

INVITING IDEAS

Summer salsas are sensational

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Today the word "salsa" is as common as ketchup, and used in a similar fashion. Since 1991, salsa sales have surpassed dollar sales of ketchup — in dollars, not volume! Two decades ago "salsa" was thought of as a tomato-based Mexican condiment used as a dip for salty corn chips in sparsely visible Mexican restaurants. Times have changed, and so have the salsas — the trendy salsa of the 1990s, may be made of the old standby tomatoes or tomatillos, but you will often see them made from — mangoes, peanut, a variety of roasted peppers, exotic mushrooms, and an array of herbs. There are currently over 2,000 brands of salsa sold in the United States.

Cool summer salsa can be served with seafood, meat, interesting breads, and as accompaniments to desserts — we might see an associated corn chip, but they are usually stone ground, and blue. Many salsas still include chiles or roasted peppers as a main ingredient, many do not — especially those that are served as part of a dessert (heaped over a big scoop of vanilla ice cream, draped over yogurt, or sitting comfortably close to a delicate slice of custard pie).

"Chile Pepper Magazine," a monthly publication, is a strong indication that chiles are here to stay — in salsas or other foods for "Chile Heads," you can also get the Mo Hotta Mo Betta® catalog loaded with hot stuff, salsa included — it is wonderfully fun and spicy — P.O. Box 4136 San Luis Obispo, Calif. 93403 (1-800-462-3220), pick up a copy of "The Great Chile Book." (Ten Speed Press 1991), a great source book on chiles written by Mark Miller the owner of Coyote Cafe. A great hot and spicy book on the market is The El Paso Chile Company's "Burning Desires" by W. Park Kerr, (William Morrow & Company 1994). Kerr will

tell you that he is Graham Kerr's younger brother — actually he is a ninth generation Texan and co-owner of The El Paso Chile Company... and quite a character!

If you're feeling like part of the hazy, lazy, crazy days of summer, and would like to buy prepared salsa you can find many of those 2,000 brands in specialty markets and upscale produce shops, or mail order from: The El Paso Chile Company 909 Texas Avenue, El Paso, Texas 79901 (1-800-274-7468), Salsa Express P.O. Box 3985 Albuquerque, N.M. 87190 (1-800-43-Salsa), or call Country Home Creations, Inc. P.O. Box 126 Goodrich, Mich. 48438 (810) 636-7348 to get their Country Salsa Mix™ (with this one you have to add tomato sauce and 1 cup of water).

Here are a few summer salsa recipes to try:

This recipe comes from Park's book The El Paso Chile Company's "Burning Desires" — and with his kind permission, here goes!

"Somewhere in the jungles of tropical Central Africa (as played in the Saturday matinee movie screen in my mind) there lives the villain for whom this fiery condiment is named. All you need to know is that the habanero — or Scotch bonnet — is the hottest chile on earth. And that is why the jungle prince is called evil. Actually things don't get really devilish until you add that second habanero. Up until that point, this salsa is sweet-hot and crunchy, the perfect accompaniment to smoky grilled chicken, fish and shrimp. So unique is the heat generated by the habanero that while you can use jalapenos instead, even a lot of jalapenos, and make salsa every bit as hot or hotter, the dazzling effect still won't be the same."

EVIL JUNGLE PRINCE SALSA

3 large ripe tomatoes (about 1 1/2 pounds total)
1/3 cup finely chopped white onions
1/4 cup fresh orange juice
1 or 2 fresh habanero chilles, stemmed and coarsely chopped

1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
2/3 cup finely diced seedless cucumber
2/3 cup finely diced red radish
2/3 cup finely diced jicama root
1/3 cup finely chopped cilantro
3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh mint

Trim and halve the tomatoes. Gently squeeze out and discard the seeds and juice. Chop the tomatoes.

In a food processor, combine the tomatoes, onion, orange juice, habaneros, lime juice, and salt and process until fairly smooth. Transfer the puree to a bowl and stir in the diced cucumber, radish, jicama, cilantro and mint. Adjust the seasonings. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving. The salsa can be prepared up to 1 day in advance. Yield: about 4 cups.

This delicious berry salsa is terrific over ice cream or frozen yogurt. When my wild berry bushes are brimming, this is my first choice!

BERRY DESSERT SALSA

1 cup raspberries, if small keep whole, lightly rinsed
1/2 cup blueberries, lightly rinsed

1/2 cup strawberries, rinsed and chopped
Zest of a lemon, grated (only the yellow part) — add as much as desired

1 vanilla bean, split and scraped

In a large bowl gently mix all ingredients — serve at room temperature. Yield: approximately 2 cups.

This delicious combination is fabulous over vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt — how about over Ben and Jerry's Cherry Garcia — WOW! Make sure if using Kirsch, your eaters are of age.

CHOCOLATE-CHERRY SALSA

2 cups fresh black Michigan cherries — washed and pitted
1/2 cup shaved dark semi-sweet chocolate
2 tablespoons Kirsch, or desired amount

In a large bowl gently mix all ingredients — serve at room temperature. Yield: approximately 2 1/2 cups.

Ruth Mossok Johnston is an author and food columnist who lives in Franklin. To leave a Voice Mail message for Ruth, dial (313) 953-2047, mailbox 1902.

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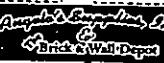
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Summer tours slated

Preservation Wayne celebrates Detroit's history with a tour series that blends visits to architectural landmarks with commentary on the diverse heritage they represent.

The following tours are offered during July. Tickets for each are \$10; call (313) 222-0322 for reservations.

• Preservation Wayne Presents the Mansions of Ferry, Saturday, July 20 — Tour the fashionable Victorian neighborhood that is currently having more than \$10 million in restorations, which will include a multi-building bed and breakfast.

This 2 1/2-hour walking tour begins 10 a.m. at the carriage house of the Hecker-Smiley mansion with a slide

show overview. The mansion is on the corner of E. Ferry at Woodward, one block north of the Detroit Institute of Arts.

• Magnificence on Woodward: The Hecker-Smiley Mansion, Saturday, July 20 — Tour the spectacular mansion that was built by wealthy industrialist Frank Hecker, then was home to the Smiley Bros. Music Co. for more than 40 years and is now home to a law firm that has restored it to grandeur.

The 1 1/2-hour tour begins 11 a.m. in the mansion's carriage house with a brief slide overview of the mansion's history and restoration.