

3% Fermented Hot Sauce Mash

Fresh peppers, tomatoes, garlic, and onion, salted by weight and left to ferment. Then blended into a hot sauce as smooth, rustic, mild, or fiery as your harvest allows.

The 3% Mash Formula

For a mash, salt is measured by the weight of the prepared vegetables, not the water. The vegetables make their own liquid.

Prepared vegetable weight × 0.03 = salt needed

Prepared vegetables	Salt for a 3% mash
1 pound / 454 g	14 g
2 pounds / 907 g	27 g
3 pounds / 1,361 g	41 g
4 pounds / 1,814 g	54 g
5 pounds / 2,268 g	68 g
1 kilogram / 1,000 g	30 g

A kitchen scale gives the best results. Fine sea salt, pickling salt, or kosher salt all work when measured by weight.

Ingredients

- Fresh hot peppers, one variety or a mix
- Sweet peppers, optional. They add fruit and body without adding heat. A sauce that is hot and balanced beats one that is only hot.
- Fresh tomatoes
- Onion
- Fresh garlic cloves
- Non-iodized salt, 3% of the prepared vegetable weight
- Optional: distilled white vinegar or apple cider vinegar, for blending after fermentation

Equipment

- Kitchen scale
- Food processor or sharp knife
- Clean wide-mouth glass jar
- Fermentation weight
- Airlock lid or regular jar lid
- Clean spoon, tamper, or fermentation tool
- Plate or tray beneath the jar

Make the Mash

- 1 Prepare the vegetables.** Stem the peppers and trim away any bruised or damaged spots. Roughly chop the peppers, tomatoes, onion, and garlic. Leave the seeds in for a hotter sauce or remove some for a milder one. Sweet peppers go in with the hot ones and count toward the vegetable weight. Wear gloves, especially with very hot varieties. Pepper hands are no joke.
- 2 Weigh the prepared vegetables.** Set a large bowl on the scale and tare it to zero. Add all of the peppers, tomatoes, onion, and garlic. Write down the total weight in grams.
- 3 Calculate the salt.** Multiply the vegetable weight by 0.03. If the vegetables weigh 1,500 g, $1,500 \times 0.03 = 45$ g salt. Sprinkle it evenly over the vegetables.

- 4 Process into a coarse mash.** Pulse the salted vegetables in a food processor until finely chopped, wet, and juicy. Stop before it becomes a smooth puree. Aim for a coarse salsa texture.
- 5 Pack the jar.** Spoon the mash into a very clean wide-mouth jar, pressing down firmly after every few spoonfuls with a clean spoon or tamper. This removes trapped air and brings the juices to the surface. Leave 1½ to 2 inches of headspace. The mash gets lively.
- 6 Keep the mash below the liquid.** Set a fermentation weight over the mash. If there is not enough liquid after several hours, make a small amount of 3% brine and add only enough to cover the surface: 1 cup / 240 g non-chlorinated water with 7 g non-iodized salt.
- 7 Ferment.** Attach the airlock lid. Set the jar on a plate out of direct sunlight at a comfortable room temperature. Ferment for at least 2 weeks and begin tasting then. For a deeper flavor, allow 3 to 4 weeks.
- 8 Check the ferment.** Bubbling in the first several days is normal and welcome. With a regular lid, open it briefly once a day during active fermentation to release pressure, then press the mash back under the liquid with a clean utensil before closing.

Finish the Hot Sauce

When the mash smells bright, pleasantly sour, and peppery, it is ready.

- 1 Blend.** Transfer the fermented mash to a blender and blend until smooth.
- 2 Thin.** Add a little of the fermented liquid, distilled white vinegar, apple cider vinegar, or a combination until the sauce is the thickness you like.
- 3 Taste and adjust.** A little more vinegar for brightness, or leave it thicker for a rustic table sauce.
- 4 Strain, if you like.** Pass it through a fine-mesh sieve for a thinner, pourable sauce.
- 5 Bottle and refrigerate.** Transfer to clean jars or bottles and keep cold.

Fermentation Notes

- Keep the mash beneath the liquid and the rim of the jar clean.
- A pleasantly sour, peppery aroma is expected.
- White sediment at the bottom of the jar is normal.
- A thin, flat white film on the surface can appear. Remove it promptly, then press the mash back down under the liquid.
- A rotten smell, slime, or fuzzy mold means discard it.

Serving Ideas

- Eggs, breakfast hash, and biscuits
- Beans, soups, chili, and stews
- Tacos, burritos, nachos, and quesadillas
- Fried chicken, roasted chicken, and grilled meats
- Greens, cooked cabbage, collards, and roasted vegetables
- Marinades, barbecue sauce, dressings, and dips

Batch Notes

Pepper varieties used

Total prepared vegetable weight

Salt added

Date started

Date finished

Flavor notes