar and lemon juice. Lemon juice is more acidic than vinegar, but has less effect on flavor. Use only vinegar that is at least 5% acid and use only bottled lemon juice.

If you wish, you may safely substitute an equal amount of lemon juice for vinegar in recipes using vinegar. Do not substitute vinegar for lemon juice. This substitution will result in a less acid and potentially unsafe salsa.

Spices

Spices add flavoring to salsas but of course are optional. Cilantro and cumin are often used in spicy salsas. You may leave them out if you prefer a salsa with a milder taste. For a stronger cilantro flavor, add fresh cilantro just before serving the salsa.

IMPORTANT: Follow the directions carefully and exactly for each recipe. Use the amounts of each vegetable listed in the recipe. Add the amount of vinegar or lemon juice listed. You may decrease the amount of spices, if desired. Do not can salsas that do not follow these or other research tested recipes. (They may be frozen or stored in the refrigerator.) 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.

Filling the Jars

Follow manufacturer's directions for pretreating lids. Fill hot clean jars with the salsa that has been heated (see recipes), being careful not to leave any salsa on the rims, leave 1/2-inch headspace. Wipe jar rims with a clean, damp paper towel. Put on lids and screw on metal bands.

PROCESSING

Processing in a Boiling Water Canner

1. Use a rack to keep jars from touching canner bottom and to allow heat to reach all sides of the filled jars.
2. Put jars into a canner that contains simmering water.
3. Add boiling water if needed to bring water 1–2 inches above jar tops. Don't pour water directly on the jars. Place a tight-fitting cover on canner. (If you use a pressure canner for water bath canning, leave the cover unfastened and the petcock open to prevent pressure buildup.)
4. Bring water back to a rolling boil. Set a timer for recommended processing time. Watch closely to keep

water boiling gently and steadily. Add boiling water if necessary to keep jars covered.

5. Using a jar lifter remove the jars from the canner straightup without tipping. The food could spoil if jars are left in hot water too long.
6. Do not touch lids or rings until jars are completely cooked.

Cooling Jars

Put jars on a rack or cloth so air can circulate freely around them. Don't use a fan and avoid cold drafts.

Do not retighten screw bands after processing.

Testing for Seal

Test each jar for a seal the day after canning. Jars with flat metal lids are sealed if:

1. Lid is curved down in the center.
2. Lid does not move when pressed down.
3. Tapping the center of the lid with a spoon gives a clear, ringing sound (this is the least reliable method).

If a jar is not sealed, refrigerate the contents and use soon or reprocess. Reprocess within 24 hours. When reprocessing, the salsa must first be heated to a boil before packing in hot jars. Wipe jar rims clean. Use a new lid and process for the full time listed.

Storing

Wipe jars. Label with the date and the contents of the jar. Remove the screw bands to avoid rust.

Store jars in a cool dark place. For best eating quality and nutritive value, use within one year. Heat, freezing temperatures, light, or dampness will decrease the quality and shelf life of canned food.

Before Using

Before opening each jar, look for bulging lids, leaks, or any unusual appearance of the food. After opening, check for off-odor, mold, or foam. If there is any sign of spoilage, destroy the food.

RECIPES

Tomatillo Green Salsa

Yield: 5 pints

5 cups chopped tomatillos	1 cup bottled lemon juice
1 1/2 cups seeded, chopped long green chiles	6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/2 cup seeded, finely chopped jalapeños	1 Tbsp ground cumin*
4 cups chopped onions	3 Tbsp oregano leaves *
	1 Tbsp salt
	1 tsp black pepper

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 1/2-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner 15 minutes at 0–1,000 feet altitude; 20 minutes at 1,001–6,000 feet; 25 minutes above 6,000 feet.

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

**Optional*

Tomato/Green Chile Salsa

Yield: 3 pints

3 cups peeled, cored, chopped tomatoes	6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
3 cups seeded, chopped long green chiles	1 1/2 cups vinegar
3/4 cup chopped onions	1/2 tsp ground cumin*
1 jalapeño, seeded, finely chopped	2 tsp oregano leaves*
	1 1/2 tsp salt

Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan and heat, stirring frequently, until mixture boils. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Ladle hot into pint jars, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner 15 minutes at 0–1,000 feet altitude; 20 minutes at 1,001–6,000 feet; 25 minutes above 6,000 feet.

**Optional*

Tomato Salsa (using paste tomatoes)

Yield: 16–18 pints

7 qt peeled, cored, chopped tomatoes	6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
4 cups seeded, chopped long green chiles	2 cups bottled lemon juice
5 cups chopped onion	2 Tbsp salt
1/2 cup finely chopped, seeded, jalapeños	1 Tbsp black pepper
	2 Tbsp ground cumin*
	3 Tbsp oregano leaves*
	2 Tbsp fresh cilantro*

Combine all ingredients except cumin, oregano, and cilantro in a large pot and bring to a boil, stirring frequently, then reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes. Add spices and simmer for another 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Ladle hot salsa into pint jars, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner: 15 minutes at 0–1,000 feet altitude; 20 minutes at 1,001–6,000 feet, 25 minutes above 6,000 feet.

