Serving up Salsa

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For many families, one of the delights of summer is tending to a garden. If you have a garden, think about growing basic salsa ingredients like tomatoes, peppers, onions, and cilantro. If space is limited, a container garden is an excellent alternative. You can start your plants in pots indoors and transfer them outside when the weather allows.

Salsa is easy to prepare and can incorporate a range of fruits and vegetables based on what you have available or what you are craving. Gardening offers children a valuable lesson about the origins of food. Involving them in harvesting and preparing produce from the garden increases the likelihood that they'll be willing to try various fruits and vegetables. Making salsa is also an engaging activity for kids of all ages. Here are age-appropriate kitchen tasks for making salsa:

At 2 years:

- Pick produce out of the garden
- Rinse fruits and vegetables

At 3-4 years (items mentioned above, plus):

- Add ingredients
- Talk about cooking
- Name and count foods
- Help measure ingredients

At 5 years (items mentioned above, plus):

- Cut soft fruits and vegetables with a dull knife

At 6-8 years (items mentioned above, plus):

- Wash dishes
- Put away ingredients
- Light chopping of fruits and vegetables

At 9-12 years (items mentioned above, plus):

- Follow a recipe
- Use small appliances like blenders and mini choppers

For more information check out Food Fun for Young Children at http://go.unl.edu/food-fun

Fresh Salsa

4 cups fresh tomatoes, chopped, washed
¼ cup finely chopped onion, washed
1 jalapeno, seeded and chopped
1 tablespoon vinegar or lime juice
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1 teaspoon salt, optional

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. In a medium bowl, combine all ingredients and mix well. For better flavor, let the ingredients stand in the refrigerator for at least one hour.
3. Refrigerate until ready to eat.
4. Serve with veggies, tortilla chips, quesadillas, or on a salad or baked potato.
5. Makes 14 servings. Each serving contains 15 calories, 0 g fat, 0mg sodium, 3g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 1g protein.

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