

It's Salsa Time....Use Safe Canning Methods

Fresh tomatoes, peppers and onions equal.... what else? Salsa of course!! Summer vegetables are arriving by the armload in kitchens across the country. And plenty of those tomatoes, peppers, onions and herbs are going into homemade salsa. Not all salsas are created equal, however, to Kansas State University's Karen Blakeslee.

Recipes create in home kitchens for salsa are suitable for eating fresh or freezing, but if you're planning to preserve the popular condiment for later by canning, stick to USDA tested recipes that keep ingredients at a safe pH levels.

"No one wants to end a party with everyone getting sick from the salsa," said Blakeslee, who is the Rapid Response Center Coordinator with K-State Research and Extension in food science.

Salsas include high-acid and low-acid ingredients and are considered acidified food, appropriate for boiling water bath canning if the final pH is less than 4.6, she said. The safety of home canned salsa depends on the combination of ingredients, procedures used in preparation, the acidity, and consistency of the final product.

"Using a process time from another recipe is only a guess for homemade recipe and can cause spoilage and potential foodborne illness," she said.

Blakeslee, who is an avid home canner herself and a proponent of making the most of your (or your neighbor's) vegetable garden, says to start with high-quality, disease-free produce. She adds, "Be smart about food preservation. Look for reliable recipe sources to increase your chances for safe food. It is a waste of good food if safety is ignored from beginning to end."

If you have any food safety or food preservation, be sure to contact your local extension office. In the Meadowlark Extension District, we can be reached at the following offices: Oskaloosa—785-863-2212; Holton—785-364-4125; Seneca—785-336-2184.

K-State Research and Extension has publications free for viewing and downloading, including "Preserving Tomatoes". Also available is "Preserving It Fresh, Preserve It Safe", "Sassy Safe Salsa at Home. A video of Blakeslee offering tips on home canning and preserving is available on YouTube.