

SALSA DE JITOMATE YUCATECA I

SMOKY COOKED TOMATO SALSA

The cooked tomato sauces we think of as Italian had their root in ancient Mexico. Of course, tomatoes are indigenous to Mexico, and the practice of heating them slowly until they rendered their juices and eventually thickened has been a component of the Mexican table for at least a few centuries. While the Maya utilized native forms of *allium*, the onion and garlic additions with which we are familiar are more recent adaptations. And the *habanero* is a purely regional touch. (Fear not: because they are left whole they only add a bit of zing.) This is one of Yucatán's most popular cooked tomato *salsas*. It has the smoky taste characteristic of many Yucatecan dishes due to the charred tomatoes and the caramelized onions. This sauce is served with tamales and a host of other dishes as a topping.

10- 15 SERVINGS

🌀 COOK THE ONIONS 🌀

- 4 whole *chiles habaneros*
- 1/2 white onion, cut *media luna* (in quarters and then sliced)
- 4 Tbs. (60 ml) vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

- 2 lbs. (1 k) Roma tomatoes
- 1/2 white onion

- Salt and black pepper to taste

STEP 1 CHAR THE HABANEROS over a gas flame or in a heavy cast iron skillet. In a medium skillet, sauté the onions in the oil until browned. Add garlic and whole *chiles* and cook over medium heat until garlic is translucent, about 2-3 minutes.

🌀 PREPARE THE TOMATOES 🌀

STEP 2 MEANWHILE, ROAST the tomatoes and onions in a heavy skillet or *comal*. When patches of the skins are blackened, remove from heat and coarsely chop. Put tomatoes and onions in blender and pureé for a few seconds. There should still be some texture left. **DO NOT LIQUEFY.**

🌀 FINISH 🌀

STEP 3 ADD BLENDED TOMATO/ONION mixture to the onion/*chile* mixture. Boil rapidly until reduced, about 15 minutes, then lower heat and simmer another 5 minutes until thickened. Remove *chile* and taste for seasoning. If prepared in advance, reheat before serving.