



JUST GROW IT: How to Plant and Harvest a Salsa Garden By Dana Freeman



Feed your family this summer, encourage kids to eat their fruits and vegetables, and help them make the connection from earth to plate! Kids love snack time and enjoy hands-on activities that literally produce edible results. You can do all of these things with a salsa garden, as well insinuate lots of science and nutritional information into your conversations during these times you are working together. When you and your children grow your own food, you are reducing the distance your produce travels and therefore your carbon footprint and assured that your food is organically grown and prepared in the safest way possible. So, let's just grow it, already!

Summer Salsa Garden

You will need:

- 1 plum or other tomato seedling
- 1 jalapeno or serrano pepper seedling (optional)
- 1 tomatillo seedling (optional)
- 3 onion sets
- 1 or 2 cilantro seedlings
- planting container, window box, or garden plot

Step 1:

You can plant this garden in a window box, large pot, or directly in the garden. These warm-season crops should not be planted outdoors until after Nebraska's average frost-free date on May 15. Whether in a container or garden, plants need good light and soil and adequate space and water. Choose a location that is somewhat flat and receives a minimum of 5 hours of sunlight each day.



Step 2:

If you are starting a new in-ground garden, be sure to have the soil tested for lead before proceeding. You can plant raised beds and bring in clean soil for planting. Mix compost into your soil, regardless, to improve its health and growing ability. If you already have a garden started, sow seeds and seedlings as your spring crops are finishing.

Step 3:

Plant and space the tomato (and tomatillo & pepper seedlings, if desired) about 6 inches apart. The tomato and tomatillo plants can be planted deeply to ensure a solid stem; they will grow additional roots. The tomato and tomatillo plants will be large, should be staked, and situated westernmost in your plot to prevent too much shading.

Step 4:

Add the cilantro plants at either end, and tuck the onions between the other plants.

Step 5:

Weed, water, and nurture your plants through the summer.

Harvest and Prepare Your Salsa!

You will need:

- 2 cups chopped tomatoes (can be seeded)
- 2 husked and chopped tomatillos (optional)
- 1 peeled and chopped onion
- 1 chopped and seeded jalapeno or serrano pepper (optional)
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 1 diced mango (optional)
- juice from 1 lime
- salt and pepper to taste
- tortilla chips

Step 1:

Chop and prepare all items as listed above.

Step 2:

Combine and stir all ingredients in a small bowl.

Step 3:

Congratulations! You and your children have just made salsa and participated in the process from produce to plate. You should celebrate with a little harvest party snack and share your salsa.

Step 4:

Be sure to compost all of your kitchen scraps.

Step 5:

The fun doesn't stop here, as you'll be able to continue harvesting produce from your plants and making more salsa and other tasty treats to share with family and friends!

During the times you are planting, watering, and harvesting with children, you can learn what they really know about what they eat. You can then share nutrition and vitamin information and health benefits of various vegetables. See below for information from the nutrition database on Fruits and Veggies More Matters

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org>

Did ya know...

In the same plant family as nightshade, these yummy veggies were mistakenly thought to be poisonous until the nineteenth century.

How to Select

Choose tomatoes with bright, shiny skins and firm flesh.

How to Store

Store at room temperature away from direct sunlight, for use within 1 week after ripe. Tomatoes taste best if not refrigerated; refrigerate only if you can't use them before they spoil.

Nutrition Benefits

Low fat; saturated fat free; very low sodium; cholesterol free; low calorie; high in vitamin A; high in vitamin C; good source of potassium.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 medium tomato (148g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 25	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 20mg	1%
Total Carbohydrate 5g	2%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 3g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 20%	Vitamin C 40%
Calcium 2%	Iron 4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less Than 65g 80g
Saturated Fat	Less Than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less Than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less Than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9	Carbohydrate 4 Protein 4

Did ya know...

Also known as the Tomate Verde and Mexican Husk Tomato, the Tomatillo is a staple in Mexican salsa and mole. As it matures, the fruit fills, and sometimes bursts through its papery husk.

How to Select

Look for dry, hard tomatillos with tightly fitting husks that are dry and free of mold.

How to Store

Refrigerate tomatillos loose or in an open container in the crisper drawer for 2-3 weeks.

Nutrition Benefits

Low fat, saturated fat free, cholesterol free, sodium free, low calorie, a good source of vitamin C.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2 medium (68g)	
Servings Per Container	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 20	Calories from Fat 5
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 4g	1%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 3g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 2%	Vitamin C 15%
Calcium 0%	Iron 2%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9	Carbohydrate 4 Protein 4

Did ya know...

People have been eating onions since prehistoric times.

How to Select

Choose onions that are firm and dry with bright, smooth outer skins.

How to Store

Store whole onions in a cool, dark, well ventilated place for use within 4 weeks.

Refrigerate cut onions in a tightly sealed container for use within 2-3 days.

Nutrition Benefits

Fat free; saturated fat free; very low sodium; cholesterol free; high in vitamin C; good source of dietary fiber.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 medium onion (148g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 45	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 5mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 11g	4%
Dietary Fiber 3g	12%
Sugars 9g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 20%
Calcium 4%	Iron 4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less Than 65g 80g
Saturated Fat	Less Than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less Than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less Than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9	Carbohydrate 4 Protein 4

Did ya know...

Jalapeno peppers are a variety of chili peppers and can be hot! If the heat is too much, dairy products like milk and yogurt can help put that fire out.

How to Select

Choose firm, smooth chilies. "Stretch marks" often indicate hotter peppers.

How to Store

Wrap unwashed jalapeno peppers in a paper towel then refrigerate in a plastic bag for up to ten days. Rinse before using.

Nutrition Benefits

Low fat, saturated fat free, cholesterol free, sodium free, excellent source of vitamin C, good source of vitamin A and folate.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup sliced (90g)	
Servings Per Container	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 25	Calories from Fat 5
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 5g	2%
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%
Sugars 3g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 15%	Vitamin C 70%
Calcium 0%	Iron 4%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9	Carbohydrate 4 Protein 4

Did ya know...

Mangos are the most widely consumed fruit in the world.

How to Select

Choose slightly firm mangos with sweet aroma. Avoid sap on skin.

How to Store

Store mangos at room temperature 1-2 days. Refrigerate peeled, cut mangos.

Nutrition Benefits

Low fat; saturated fat free; sodium free; cholesterol free; high in vitamin A; good source of vitamin C.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size ½ mango (104g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 70	Calories from Fat 5
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 17g	6%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 15g	
Protein 0g	
Vitamin A 40%	Vitamin C 15%
Calcium 0%	Iron 0%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less Than 65g 80g
Saturated Fat	Less Than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less Than 300mg 300mg
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Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9	Carbohydrate 4 Protein 4

Did ya know...

You can use lime juice in place of salt to season fish, chicken or pork.

How to Select

Choose limes with smooth, shiny skin, heavy for size.

How to Store

Refrigerate limes for up to 2 weeks.

Nutrition Benefits

Fat free; saturated fat free; sodium free; cholesterol free; low calorie; high in vitamin C

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 medium (67g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 20	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 7g	2%
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%
Sugars 0g	
Protein 0g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 35%
Calcium 0%	Iron 0%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories 2,000 2,500
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You need not be an expert to garden and have fun with children. Your time, patience, and dedication as a mentor are what really matters.

Remember, the best thing you may ever grow is a gardener!