

Five-Minute Tomato Salsa

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP, SERVING 4 TO 6

TIME: 5 MINUTES

If you want to use fresh tomatoes, core and cut 2 small ripe tomatoes (about $\frac{3}{4}$ pound) into eighths. Serve with tortilla chips.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ small jalapeño chile or $\frac{1}{2}$ chipotle chile in adobo sauce, minced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ small red onion, peeled and root end removed
- 1 small clove garlic, minced or pressed through a garlic press (about $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon)
- 2 tablespoons packed fresh cilantro leaves
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- Pinch ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons juice from 1 lime
- 1 (14 $\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained

Pulse all the ingredients except the tomatoes in the workbowl of a food processor until minced, about five 1-second pulses, scraping down the sides of the bowl as necessary. Add the tomatoes and pulse until roughly chopped, about two 1-second pulses. Transfer the mixture to a fine-mesh sieve and allow the excess moisture to drain, about 1 minute. Transfer the salsa to a serving bowl; serve. (The salsa can be covered with plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 2 days.)

CHEESE STRAWS

CHEESE STRAWS ARE AN OLD-FASHIONED appetizer that never fails to impress. In fact, a recipe for them, called Parmesan Cheese Pastry Twists, is usually printed on the back of the Pepperidge Farm Puff Pastry box. Yet, after making this old standby as the box suggested, we knew we could do better.

First, we wanted more cheese flavor. While the back-of-the-box recipe called for only $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cheese, we found it took a full cup of grated Parmesan to produce cheese straws with a good, hearty flavor. We then tried a few other cheeses, including Asiago, smoked cheddar, and manchego. Although all the cheeses melted just fine, only the Parmesan and Asiago retained their full-flavored punch after baking. The other cheeses, although potent on their own, tasted bland against the rich dough. We also tried adding various herbs and spices, such as fresh thyme, smoked paprika, and chili powder; however, tasters preferred the batches seasoned with a little salt and black pepper only.

To form the straws, we found it much easier to work with pastry that wasn't

INGREDIENTS: Puff Pastry

Puff pastry is a super-flaky dough with hundreds of but-tery layers. It is made by wrapping a simple pastry dough around a stick of cold butter, rolling the dough, folding the dough over itself at least four times, and chilling the dough for at least one hour after each fold. When baked, the water in the butter creates steam, which causes the dough to puff into flaky, delicate layers.

Almost no one—not even chefs at fine restaurants—makes puff pastry. Home cooks have one, maybe two commercial options in the freezer case. Pepperidge Farm Puff Pastry Sheets (made with vegetable oil, not butter) is available in almost every supermarket. Better supermarkets and gourmet shops might carry Classic Puff Pastry from Dufour Pastry Kitchens. When pitted in the test kitchen against Pepperidge Farm, the all-butter pastry was easy to pick out and was the clear favorite. That said, cheese straws made with Pepperidge Farm were still quite good. Our advice is to buy all-butter puff pastry if you can, but don't go without cheese straws if Pepperidge Farm is your only option.