

Munch ON THIS



Making Salsa

*By Marcia Rae
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How many times have humans invented something and then forgotten it? Unless our skills and knowledge are passed directly to the next generation or unless accumulated knowledge is somehow recorded and then learned via books or computers and teachers, a lifetime of figuring-things-out is lost.

My tiny grandfather, Archie, was a superb logger and woods boss. Some of what he knew he passed to my father, who was the woods boss for the largest logging operation in the world. And much of what they knew was passed to my brother, Rod, known widely for his skill with a chainsaw. They could pass on what they knew, father to son, because they worked side-by-side. But even in that, there are things that Archie knew that no-one knows now.

This weekend, I worked side-by-side with my 15-year-old grandson, making green tomatillo salsa. I wanted to freeze a supply of salsa for the winter, but more than that I used the salsa making process to grow love, values, work habits, appreciation of good food, and much more.

We visited the farmers market in Portland, stopping at booths overflowing with local seasonal food. We bought fresh pasture-raised eggs and talked to a couple of young farmers from Bandon who have managed to wrest their cranberry bogs from the clutches of Ocean Spray and have started their own line of cranberry/blueberry juice (no sugar). We selected our ingredients, paying attention to smell, freshness, and price.

At home, we organized our work, divided the tasks, perused various recipes and then made up our own. We tasted and adjusted the recipe, cleaned up as we went, chatted about food and life. In the end we had a delicious salsa, but more than that, we worked on something together, created together, talked and listened. We built our relationship along with stirring the pot. So here is what we learned:

Solomon's Salsa –

Use a food processor to finely chop –

6 pounds of green and firm tomatillos

3 medium yellow onions

2 bulbs of fresh garlic

2 large jalapeno peppers

Put all in a large pot and simmer until just soft and blended. Stir and taste often. Talk it over. Add salt to taste. Add juice from ten limes. Finely chop 1½ bunches of fresh, local cilantro and add to the pot. Stir some more. Stand over the pot. Smell. Taste some more. Talk it over. Add more of anything as needed. Taste some more. Pronounce it perfect. Eat with anything – corn chips, in guacamole, with eggs, on black beans, in quiche, on pork, etc. Freeze in pint-sized freezer bags. Repeat next year.

Soon, I will move miles from this gangly duckling with the changing voice, but I will always remember making salsa with him and I think he will remember too. Then someday, he will make salsa with his son, and I will have passed some part of my passion for real food on to a generation that I might never know.

Munch on This – What do you know? Pass it on.

PS – See you at the Farmers Market this Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon. Support your local farmer. Bring a youngster. Music is Tom Janssen and friends.

PSS – This week at the Market look for: apples, baby bok choy, beets, bell peppers, broccoli, carrots, tomatoes, corn, cucumbers, daffodil bulbs, decorative gourds, eggplant, eggs, flower bulbs, garlic, grapes, green beans, honey, jams, leeks, lettuce, nasturtiums, nectarines, onion starts, peaches, pears, poblano peppers, pumpkins, radishes, raspberries, rutabagas, salad mix, sheepskins, squash, strawberry plants, syrups, tomatoes, treviso, turnips, zucchini.

PSSS – Get ready for the Pumpkin Decorating Contest at the Farmers Market, October 30. If you have pumpkins to sell or donate, please let us know.