

A Maritime Tradition: Green Tomato Chow



My Mother and Grandmother made this at the end of every gardening season. It was generally done so you didn't waste the remaining tomatoes that hadn't ripened before the first frost. So, they were picked green and made into this wonderful relish. Variations included small bits of red pepper or sweet red onions instead white. Gran liked to add the red peppers. Mom added a little extra clove ... both were delicious! This is the one I use most often, though I do try the other options from time to time. Enjoy!

Yield: About 9 jars (500 mL each)

Time: Prep: about 2 hours · Brining: overnight · Cook: 1½–2½ hours · Processing: 15 minutes (plus altitude adjustment) · Total: about 1 day

Tools: Large stockpot, large non-reactive bowl or pot, knife, cutting board, food processor (optional), colander, clean cotton or cheesecloth spice bag, boiling-water canner with rack, 9–10-pint (500 mL) jars, new canning lids, canning funnel, ladle, bubble remover, jar lifter, clean cloth

Ingredients

- About 8 L (32 cups) prepared green tomatoes (sliced, wedged, or chopped; weight to be added after the next measured batch)
- 2.3 kg (5 pounds) white or yellow onions (sliced; use 1.1 kg / 2½ pounds for a more tomato-forward chow)
- 1/3 cup (80 mL) pickling salt
- 3 cups (750 mL) white vinegar (5% acidity; do not dilute)
- 6 cups (about 1.2 kg) granulated sugar (or less, to taste)
- 1 cup (250 mL) pickling spice (tied in a clean cotton or cheesecloth bag; see Notes for a milder variation)
- 1-2 tablespoons (15-30 mL) ground turmeric (optional, for colour)

Instructions

1. Cut the tomatoes into slices, wedges, or cubes, depending on their shape and how fine you want the finished chow.
2. Peel and slice the onions. A food processor does a perfectly fine job.
3. Place the tomatoes and onions in a large non-reactive bowl or pot. Sprinkle with the pickling salt, cover, and refrigerate overnight.
4. The next day, rinse the tomatoes and onions well, drain thoroughly, and discard the brining liquid.
5. Tie the pickling spice in a clean cotton or cheesecloth bag.
6. Prepare a boiling-water canner. Wash 9-or 10-pint (500 mL) jars and keep them hot. Prepare new canning lids according to the manufacturer's directions.
7. In a large stockpot, combine the 5% acidity vinegar and sugar. Do not dilute the vinegar. Bring to a boil, then add the drained vegetables and spice bag.
8. Simmer uncovered over medium-low heat for 1½ to 2½ hours, stirring often, until the mixture cooks down and thickens. Stir more frequently near the end to prevent scorching.
9. Stir in the turmeric, if using, and remove the spice bag.
10. Ladle the hot chow into clean, hot pint (500 mL) jars, leaving 1/2-inch (1 cm) headspace. Remove air bubbles, adjust headspace if needed, wipe the rims, and apply the lids and rings fingertip tight.
11. Lower the jars into the boiling-water canner, with at least 1 inch (2.5 cm) of water over the lids. When the water returns to a full rolling boil, process for 15 minutes at elevations up to 1,000 feet; 20 minutes at 1,001–3,000 feet; 25 minutes at 3,001–6,000 feet; or 30 minutes above 6,000 feet.
12. Turn off the heat, remove the canner lid, and wait 5 minutes. Remove the jars without tilting and let them stand undisturbed for 12 to 24 hours.
13. Check the seals, remove the rings, label the jars, and store sealed jars in a cool, dark pantry for up to one year. Refrigerate any jar that does not seal.

Notes

This is a traditional family canning recipe, made and stored successfully for decades. Use vinegar labelled 5% acidity and do not dilute it. For a more tomato-forward chow, reduce the onions to 1.1 kg (2½ pounds). Sugar may be reduced to taste. For milder spice, use about 15–30 mL (1–2 tablespoons) each mustard seed and celery seed, loose or bagged, instead of the full cup of mixed pickling spice.