



**Ontario Home Economics Association**

*Ask a Professional Home Economist*

**For Immediate Release**

## **Cook Up Sensational Salsa with Local Tomatoes**

**by Ellie Topp, P.H.Ec.**

Early fall finds succulent red tomatoes piled high in farmers' markets. While tomatoes are generally available year-round, the flavour of those that have ripened in the summer sun is far superior. So now is the time to take advantage of this locally-grown bounty and transform them into jars of spectacular salsa ready to be enjoyed now and later when snow is covering the ground. Not only does homemade salsa have incomparable taste, it is also economical, costing far less than commercial products.

All the equipment you need to produce a terrific batch of salsa is a large cooking pot and some mason jars with two-piece lids. Since a lot of chopping is involved, a food processor or hand chopper makes short work of getting the tomatoes, onions and peppers into the pot. It is essential to follow a tested recipe to ensure that it has the required acidity if you plan to preserve the salsa in jars for storing on the shelf. Once the salsa has cooked to the desired consistency, simply ladle it into the jars, secure with snap lids and place filled jars into boiling water in a large pot or a canner with a wire rack. The pot needs a rack on the bottom to support the jars and the pot must be high enough for the water to cover the jars by at least 1 inch. Start the time of processing specified in the recipe once the water has returned to a boil. Once processing is complete, if there is no wire basket, use a jar lifter to remove the jars from the boiling water.

The following recipe for Basic Chunky Tomato Salsa is taken from **The Complete Book of Small-Batch Preserving** by Professional Home Economists Ellie Topp and Margaret Howard (Firefly 2007). Make it mild or spicy according to your taste by the number of jalapeño peppers you use. Either way, it is a delicious accompaniment to your favourite chips or quesadillas. For more detailed information on the preserving process, check the introduction to the book.

## Basic Chunky Tomato Salsa

8 medium locally-grown tomatoes, peeled and chopped (about 2 lb/1 kg)  
2 medium onions, finely chopped  
1 sweet green pepper, chopped  
2-6 jalapeño peppers, seeded and chopped  
6 cloves garlic, minced  
1 cup commercial tomato sauce  
1 cup red wine vinegar  
1 cup chopped fresh parsley  
1 tbsp granulated sugar  
1 tsp pickling salt  
1 tsp ground cumin

1. Combine tomatoes, onion, green pepper, jalapeño peppers, garlic, tomato sauce, vinegar, parsley, sugar, salt and cumin in a medium stainless steel or enamel saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat and continue to boil gently, uncovered, for 25 minutes or until desired consistency, stirring frequently.

2. Heat jars in boiling water. Remove hot jars from water and ladle salsa into jars to within 1/2 inch of rim (headspace). Fit with a two-piece lid fingertip-tight and place in pot or canner of boiling water. Ensure boiling water covers jars by 1 inch. Return water to boil over high heat, cover and begin timing. Keep water boiling for 20 minutes for half-pint jars (250 mL) or pint jars (500 mL). Turn off heat, remove cover and allow jars to stand for 5 minutes. Remove jars from water with a rack or jar lifter and allow to cool. Check seals and refrigerate any unsealed jars. Makes 5 cups.

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