TIPS + TRICKS

FOR ENTERING SALSA AT THE FAIR

Entries for the Canning Division must follow the Canned Entries specifications as listed in the General Rules and specifics in each Division. USDA guidelines must be followed with each entry in order to be judged.

* New rule this year on salsa is that any recipe is permitted as long as USDA guidelines are followed.

- In judging salsa, texture is very important. Uniformity in the vegetable pieces added to the tomatoes adds to the overall taste. You want an even amount of vegetable and juice. Using tomatoes at their prime will give you the best result. Knowing the variety of tomatoes that is best for salsa will give you a better result.
- Remember not only cooking before putting in the jars and the processing time for your altitude has an effect on the texture.
- The color and appearance of your exhibit is very important. We all eat with our eyes first before we taste. It also is determined by the freshness of ingredients, the spices added and shelf life of the exhibit.
- Be aware of the spices added for flavor and the type of pepper for degree of "hotness." The spices can change the color depending on what they are. Remember you are canning for the State Fair. The hottest pepper you enjoy at home in small amounts for the Fair will allow the judge to also taste the other ingredients in your exhibit.
- In judging, USDA guidelines must be followed: Method of processing, Headspace, Processing time, Altitude where exhibit was processed and County name must all be on exhibit. The general rules tell you where this is included.

Questions about canning can be directed to Iowa State University Answer Line at 1-800-262-3804.

General exhibit questions can be directed to Food Superintendent at 515-291-8067