This recipe works best with paste tomatoes. Slicing tomatoes require a much longer cooking time to achieve a desirable consistency.

**Optional*

Tomato Taco Sauce

Yield: 16–18 pints

8 qt peeled, cored, finely chopped paste tomatoes	2 1/2 cups vinegar
2 cloves garlic, crushed	2 Tbsp salt
5 cups chopped onions	1 1/2 Tbsp black pepper
4 jalapeños seeded, chopped	1 Tbsp sugar
4 long green chiles, seeded, chopped	2 Tbsp oregano leaves*
	1 tsp ground cumin*

Combine ingredients in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, stirring frequently until thick (about 1 hour). Ladle hot mixture into pint jars, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in boiling water canner: 15 minutes for 0–1,000 feet altitude; 20 minutes at 1,001–6,000 feet; 25 minutes above 6,000 feet.

**Optional*

This recipe works best with paste tomatoes, as slicing tomatoes will yield a thin watery salsa. If you only have slicing tomatoes available, use the Tomato/Tomato Paste Salsa recipe.

Tomato/Tomato Paste Salsa

Yield: 7 to 9 pints

3 qt peeled, cored, chopped slicing tomatoes	2 12-ounce cans tomato paste
3 cups chopped onions	2 cups bottled lemon juice
6 jalapeños seeded, finely chopped	1 Tbsp salt
4 long green chiles, seeded, chopped	1 Tbsp sugar
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped	1 Tbsp ground cumin*
	2 Tbsp oregano leaves *
	1 tsp black pepper

Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Ladle hot into pint jars, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner. 15 minutes at 0–1,000 feet altitude; 20 minutes at 1,001–6,000 feet, 25 minutes above 6,000 feet.

**Optional*

Chile Salsa

Yield: 7 to 9 pints

10 cups peeled, cored, chopped tomatoes	4 cups chopped onions
6 cups seeded, chopped chiles*	1 cup vinegar
	3 tsp salt
	1/2 tsp pepper

Combine ingredients in a large saucepan. Heat to a boil and simmer 10 minutes. Ladle hot salsa into pint jars, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process in a boiling water canner: 15 minutes at 0–1,000 feet altitude, 20 minutes at 1,001–6,000 feet; 25 minutes above 6,000 feet.

**Use mixture of mild and hot chiles.*

IMPORTANT

The only changes you can safely make in these salsa recipes are to substitute bottled lemon juice for vinegar and to decrease the amount of spices and herbs. Do not alter the proportions of vegetables to acid and tomatoes because it might make the salsa unsafe.

Elevations of Cities and Towns in New Mexico

City/Town	Elevation (ft)	City/Town	Elevation (ft)
Alamogordo	4,350	Las Vegas	6,450
Albuquerque	5,000	Logan	3,830
Artesia	3,350	Lordsburg	4,250
Aztec	5,650	Los Alamos	7,400
Bayard	5,800	Los Ranchos de Albuquerque	4,950
Belen	4,800	Lovington	3,900
Bernalillo	5,050	Magdalena	6,556
Bosque Farms	4,864	Melrose	4,599
Carlsbad	3,100	Mora	7,200
Carrizozo	5,450	Mosquero	5,550
Chama	7,900	Mountainair	6,500
Cimarron	6,450	Portales	4,010
Clayton	5,050	Raton	6,650
Cloudcroft	8,650	Reserve	5,749
Clovis	4,300	Rio Rancho	5,290
Columbus	4,020	Roswell	3,600
Corona	6,664	Roy	5,900
Corrales	5,005	Ruidoso	7,000
Cuba	7,000	San Jon	4,200
Deming	4,300	Santa Fe	7,000
Dexter	3,500	Santa Rita	6,300
Eagle Nest	8,250	Santa Rosa	4,600
Elida	4,345	Silver City	5,900
Española	5,600	Socorro	4,600
Estancia	6,100	Springer	5,800
Farmington	5,400	Taos	7,000
Fort Sumner	4,050	Texico	4,150
Gallup	6,500	Tierra Amarilla	7,460
Grants	6,450	Truth or Consequences	4,250
Hobbs	3,650	Tucumcari	4,100
Hurley	5,700	Tularosa	4,500
Jemez Springs	6,200	Vaughn	5,950
Las Cruces	3,900	Wagon Mound	6,200

Originally developed by Val Hillers and Richard Dougherty, Washington State University, Cooperative Extension Service. Adapted for use in New Mexico by Martha Archuleta, Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist.

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