

Activity: Food/Cooking **Goal:** Physical **Populations:** All but Some Medical Conditions

TH Activity Plan – Making Salsa

Text by Kathy Carroll, HTR & Bob Carroll

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Making nutrient-dense salsa from fresh garden produce.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Learn about nutrition; cognitive practice of following sequential steps

Physical: Maintain hand dexterity, strength and pincer grip

Psychological/Emotional: Focus on self-care, well-being & cooking life skills

Sensory: Use gustatory/tasting, tactile/touch, olfactory/smell senses to experience & recognize enjoyable activities

Social: Practice group cooperation activity, teamwork, collaboration & positive socializing skills

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Prep:** Set up work stations; each participant has cutting board, paring knife, apron, gloves, with measuring cups & spoons available.
2. Review food safety guidelines and hygiene protocols for activity (washing station, garbage).
3. Demonstrate cooking/cutting techniques. Participants write recipe & tips.
4. Divide into groups of 6 with each person given specific task or ingredient to prepare.
5. **Ingredients:** ripe tomatoes chopped and salted with ½ t salt; ½ green pepper chopped (seeds removed); ½ medium onion chopped; optional 1 medium Jalapeno pepper (seeds removed); measured ingredients of 1 T minced garlic, ½ T olive oil, ½ T apple cider vinegar, ¼ t pepper, dash cumin cilantro.
6. Each participant prepares their assigned ingredient, measuring & adding to large bowl when directed.
7. Prepare for tasting with chips, crackers and salsa, served room temperature or refrigerated up to 2 weeks if it lasts that long!
8. Clean workspace, reviewing best practices for food prep, refrigeration, and sanitation.
9. While eating salsa, discuss nutritional value of ingredients, benefit of good nutrition, and cost of eating healthy. (<https://healthyeating.sfgate.com/health-benefits-fresh-tomato-salsa-4157.html>)

Materials

Recipe

6 medium tomatoes
½ green pepper
½ medium onion
1 Jalapeno pepper
1 T minced garlic
½ T olive oil
½ T apple cider vinegar
¼ t pepper
dash cumin cilantro
chips, crackers

knives, cutting boards,
bowls, spoons, measuring
cups, aprons, gloves, plates

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This activity can be delivered as individuals making salsa or as a group activity. It is appropriate for most populations including food insecure, youth & seniors. This activity lends itself to a variety of themes: nutrition, life skills, sensory stimulation, ethnobotany, cooperative work, or food security. Tasks can be supervised so that all levels of intellectual abilities can participate.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Essential to check with staff and individuals before the activity for allergies, swallowing difficulties &/or contraindications with medication. Leader needs to be aware of items being put in mouths prior to conclusion. Use of sharp knives may not be appropriate for some populations (children, incarcerated, dementia). Some cutting can be done by leader or using plastic knives which are not as sharp.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: This activity provides integration of garden produce, often in great supply during summer months, with other concepts like lifestyle choices, how to prevent food spoilage, healthy food options not requiring cooking/heat & food insecurity. It may be appropriate for upskilling festivals, community garden/community meal/programming or other special events.

Many organizations are now using nutrition as a pathway to improving health, often with a focus on specific populations like youth, people with chronic diseases & those with food insecurity. A few program examples drawn from the Florida Horticulture for Health Network Resource Hub <https://www.flhhn.com/food-nutrition-food-action-initiatives.html>:

- *Acta Non Verba Youth Urban Farm Project (ANV)* Oakland CA is a safe outdoor space for children, youth and families focused on nutrition, food production and healthy living, founded & led mainly by women of color. <https://anvfarm.org/mission/>
- *Cleveland Crops* offers agricultural & culinary training to adults with disabilities with the urban farm productive year round. <https://www.cleveland.com/topic/Cleveland%20Crops/index.html>
- *Feed the Future* programs from Food Bank Santa Barbara (CA) has a host of programs for children: Kids Farmers Market, Healthy School Pantry, Food Literacy in Preschool (FLIP), Picnic in the Park (PIP), & Teens Love Cooking. Other programs are available to other groups & individuals. <https://foodbanksbc.org/programs/feed-the-future/>
- *Nutrition Garden Rx* non-profit works with groups to optimize urban gardens for climate & health benefits. Models have included garden & programming to support people at risk for and/or who live with diabetes, in Portland, OR. <https://www.nutritiongardenrx.org/>

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Fleming, L. & Langone Perez, D. (2023). (2023). *Food Action is Happening in PeoplePlant Programming* [YouTube]. Florida Horticulture for Health Network.

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Nierenberg, D. (2023). When we talk about college campuses, we're forgetting food insecurity. *Food Tank*. <https://foodtank.com/news/2022/08/when-we-talk-about-college-campuses-were-forgetting-food-insecurity/>

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Zanini, L. (2017). 10 reasons your body will thank you for eating salsa. *Healthline*.

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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2023.