

SALVADORAN TOMATO SALSA ROJA

Prep Time: 15 minutes | Cook Time: 10 minutes | Yield: 12 Portions

Salsa Roja is the traditional tomato accompaniment served alongside pupusas in El Salvador. Unlike many chunky Mexican salsas, Salvadoran Salsa Roja is smooth, lightly cooked, and gently seasoned. Its bright acidity balances the richness of masa and cheese while maintaining a soft, sauce-like consistency. Rooted in Central American tomato cookery, this salsa reflects the region's preference for harmony and subtle heat rather than aggressive spice.

Ingredients

- 3 lbs ripe tomatoes, halved
- 1 medium yellow onion, roughly chopped
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1–2 jalapeños, seeded (adjust for heat preference)
- 1 tablespoon neutral oil (optional for sautéing)
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt (adjust to taste)
- ½ cup water (as needed for blending consistency)



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Arrange tomatoes, onion, garlic, and jalapeños on a sheet pan.
3. Roast 15–20 minutes until softened and lightly caramelized.
4. Transfer vegetables to blender. Add salt and a small amount of water.
5. Blend until smooth and sauce-like in consistency.
6. Pour into saucepan and simmer gently for 5–10 minutes to deepen flavor.
7. Adjust salt and consistency before serving warm or at room temperature.

Chef Ron's Notes

- Salsa Roja should be smooth, not chunky.
- Roast deeply for sweeter tomato notes.
- Do not overpower with jalapeño—heat should be gentle.
- Serve warm or room temperature alongside hot pupusas.
- A small squeeze of lime can brighten flavor if tomatoes lack acidity.