



UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County

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I have been intrigued, for quite some time, with the wall of dried chiles at the grocery store. Such a variety! I keep saying I need to investigate them. I love Mexican food that's for sure. (what westerner doesn't - duh). I want to learn how to cook with them, learn the flavor profile of each one, and last but not least, how can I incorporate them into my favorite hobby - preserving!



I was perusing recipes in my preserving books and came across a salsa recipe that uses some of these dried chiles; Ball's Tomatillo-Chipotle Salsa. Yes, that will be my next project!!! It so happens I have a several bags of dried chiles in my pantry and they are the right variety for this recipe. All I need is tomatoes and tomatillos. Luckily, they are available, even this time of year, in our super markets.

The beauty of this recipe is that the tomatoes and tomatillos are not the stars of this show, the chiles are, so bland winter tomatoes are not going to ruin this product. This time of year, Roma tomatoes from Mexico are usually on sale, I got mine for \$0.68/pound. And I only need 2 pounds of tomatoes and 2 pounds of tomatillos.

ROASTED TOMATILLO-CHIPOTLE SALSA

Makes about 6 (16 oz) pints

Not all markets stock cascabel chilies or chipotle chilies (which are dried, smoked jalapeños), but this unique salsa is so tasty it's well worth the extra shopping effort.

12 dried Chipotle chile peppers, stemmed
* 12 dried Cascabel chile peppers, stemmed
2 lbs husked tomatillos
2 lbs Italian plum tomatoes
2 small onions
1 head garlic, broken into cloves
1 cup white vinegar
2 tsp sugar
1 tsp salt

* Cascabel chiles with a mild to moderate heat level. I had Guajillo chiles in my pantry, also mild to moderately hot, so I substituted them for the casabel chiles.



TOAST Chipotle and Cascabel (or Guajillo) chiles 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 chiles 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 chiles until smooth in a blender or food processor. Set aside.

PREPARE boiling water or [atmospheric steam canner](#). Heat jars in simmering water until ready for use. Do not boil. Wash lids in warm soapy water and set bands aside.

COMBINE tomatillo purée, roasted onion and garlic, vinegar, 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 canner for 15 minutes, adjusting for altitude. Remove jars and cool. Check lids for seal after 24 hours. Lid should not flex up and down when center is pressed.

Source: Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving, 2006

Cooks notes:

*This salsa is not for the faint of heart. It's flavors a **bold**, smoky and spicy from the chipotle chiles, with more bold flavor added from the Guajillo chiles. I would say the heat factor here is on the high side of medium. Keep in mind, that the salsa will mellow out after it is has been in the jar for a week or two.*

You can tone down the smoky and spicy flavor by using less chipotle peppers. However, you must add more of the Casabel peppers to keep the recipe balanced. For example, if you use 6 chipotle peppers instead of the 12 called for in the recipe, then add 6 more Casabel peppers to the mix. You can also use California dried chiles instead of Casabel. California chiles are dried Anaheim peppers. They are mild; not hot at all.

If tomatillos are not available, you can substitute them with Roma tomatoes, instead. Remember to use the same amount as required in the recipe. Tomatillos are processed in exactly the same way tomatoes are processes so they are always inter-changeable.

This product can stand alone as a bold salsa, or can be used as a staple in your pantry for use in Mexican-style sauces, such as a red sauce for enchiladas, or in a crockpot pulled pork dish. You could also use it in an Enchilda Soup recipe. It is a good product to have handy in your pantry.

UCCE Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message at (530) 621-5506 or email us at edmfp@ucanr.edu. For more information about our program and events, visit our website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmfp>. Sign up to receive our eNewsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpenews/>. Find us on Facebook, too (UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County)!