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Author's relish for sauces also helps children

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The American Dietetic Association wants us to eat Five servings of fruits and vegetables a day for good health.

You can do this the fun, easy and zesty way by scoffing down a variety of salsas using the recipes from Jim Atkinson's book, "I Never Met a Salsa I Didn't Like."

This paperback is not only a recipe book by our Edmond neighbor, but it's also a coupon book. So, if you don't feel like slicing and dicing tomatoes, onions, cilantro, peppers and other scrumptious edible gifts crafted by Mother Earth, you can flip to page 60 and beyond for more than \$600 worth of coupons and gift certificates to local restaurants. These eateries serve up typical faire that would satisfy Atkinson's stimulated palette.

"The restaurants in (the book) are a reflection of my taste in cuisine," he explained.

Atkinson uses only the freshest produce available and original recipes in his book.

Atkinson admits to a complete fascination with fresh, nutritious and spicy food since going into the produce business about 20 years ago.

"What's behind a good food is the sauce," he explained. "I'm obsessed with hot stuff."

To feed his ferocity for fiery food, his refrigerator houses jars of homemade pickled garlic, mango salsa, pizza sauce, as well as smoked Habaneros – considered the hottest peppers in the world.

Atkinson did set out to make his fortune by the sales of his book.

"Making money was not my motivation to do this," he said. "I'm not really motivated materially or monetarily."

He only wanted to share with others what he considered good food that is good for others. "I wanted to turn people on to something they are missing," he explained. Instead of finding an agent, wondering if he would accept his manuscript, then only recouping only a fraction of its worth, he decided to self-publish.

Believing in his work, Atkinson took \$13,000 out of his savings account to gamble on this enterprising project. After all, it was an innovative type of book and he really didn't know how many of the 5,000 copies he printed, would sell.

With boxes of books still warm from the printing shop, Atkinson approached the president of Baker's supermarket in Oklahoma City with the idea that he sell his book in the grocery store near the produce isle.

Baker's would get a percentage of every book sold and would also profit from shoppers buying the ingredients at the store.

Liking Atkinson's entrepreneurial spirit, the president gave him the opportunity not only to sell the books, but to also give out fresh salsa samples made using only the recipes from his book.

"It went over extremely well," he said.

He sold 53 books in two hours and it was considered the most financially successful demonstration program ever, Atkinson exclaimed. People who bought the book also spent, on average, six to eight dollars worth of produce, chips, herbs and spices.

Now that Atkinson recouped his \$13,000 payout, he decided to spread his delicious word and help children at the same time.

Currently he is working with the Western Heights school district to help the children with fund-raising projects. He sells his books wholesale and the children sell them retail and get to keep all the profits.