



MonsterChef's Hot Salsa



What Makes This Salsa Recipe Different From Others?

I really like salsa. I have some on my breakfast omelet almost everyday. There are several reasons for making my own salsa and this recipe was developed to satisfy me. You are free to alter it to suit your own taste. I am a diabetic, so I read labels when I buy stuff. Did you know that the typical \$3.50 jar of salsa in a grocery store has quite a bit of sugar in it and is also very high in sodium? If you can find a low sugar, low sodium version in the store, it will cost you \$5.00 and up per jar (I go through about 50 jars per year).

I set out to make a salsa recipe that would:

- be made from ingredients grown in my own garden so I would know what is in it
- have no sugar and would be low in sodium
- be able to store for at least a year without preservatives
- fit my taste preferences (most store salsa is made with Jalapeno Peppers - too mild and I don't like their flavor)

Most store salsa is not cooked. Mine is cooked and preserved through the same canning process you would use to can your own tomatoes or other vegetables. This gives it a slightly different texture than the store version. I also prefer to use Cayenne peppers because they are very hot, easy to grow, and have a great flavor. You can use any of your favorite peppers in this recipe.

This is not an easy recipe. It will take the better part of a day to make a batch. You will need to be knowledgeable in proper canning procedures in addition to making the salsa (unless you are just making a small batch to eat right away).

What You Will Need

Equipment:

- Two 8 quart saucepans
- 6 to 8 one pint canning jars and lids
- Colander
- Sharp knife
- Big Stirring Spoon
- Ladle
- Canning Jar Funnel
- Canning Kettle with Wire Jar Basket
- Big Tongs
- Towels for Cooling Area

Ingredients:

- **About 15 pounds of Fresh Ripe Tomatoes**
- **3 Large Green Peppers (chopped)**
- **1 Large Onion (chopped)**
- **1 Clove Garlic (finely chopped)**
- **1/4 Cup Fresh Cilantro Leaves (chopped) Note: Fresh Cilantro can be found in the produce section of the store if you do not grow your own.**
- **1/2 Cup Fresh Cayenne Peppers (chopped) Note: Substitute any kind or amount of pepper you like or even a combination of types - some of my favorites include Cayenne, Thai Dragon, and Tabasco.**
- **2 small cans of Tomato Paste (or 1 bigger one)**
- **1 Teaspoon Salt**
- **2 Teaspoons Coarse Black Pepper**
- **1/4 Cup Vinegar**

Making the Salsa

This recipe will make between 6 or 8 pint size canning jars. Double or triple the recipe if you have lots of tomatoes and a really big stock pot to make the sauce in. Here is the step by step process for making and preserving the MonsterChef Cayenne Salsa:

1. Make sure you have good canning jars (run your fingers around the rims to make sure they have no rough spots or chips - a faulty rim will not seal properly). Have enough new lid inserts with the rubber gaskets built in. Make sure that the lids fit the jars - there are different brands and sizes.
2. Use a bleach solution to wash and sterilize your working area (countertop, etc.)
3. Sterilize the jars and lids by boiling them in water for about 15 minutes. Set them aside to air dry on a clean towel.
4. Fill one of the 8 quart saucepans with water and bring to a boil.
5. While waiting for the water to boil, wash the tomatoes, Green Peppers, Hot Peppers, and Cilantro Leaves to remove any dirt or other garden residue off them.
6. Place a Colander over the other 8 quart sauce pan (preferably in the sink). Have a clean towel laying next to the sink where the pan and colander are (important for next step).
7. **This Part Requires Fast Work - Be Prepared!!** Place a few tomatoes in the boiling water for a few seconds. Use the Tongs to remove them from the boiling water and place them on the towel as soon as you see the skins start to split open. Keep repeating this process until all the tomatoes have been scalded this way.

8. While working over the colander, use a sharp knife to peel each tomato and cut it into 1/2 square inch chunks. **Note: Tomatoes are very juicy, so juice runs through the colander into the pan while you are peeling and cutting. Throw peelings in trash or garbage disposal. The purpose of the colander is to catch the peelings if you slip a little. Each time the colander is full of chopped tomatoes and no skin, dump it into the pan with the tomato juice. Keep doing this until all the tomatoes are chopped. The end result is a big pan full of chopped tomatoes and juice.**

9. Put the tomatoes and juice on the stove and turn the temperature high enough to bring it to a simmer. While it is heating up, chop the green peppers, onion, garlic, and hot peppers and add to the tomato mixture. **It is a good idea to wear rubber gloves while chopping the cayenne peppers or other hot peppers.**

10. Add the two cans of tomato paste, salt and black pepper. Stir the mixture frequently. **Do not let it boil hard - slow simmer is best. We just want it cooked enough to kill bacteria, yet leave the ingredients in recognizable chunks.**

11. Turn off the heat and add the fresh Cilantro leaves and vinegar. **You do not want to boil off the vinegar - the vinegar's purpose is to add a little acidity to the mixture because many varieties of tomatoes do not have enough acid for good canning.**

12. Fill the canner kettle with water (just over half full so that there will be room for 6 to 8 jars completely submerged in the boiling water. Turn on the heat to bring to a vigorous boil and move on to step 13 while you are waiting for it to boil.

13. Use a canning funnel and ladle to fill the jars to a level of about 1/2 inch from the top. The funnel will help keep from getting salsa on the rims of the jar. Use a butter knife to poke up and down in each jar to work out any air bubbles.

14. Place the lids on the jars and screw them down tightly. **MAKE SURE THE RIMS ARE VERY CLEAN BEFORE PUTTING THE LIDS ON!!!**

15. Make sure the canning kettle water is boiling vigorously. **CAREFULLY** Place jars on canning rack and gently lower into the boiling water making sure jars are submerged.

16. Boil the jars in this "water bath" for 1/2 hour. Then gently remove the jars and set them aside to cool. As they cool you will hear each jar make a snap or pop sound (that is the signal that the jar sealed properly). **Proper Seal is important. After the jars are completely cool, you should be able to push on the lid and hear nothing. If the lid will make a popping noise as you push on it, you did not get a good seal and that jar cannot be saved for a long period (use that one right away within a week or two).**

17. After the jars are completely cool, give the lids one more twist to tighten them further. Label the lids "Salsa" or "Hot Salsa" and the date canned. Store in a cool dark place for up to 3 years.

You Are All Done Except For Cleaning Up Your Mess !!