

A Taste of Home — San Antonio Style

by Ms. Ashley Wuytens, Staff Writer, DCMA West Headquarters

With 22 of their colleagues deployed to provide Contingency Contract Administration Services (CCAS) in Kuwait, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq, DCMA San Antonio employees are very experienced when it comes to sending care packages overseas.

Messages from the deployed employees discuss items that they miss from home, including the Mexican food that's so popular in San Antonio, Texas. Since there are limitations on what can be shipped, care packages include nonperishable items such as beef jerky, pork rinds, canned *menudo* (a type of soup) and jars of homemade salsa. Not only is the salsa a San Antonio favorite — everyone in San Antonio knows that salsa is good on anything! — but “nothing says ‘we care’ like a homemade gift,” according to Mr. Carlos Flores, quality assurance representative, DCMA San Antonio.

After being made, the salsa goes through the canning process and is put into jars. The jars are then placed in a deep pot of boiling water. The high temperature destroys potentially harmful microorganisms and enzymes and removes air from the jar, forming a partial vacuum that seals the jar and prevents other microorganisms from entering.¹ The jars are wrapped in plastic wrap and put into resealable plastic bags so that if a jar breaks, the salsa will not be all over everything else in the care package.

When the care packages are complete, they are sent to DCMA San Antonio's deployed team members. “I will always cherish the special sentiments of [the] cards, homemade salsa and cookies that I have received,” said Ms. Maria Solis-Kotzur, a DCMA San Antonio employee currently deployed to Kuwait.



In addition to the salsa and other food items, DCMA San Antonio employees frequently exchange e-mails with their deployed colleagues, giving updates on work, promotions, new additions to families, illnesses — day-to-day news to keep them feeling in touch with home. “Our support of our CCAS employees is a real team effort with everyone in

DCMA San Antonio pitching in,” said Ms. Susan Jackson, commander of one of DCMA San Antonio's streamlined contract management offices (CMOs). “We make sure our colleagues know we're thinking of them [because] they've sacrificed so much for us. We have a large bulletin board where we post all the pictures sent by our deployed teammates. It keeps them

(Above) Image from *The Ball Blue Book®: The Guide to Home Canning and Freezing*.

¹ *The Ball Blue Book®: The Guide to Home Canning and Freezing*, 31st ed. Muncie, Ind: Ball Corporation, 1985, p. 2

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in our thoughts and prayers.” Those deployed are grateful for the efforts of the CMO employees. “I truly appreciate all the kind words of encouragement and support from everyone back home,” said Ms. Solis-Kotzur. In response, the deployed employees send pictures of their home bases, the countryside, local people and historic locations. They also describe scary situations, heartfelt experiences and rewarding work.

Mr. Steven Bratz, Ms. Teresa Izarraras, Mr. Flores, Mr. Danny Garcia, Mr. Omar Garza, Mr. Roman de Luna, Maj. Jenise Bentle, Mr. Luis Barcenes and Ms. Solis-Kotzur, who have been deployed to various locations, have all thanked their DCMA San Antonio friends for sending

care packages their way, especially this San Antonio “taste of home.” Receiving the packages “reassures me that my CMO supports my decision in being here and supporting the warrior,” said Ms. Solis-Kotzur. “It’s nice to know you can volunteer for the DCMA CCAS Program and your CMO will stand by you.”

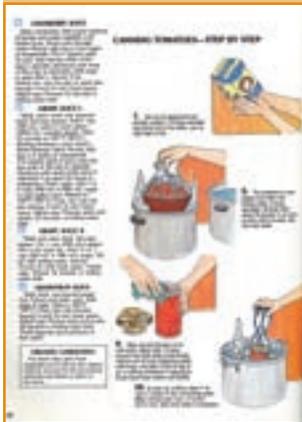
Suggested reading

Lee, Freddy (DCMA San Antonio). “This Time the DCMA Customer Had a Name I Knew.” *WestWord* (Summer 2004): 18. <http://home.dcmdw.dcma.mil/command/public_affairs/westword.html>.



(Top left) CCAS deployees Ms. Maria Solis-Kotzur, Mr. Steve Bratz and Army Maj. Jenise Bentle show Christmas items sent by their CMOs. (DCMA Kelly Air Force Base staff photo) *(Top Right)* Mr. Carlos Flores, DCMA San Antonio quality assurance representative, in Kuwait with items that he received in his care package. (DCMA staff photo)

A Taste of Home Salsa Recipe



- 5 lbs. tomatoes, blanched, cored, skinned and diced
- ¼ cup diced jalapeno peppers
- ¼ cup diced serrano peppers
- 2 large white onions, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, diced
- 1 cup cilantro, chopped
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 4 teaspoons cumin
- ½ cup lemon juice



Combine ingredients and bring to a boil. Spoon into sterilized glass jars. Wipe mouth and top of jars to remove any drops of salsa. Screw the lids and rims on tightly and fully submerge jars in a bath of hot, not boiling, water. Water should cover tops of jars by at

least 1-2 inches (add more water if necessary). Put cover on pot. Bring water to a boil. Process jars at a gentle but steady boil for 45 minutes for quart-sized jars, 35 minutes for pint-sized jars. Remove jars and stand several inches apart and out of drafts. Allow to cool for about 12 hours.¹

¹ *The Ball Blue Book®: The Guide to Home Canning and Freezing*. 31st ed. Muncie, Ind: Ball Corporation, 1985. pp. 20-21