



Where The Land, Food, and People Come Together!

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Distribution Week #11

Field Walk...

Frequently Asked Tomato Questions

1. *Why do you harvest unripe tomatoes?* Because we can't harvest tomatoes everyday. If we take the tomatoes with a hint of red, they will ripen in a day or two.

2. *Why do the tomatoes look like peaches?* Those are an heirloom variety of tomato called **Peach**. We enjoy growing heirlooms because of their fun colors, unique tastes, and the personalities we see in every different shape. Heirlooms are seeds that have been planted for a hundred years or more. Some of the tomatoes we are growing come from the late 1800's. We are eating the same tomatoes that quite possibly your great-great grandmother ate. For that reason they are priceless. Tomatoes such as these sell for \$5 a pound at the farmer's market. And some heirlooms are two pounds alone.

3. *Why do heirlooms have such weird shapes, lines and scabs?* Most heirlooms are like that. Just cut off the scabs and try to slice the tomato the best you can. Heirlooms are planted year after year **not** because they produce a perfectly round, flawless tomato, but because of their color, taste, and texture.

4. *Why do some of your tomato plants look like they are dying?* All tomato plants get tomato blight; a soil born disease that is prevalent in all U.S. soils. The leaves on the bottom turn yellow and then brown and then shrivel, but not before a little rain splashes the disease (or human hands) onto the leaves above it. Eventually all the leaves will die and the tomatoes won't ripen. But usually not before the majority of the crop has been harvested. Our plants this year look remarkably well due to the dry conditions.

5. *What are roma tomatoes?* These tomatoes are oblong shaped and a little smaller than regular slicing tomatoes. They are great for sauces and canning because the tomato is more meaty, less juicy.

Enjoy the harvest, Amy & Segue



Our Best Guess for what's in your Share:
tomatoes, summer squash, zucchini, carrots, green beans, peppers, potatoes, canteloupe/watermelon and

Hot Peppers: We grow a wide variety of hot peppers with a varying degree of heat (from jalapenos to habernos--HOT!) To lessen the heat, take out the seeds and use sparingly. Wash hands after cutting them. (For St. Louis folks, the hot peppers will be in your tomato bag).

Sweet Onions: These are our sweet "Ailsa Craig" Spanish (Vidalia) type onion. These are good for eating fresh on sandwiches, or cooking but probably won't store for more than a couple of weeks.

(PYO--2 quarts green beans, unlimited cherry tomatoes, herbs, flowers!)

Coming Up!

The edamame soybeans need another week.
Pole beans maybe be ready for Pick-Your-Own.

What's For Dinner: Summer Vegetable Soup

from "The New Mayo Clinic Cookbook"--thanks Marilyn!!

1 T olive oil
1 onion, chopped
3 cloves garlic, chopped
4 tomatoes, diced
1 T chopped fresh oregano or 1 tsp dried oregano
1 tsp ground cumin
4 cups vegetable stock
1 bay leaf
1 carrot, chopped or sliced julienne
1 bell pepper, diced
1 zucchini or summer squash, diced thinly
1 T grated lemon zest
2 T chopped fresh basil
salt and pepper to taste

In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and saute until soft and translucent, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and saute for 30 seconds; do not let the garlic brown. Add the tomatoes, oregano and cumin and saute until the tomatoes are softened, about 4 minutes. Add the stock and bay leaf and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low and bring to a simmer. Add the carrot and bell pepper and cook for 2 minutes. Add the zucchini and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 3 minutes longer. Stir in the lemon zest and basil. Season with salt and pepper.

Tips for Canning & Freezing& Eating

Finally, after weeks of anticipation, the tomatoes are here; I mean really here!! Off of just one row, we can get as many as 500 lbs, so it's time to eat tomatoes and freeze tomatoes and can tomatoes to your heart's content!!

Canning Tomatoes: The traditional way is to put them in glass canning jars. This is a tasty way to have tomatoes all year long. They taste great fresh out of a jar. Use a good reference like "Putting Food By" to get the scoop on how to do it right. This method is somewhat time consuming but yields the best product.

Freezing Tomatoes: For those who want a quicker and simpler way, just cut them in chunks, slices, quarters, (any which way really!) and put them in plastic bags and into the freezer they go. When you thaw them they can be used for cooking, but they are too mushy to be eaten fresh. The taste is great and for cooking they are ideal.

Tomato Sauce: Sauce now, smile later! Put your tomatoes in a big pot and add just a little bit of water (unless the tomatoes are really juicy themselves). Bring them to a boil and then turn the heat down to simmer (don't let them burn--that is the trick!). After they've cooked for many, many hours (like, all day) put the whole thing through the Foley Food Mill (to take out the skins, etc--*You can also drop the tomatoes in boiling water for a minute before saucing them to take the skins off, if you don't have a food mill*). Don't add any onions, peppers, garlic; just tomatoes. Put this brew in yogurt containers (leave an inch of headroom) and put into freezer. You can can this as well, but make sure to follow the directions carefully! Enjoy summer 2007 in winter 2008!

Grilled Tomatoes (from "The Real Dirt on Vegetables")

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 T red wine vinegar
1 T chopped fresh basil
3 bay leaves
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 tsp salt
oil for greasing the pan
6 tomatoes, halved horizontally, seeds squeezed out
Preheat the broiler or the grill. Combine the olive oil, vinegar, basil, bay leaves, garlic and salt in a medium bowl; stir until well combined. If you are using a broiler: Lightly oil a baking pan or broiling pan. Place the tomatoes halves cut-sides down in the pan. If you are using a grill: Lightly oil the grill. Place the tomatoe halves cut-side down directly on the grill. Broil or grill the tomatoes until they start to char and blister, about 4 minutes. Using tongs, carefully turn them over and broil or grill for 2 minutes more. Remove the cooked tomatoes from the heat and place them cut-sides up in the dish with the oil and vinegar mixture. Spoon some mixture over the tomatoes. Set the tomatoes aside to marinate for at least 1 hour, or cover them and keep them in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Serve at room temperature.

Fresh Tomato Salsa (from "Asparagus to Zucchini")

1 small onion
1/2 hot pepper (seeds removed if you want less heat)
small bunch cilantro
3 minced garlic cloves
salt to taste
2 lbs tomatoes, peeled
Process all ingredients except tomatoes in a food processor. Add peeled tomatoes. Process again and it's ready to eat! Store in refrigerator 1 week.

Mark Your Calendars!!

- * **August 11**, 9-Noon, Volunteer work day; help us get the farm cleaned up for an important farm tour!
- * **August 17**, 9-Noon, University of Illinois Sustainable Agriculture Tour exploring the topic of "starting a farm from scratch." Lunch follows. Please contact Amy if you would like to attend.
- * **August 18**, 5PM, our tomato fest! Bring your favorite tomato dish to share along with plates, utensils and chairs. Amy will demonstrate briefly how to save heirloom tomato seeds. Some fun tomato activity is bound to be served up!!

